



The role of research and strategic intelligence in mission: The Ghana Evangelism Committee and the making of the “Unfinished Task” in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the importance of research and strategic intelligence in the missionary work of the Ghana Evangelism Committee (GEC). It contended that one of the most distinctive and least studied contributions the institution has made to Ghanaian Christianity is its ability not only to mobilise churches but also to deepen their understanding of the missionary field. The study relied on a qualitative institutional case-study approach and on milestone records, anniversary publications, strategic plans, annual reports, survey documents, and interview testimony. The findings were analysed using thematic analysis and data triangulation. The study clarified that GEC research was not an academic misstep in evangelism but rather a strategic response to missionary concern. As time passed, the Committee formed an institutional mission intelligence practice focused on church growth, church distribution, saturation church planting, unreached people groups, urban migration, communities without churches, and the evolving demographic reality of the church in Ghana. The study demonstrated that GEC research has fulfilled at least six key roles: diagnosing the church's real situation; making visible the unfinished task; informing church-planting and denominational strategy; facilitating ecumenical consultation; maintaining a national missionary imagination; and serving as one of the Committee's most significant catalytic tools. The study has a role to play in the literature on African Christian agency, parachurch mission, mission research, strategic planning, and the relationship between knowledge and the fulfilment of the Great Commission.

Keywords: Ghana Evangelism Committee; mission research; strategic intelligence; unfinished task; National Church Survey; unreached people groups; Ghana

INTRODUCTION

The history of Christian mission is traditionally told in terms of preaching, conversion, discipleship, church planting, revival and ecclesial expansion. These are categories that cannot be left out, but they are not the end of mission history. Mission also requires knowledge of the locations of churches, where they do not exist, the groups of people who are only weakly reached, the rate at which demographic

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realities are shifting, and how the church can act wisely and cooperatively in response to those shifts. The Great Commission, in that regard, is not only a spiritual challenge but also an epistemic challenge. The church should not only be willing to go, but also know where, how and to whom it is being sent.¹ A very notable revealing example of this issue is provided by the Ghana Evangelism Committee (GEC).

Although GEC is mainly known for interdenominational evangelistic mobilisation through the New Life for All (NLFA) programme, one of its most distinctive and lasting contributions has been its effort to produce structured knowledge about the state of the church and the unfinished task of mission in Ghana. Since the early National Church Survey and later work on unreached people groups (UPGs), the regional church survey initiatives and plans of a renewed national church survey, as well as the urban-centre analysis, GEC continued to regard mission research not as a subsidiary area of scholarship but as one of the means by which the Body of Christ can be mobilised more intelligently and effectively.²

This paper holds that GEC's research role is best understood as a core articulation of its catalytic mission identity. Its surveys, unfinished-task models, UPG books, and up-to-date suggestions for urban mission and communities-without-churches analysis were not collateral efforts disconnected from mission itself. They were among the major methods the Committee sought to employ to mobilise the churches of Ghana in fulfilling the Great Commission.³

The article presents six claims. First, GEC research was driven by missionary interest rather than abstract scholarly interest. Second, the Committee's survey work was a major departure from the general evangelistic aspiration toward evidence-based mission planning. Third, the National Church Survey tradition made the unfinished mission task more concrete by translating the spiritual concern into quantifiable, tangible facts. Fourth, GEC's research was one of its most obvious sources of catalytic influence, as it frequently shaped church action indirectly by seeking to assist denominations, leaders, and mission bodies in interpreting the field. Fifth, subsequent changes in the UPG work, urban migration, census interpretation, and church-distribution analysis show that GEC's research imagination has been adjusted to new social realities and is not tied to a previous model. Sixth, within GEC's tradition of strategic intelligence, there is a key aspect in which African Christian agencies are seen not merely as passive recipients of mission strategy but also as producers of mission knowledge.⁴

The article therefore contributes to recent mission and World Christianity scholarship by showing how an African interdenominational body generated mission knowledge for churches rather than merely receiving strategy from external mission agencies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mission, Discernment, and the Epistemic Dimension of the Great Commission

The Great Commission cannot be boiled down to a simple instruction to preach in the abstract. R. T. France's reading of Matthew 28:18-20 highlights that the governing imperative is to make disciples, whereas going, baptising, and teaching are the processes by which disciple-making is achieved.⁵ This is important because it establishes that mission is continuity, teaching, incorporation, and making, not just proclamation in the moment. When mission is considered in this broader sense, then the question of structure, sequencing and field knowledge arises.

The classic work by David J. Bosch improves this understanding. He identifies mission in the broader context of the *missio Dei*. He describes mission as a movement of God to the world, and the church as invited to participate in this movement, but not as proprietor.⁶ The importance of Bosch analysis for the current study is that it reveals that missionary responsibility involves discernment of

¹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011).

² Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Vision 2027: Mobilising the Churches of Ghana to Disciple the Whole Nation and Beyond* \ (Accra: Ghana Evangelism Committee, 2023); Ghana Evangelism Committee, *50th Anniversary Brochure* (Accra: GEC Archive, 2024).

³ Ghana Evangelism Committee, "Annual Report 2023" (Accra, 2023); Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Vision 2027*, 31–32 research and rebranding sections.

⁴ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996); Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1995).

⁵ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1116–18.

⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390–93.

history and context. The church is not involved in God's mission in a blind, activist manner. It is involved in historically informed obedience.

Christopher J. H. Wright also expands the conceptual landscape by locating mission in the entire biblical story. Mission is not just a task among tasks. It is participation in God's redemptive purposes for people and nations.⁷ With this broader vision in place, the necessity of knowing people, places, population transition, and ecclesial dispersion becomes more apparent. Mission research, as such, is not a secular intrusion into mission. It is part of one of its practical discernments.

Church Growth, Mission Strategy, the Language of the Unfinished Task.

The church-growth tradition also is of some use, though it must be read with caution. Donald McGavran has postulated that churches can only reach out to people and communities in ways that effectively evangelise them by paying close attention to their actual movements.⁸ C. Peter Wagner also emphasised that strategic planning, contextual analysis, and specific knowledge of the field are important to the development of the church.⁹ The chief contribution of this literature to the present paper is that it does not rest on the level of pious generality. Mission involves more than conviction but also knowledge of the field.

This is concisely summarised in the evangelical mission discourse in general, in the language of the *unfinished task*. The term denotes that Christian presence is not equivalent to a completed mission. It poses the question of where the church has not yet been, where it is not well represented, and whose populations or communities are still underserved. This *unfinished-task* language was the focus of the National Church Survey and of subsequent studies within the GEC tradition. It provided missionary concern with a more tangible institutional face, allowing churches to drop the rhetoric of general revival to strategic objectives that could be quantified.¹⁰

World Christianity, African Agency, and Knowledge of Indigenous Mission.

Some scholars clearly oppose the notion that Africa is merely a passive recipient of missionary strategy. Andrew Walls, Lamin Sanneh, Dana Robert, Kwame Bediako, Ogbu Kalu, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu and Esther Acolatse, among others, in one aspect or another, demonstrate that African Christianity has emerged as a locus of theological, institutional and missionary innovation.¹¹ This is very crucial for the interpretation of the research tradition of GEC. The surveys, reports, and strategic efforts covered in this paper are not to be considered local versions of foreign practices. They are an example of a Ghanaian Christian agency in the creation of mission knowledge.

Of special interest here is Bediako, who insists that Christianity in Africa has to be perceived as a truly African religious fact instead of a foreign extension.¹² Assuming that African Christianity is indeed based on African initiative, it follows that African Christian institutions can justifiably be seen as the interpreters of their missionary field. One such example of indigenous strategic intelligence is the GEC survey tradition.

Recent scholarship in World Christianity and mission studies has continued to emphasise that the study of mission must move beyond older centre-periphery models and pay closer attention to the knowledge-producing agency of churches and Christian institutions in the Global South. Wild-Wood argues that World Christianity is not only about the geographical spread of Christianity but also about

⁷ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006). 62–67.

⁸ Donald A. McGavran, "Understanding Church Growth." (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, ., 1970). 1–24.e

⁹ C. Peter. Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*. (Ventura: CA: Regal, 1976). 17–39.

¹⁰ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee, 1970–2010* (Accra: Ghana Evangelism Committee, n.d.); Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Vision 2027*, 10–13.

¹¹ Walls, *Missionary Movement*, 3–15; Lamin Sanneh, "Translating the Message," *The Missionary Impact on Culture* 2 (1989); Dana L. Robert, *Christian Mission* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); Ogbu U. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Johnson Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2013); Esther Acolatse, *For Freedom or Bondage?: A Critique of African Pastoral Practices* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014).

¹² Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 252–67.

the study of local Christian histories, practices, and interpretive agency.¹³ Tilson's recent work on "entanglement" in mission history similarly shows that mission should be studied through complex interactions, local adaptations, and mutual influences rather than through one-directional narratives.¹⁴ These recent discussions strengthen the argument of this article: GEC's research tradition should not be read as a minor administrative activity but as a Ghanaian Christian contribution to mission knowledge, strategic discernment, and the interpretation of the unfinished task.

Ecumenical Cooperation and Shared Mission Intelligence

Another significant interpretive horizon is the literature on ecumenical mission. Lesslie Newbigin held that Christian division undermines witness and that common mission urges the church to take the shape of visible cooperation.¹⁵ Bosch also argued that mission has ecumenical logic, since it embodies the oneness of God's redemptive purpose.¹⁶ Ecumenical scholarship, however, tends to emphasise more than common intelligence or a doctrinal conversation. Practically, a collaborative mission can be reliant on shared information. Here, it is useful to distinguish between bonding and bridging social capital, as Robert Putnam does. Denominations create solidarity within them, whereas interdenominational organisations can build a bridge capacity by establishing a common language, sharing information, and jointly addressing shared problems.¹⁷ In that regard, GEC's research activity can be interpreted as both strategic mission work and an ecumenical good.

Catalytic Institutions and Indirect Mission Influence

The last piece of literature pertinent to this paper concerns the nature of catalytic institutions. Not all mission bodies have an equal impact in the field. Some of them do it through direct programme control; others through mediation, facilitation, knowledge generation, and strategic convening. Within the archival resources of the GEC, the Committee is mentioned several times as a catalyst whose work involves researching the Task, publishing information, orienting leaders and presenting findings to be implemented by the churches.¹⁸ This implies that mission intelligence does not lie at the edges of GEC's institutional identity. It is among the major ways in which the catalytic mission is practised.

METHODOLOGY

This study was a qualitative institutional case study that examined the research and strategic intelligence role of the Ghana Evangelism Committee. The objective was explanatory and interpretive rather than statistical. The study aimed to examine how research came about in GEC, how it evolved over the years, how it operated within the institution, and how it contributed to the Committee's catalytic mission.¹⁹

It was situated within an interpretivist paradigm. Mission research, strategic intelligence, unfinished-task thinking, and church-distribution analysis were not just treated as technical outputs but as meaning-bearing institutional practices. Thus, GEC was regarded as a historical institution, a theological actor, an ecumenical platform, and a catalytic mission body.²⁰

Three broad categories of sources were used in the article. To begin with, archival and institutional materials: the Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee, the 50th Anniversary Brochure, Vision 2027, the 2022 Mid-Year General Report, the 2023 GEC Annual Report, and the 2016 and 2017 meeting materials. Second, GEC's survey materials were considered strategic

¹³ Emma Wild-Wood, "Studying World Christianity," *Religious Studies Review* 50, no. 2 (2024): 273–78.

¹⁴ Kate Tilson, "'Entanglement' as a Concept in Recent Research on Christian Missions in the South Pacific and Africa," *History Compass* 22, no. 7 (2024): e12815.

¹⁵ Lesslie. Newbigin, *The Household of God* (London: SCM Press, 1953). 147–62.

¹⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 463–74.

¹⁷ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000). 22–24.

¹⁸ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Vision 2027*, 31–32.

¹⁹ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2017), 15–18.

²⁰ Michael Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research* (London: Sage Publications, 1998); John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2018). 181–83.

primary data in their own right. Third, institutional memory and interpretive nuance were recovered through the testimony of long-serving leaders and officials, all of whom were listed under pseudonyms.²¹

Semi-structured interviews with twelve purposively selected participants who knew GEC's history, leadership, programmes, institutional development, ecumenical relationships or partner networks were undertaken. Participants were selected through purposive sampling because the study required information-rich respondents rather than a statistically representative sample. The selection criteria included one or more of the following: direct involvement in GEC's leadership or administration; long-term association with GEC's programmes; participation in denominational, ecumenical, or para-church structures connected to GEC; knowledge of early training systems, survey work, or mission mobilisation; and ability to provide historical or institutional memory relevant to the period under study. Therefore, the participants included current and former GEC leaders, staff, steering committee members, church leaders, and representatives of partner organisations.

Ethical procedures were followed throughout the study as clearance was secured from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HuSSREC) of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) – Kumasi, Ghana. Again, informed consent was obtained from all participants before interviews. The participants were briefed about the research purpose, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. To safeguard confidentiality, participants were assigned codes and pseudonyms to replace real names, particularly since some participants held recognisable leadership or institutional positions. Using pseudonyms helped preserve participant anonymity while still capturing their perspectives.

The data were analysed through thematic coding. The process began with repeated reading of interview transcripts, archival documents, survey reports, annual reports, strategic plans, and institutional publications to become familiar with the full dataset. The initial open codes were then developed from recurring words, ideas, and institutional concerns in the materials. These included codes such as “unfinished task,” “survey as diagnosis,” “church distribution,” “unreached people groups,” “research dissemination,” “urban migration,” “communities without churches,” “ecumenical consultation,” and “research as mission service.” These initial codes were later grouped into broader analytical themes, including mission research as strategic intelligence, research as catalytic mobilisation, research as ecumenical service, and research as unfinished-task consciousness. The coding process was iterative: themes were refined as the documentary and interview evidence were compared. Interview data were not treated in isolation but were checked against institutional records and survey materials. This triangulation helped to distinguish personal memory from repeatedly corroborated institutional evidence. Only themes directly relevant to GEC's research and strategic intelligence role were retained for discussion.

The analysis therefore moved from descriptive coding to interpretive thematic analysis, allowing the article to explain not only what GEC did but also how research functioned within its wider catalytic mission identity.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Research emerged from Missionary Concern, not from Academic Curiosity

The initial significant conclusion is that missionary interest, rather than a remote academic interest, led to research in GEC. New Life for All, pastoral retreats, literature production, radio communication, prayer mobilisation and interdenominational evangelistic coordination dominated the early decades of GEC. However, the very success of these activities created a greater challenge: If the churches were to disciple the entire nation, how would they know where they were? Which locations already had churches? At what places were they not? What were the communities that were not churchled? What were the areas that were feeble in Christian testimony, and how could aspiration for church planting be

²¹ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones*; Ghana Evangelism Committee, *50th Anniversary Brochure*; Ghana Evangelism Committee, *2023 GEC Annual Report*.

translated into a concrete, measurable strategy? Research was thus not a withdrawal of evangelisation. It was the strategic maturation of evangelisation.²²

Of particular importance here is the milestone record. It reports that, in September 1984, the National Director submitted a paper on thirty-five unreached people groups in Ghana, the majority of which were associated with traditional homelands in Ghana's northern region. Subsequently, a directory detailing these people, their languages and religions was produced as a result of this focus.²³ This implies that even before the National Church Survey came of age, GEC had outgrown the generalised mode of evangelistic activation and moved to an organised approach to people, places and missionary gaps.

The National Church Survey Tradition Translated Vision into a Measurable Task

The second key observation is that the National Church Survey tradition provided GEC with a method for transforming a general missionary vision into measurable strategic tasks. Vision 2027 makes it clear that, in 1984, GEC resolved to define its vision and goals, determine how it would reach the unreached, make the goal of evangelisation quantifiable, and know how much work remained to complete the task of evangelisation. It then states that in 1989, the Committee conducted a Survey of the National Church, and a follow-up Survey in 1993. The first survey was said to give a *still* picture, whereas the second gave a *moving* picture of the direction the church was taking.²⁴

The milestone document is even more detailed. It documents the 1985 Brong Ahafo launch of the Church Survey programme, the regional surveys that followed in 1986 and 1987, and the presentation of results at five-day regional congresses. It further observes that between 1985 and 1989, major personnel and denominational leaders were taken to the United Kingdom to undergo training in church-growth research, cross-cultural mission, and ministry to Muslims, and that this training was closely associated with the creation of the National Church Survey.²⁵

The Unfinished Task became a National Missionary Imagination

A third significant conclusion is that the research tradition of GEC was not just a source of data. It helped to develop a national missionary imagination focused on the unfinished task. The milestone record notes that in June 1989, the first National Consultation on the unfinished task was conducted in Accra, which was aimed at denominational leaders, executive councils, synods, senior ministers, evangelism directors and the leaders of the various ministries; each denominational group held its own meeting to deliberate on the responses. It also documents that, in July 1989, the Ghana National Church Survey was proclaimed at the Lausanne Congress in Manila as the first in-depth national survey of the unfinished task worldwide, and that GEC personnel were then invited to Sierra Leone and Liberia to assist in carrying out national surveys there.²⁶

This was further refined by the second National Consultation in June 1993. The milestone record indicates that executive councils, boards, and synod committees of major denominations participated, held daily afternoon meetings to discuss challenges in the survey, and produced minutes and action plans that attested to the decisive influence of the National Church Survey on major denominations in Ghana. It goes so far as to declare that several major denominations and ministries began to reorganise and redeploy as a result of the survey and consultation.²⁷

Research and Survey Work functioned as an Ecumenical Mission Service

Fourth, a key discovery is that GEC's research activity was an ecumenical service to the churches. Strategic documents have always used research findings as a resource to share with churches and parachurch organisations, rather than as an institutional asset to be safeguarded. Vision 2027 undertakes

²² Ghana Evangelism Committee, *50th Anniversary Brochure*, historical section; Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Vision 2027*, 10–13.

²³ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones*, entry for September 1984.

²⁴ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Vision 2027*, 10–13.

²⁵ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones*, entries for 1985–1989.

²⁶ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones*, entries for June and July 1989.

²⁷ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones*, entry for June 1993.

that GEC will maintain a survey of initiated but unfinished tasks, enhance the research team, continue the survey of UPG, reintroduce the UPG document, *The Task* magazine, and strategically and deliberately make the findings and recommendations of its research work available for implementation by churches and para-church organisations.²⁸

This ecumenical rationale is also affirmed in the 2016 AGM report, which states that GEC is the brainchild of the Churches, owned by the Churches, to serve the Churches, and celebrates the encouragement of church leaders, parachurch institutions, and representatives in the quest for a united and thriving church in Ghana.²⁹

UPG Research Marked a Major Strategic Deepening

A fifth key discovery is that GEC's strategic intelligence continued to mature, with an emphasis on unreached people groups. Vision 2027 specifically notes that, by 2020, GEC conducted an impressive survey of Unreached People Groups (UPGs) in Ghana, providing churches with ample information on the best way to evangelise the country. Next, it outlines further UPG research as one of the key points of the research strategy from 2023 to 2027.³⁰

This is important because it shifts the general church-distribution analysis toward a narrower people-group emphasis. The church no longer asking questions about where churches are. Another question it poses is who is weakly reached, how populations are dispersed, and what kind of targeted evangelism will be necessary. This development had been prefigured in 1984 with the article on thirty-five unreached people groups and the subsequent journal article on peoples, languages and religion in northern Ghana.³¹

Contemporary Strategic Intelligence has expanded to Urban Migration, Church Distribution, and Census Analysis

The sixth significant discovery is that the recent research in GEC has expanded as a result of social change. The 2022 Mid-Year General Report is particularly eye-opening. It mentions that following the release of the UPG report, the survey team established four additional research domains: UPGs in urban centres, communities without churches in Ghana, church distribution in Ghana, and the interpretation of the recent national census. It states that many UPGs had moved to urban centres from their traditional homelands and needed to be researched and documented there. It also notes that some communities lacked churches, even though UPGs might not necessarily dominate them, and that national data on the distribution of churches could help churches identify areas of greater density and weaker strength to guide church-planting policies.³²

This is among the most strategically advanced developments in GEC's history. It suggests a transition from the territoriality of missions to a more mobile, demographic concept of mission. UPGs exist not only in ancestral homelands but also in cities. Societies that lack churches do not always fit into the traditional UPG types. Church density matters. Census interpretation matters. Migration matters. Urbanity matters.

The Research Team was Institutionalised, Budgeted, and Operationally Planned

The seventh major finding is that the role of research in GEC has become institutionalised and not left to ad hoc enthusiasm. The 2023 Annual Report documents the establishment of a special Research Team, whose members have pastoral, academic, and ecclesial backgrounds. It also includes a comprehensive proposal for the Third National Church Survey, covering goals, methods, ethics, timeline, pilot testing, volunteer recruitment, software, reporting, and publication.³³

²⁸ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Vision 2027*, 31–32.

²⁹ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *2016 GEC Annual General Meeting*, National Director's report.

³⁰ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Vision 2027*, 31–32.

³¹ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones*, entry for September 1984.

³² Ghana Evangelism Committee, *2022 Mid-Year General Report*, sec. 3.4, "Progress Report – GEC Survey Team."

³³ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *2023 GEC Annual Report*, research team and Third National Church Survey proposal sections.

This is a highly significant development, as it demonstrates that mission intelligence has become administratively and financially conspicuous within GEC. Research is not merely recalled as belonging to the past; it is planned, funded, and organised as part of the institution's present life. A more ambitious current framework of demographic, socio-economic, technological, and cultural change is also evident in the survey proposal, and it necessitates a new interpretation of the church's role in Ghana.³⁴

Interviews and Institutional Memory Confirm that Research was seen as Mission-Critical

An eighth key finding is that interview memory confirms the centrality of research to GEC's missionary identity. The interviews do not present research as an academic luxury or as an activity detached from evangelism. Rather, different categories of respondents remember research as a practical missionary tool that allowed churches to identify needs, recognise unreached areas, understand weak Christian presence, and plan church planting more deliberately. In this sense, interview testimony confirms the documentary evidence that GEC's research function was not marginal to its work but integral to its catalytic mission.

The former staff voices are especially important because they connect research directly to GEC's operational experience. IP06 (Miss Hannah), a former GEC official, recalls that research emerged because the churches needed more than mobilisation through New Life for All; they also needed knowledge of the missionary field, especially in relation to northern populations and underserved areas. IP07 (Miss Gifty), a GEC official, similarly links the survey tradition to the practical need to know where churches were present and where they were absent. Their accounts show that the research was born out of evangelistic necessity: churches could not meaningfully speak of discipling the whole nation without knowing which communities, regions and people groups remained weakly reached.³⁵

The same point is confirmed by voices outside the immediate staff circle. IP04 (Dr. Agyei), a missionary and senior lecturer, IP09 (Ps. Main), a former denominational and ecumenical leader, and IP10 (Ps. Dan), a church leader, all describe GEC's research and survey work as part of the wider process by which churches were equipped for mission. Their evidence is important because it shows that the value of research was not forgotten by only internal staff. It was also recognised by denominational, missionary, and church leadership voices who saw GEC's survey work as a way of helping churches move from general evangelistic enthusiasm to informed action.³⁶

Other participants further deepen this point by stressing the strategic and catalytic value of research. IP03 (Ps. Luke), IP05 (Mr. Adu), IP08 (Mr. Attah), IP09 (Ps. Main), and IP11 (Ps. Ken) describe research as a tool that helped churches identify mission needs, unreached areas, weak Christian presence, and places requiring church planting. Their combined testimony shows that research functioned as the informational mechanism through which GEC translated missionary concern into strategic action. It was not enough for churches to desire evangelisation; they needed a map of the field, a diagnosis of gaps, and a basis for coordinated planning.³⁷

The interview matrix also suggests that stakeholders valued GEC's research function as part of its wider catalytic identity. Throughout the interviews, participants appreciated GEC not only for bringing churches together and promoting evangelism and discipleship, but also for providing strategy and maintaining focus on the Great Commission. IP01 (Ps. Jones) emphasises GEC's original whole-church vision; IP09 (Ps. Main) highlights its promotion of interdenominational convergence; IP08 (Mr. Attah) values its capacity for planning and partnerships; IP11 (Ps. Ken) appreciates its broad Christian identity; and IP10 (Ps. Dan) recognises its catalytic influence. These perspectives show that the value of

³⁴ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *2023 GEC Annual Report*, survey proposal and rationale sections.

³⁵ Interview with IP06 (Miss Hannah, pseudonym), Former GEC Official, 2025; Interview with IP07 (Miss Gifty, pseudonym), GEC Official, Accra, 2026.

³⁶ Interview with IP04 (Dr. Agyei, pseudonym), Missionary and Senior Lecturer, Kumasi, 2025; Interview with IP09 (Ps. Main, pseudonym), Former Denominational and Ecumenical Leader, Kumasi, 2025; Interview with IP10 (Ps. Dan, pseudonym), Church Leader, 2026.

³⁷ Interview with IP03 (Ps. Luke, pseudonym), Steering Committee Member, Accra, 2026; Interview with IP05 (Mr. Adu, pseudonym), GEC Official, Accra, 2026; Interview with IP08 (Mr. Attah, pseudonym), Former Leader of Partner Organisations, 2026; Interview with IP09 (Ps. Main, pseudonym), Kumasi, 2025; Interview with IP11 (Ps. Ken, pseudonym), Former Denominational and Ecumenical Leader, 2025.

GEC was not confined to any single programme. Its importance lay in the relational and strategic space it created for churches to understand national evangelisation as a shared responsibility.³⁸

This range of voices is analytically important. It prevents the article from relying only on official GEC documents or on the memories of internal staff. Former officials, current officials, missionaries, denominational leaders, ecumenical figures, church leaders, and partner-related voices all converge around the same point: research helped GEC serve the churches by making the missionary field visible. Therefore, the interviews confirm that GEC's research tradition was not a secondary administrative exercise. It was a mission-critical practice through which the Committee helped churches see where the Great Commission still required attention.

At the same time, the interviews also imply that research becomes catalytic only when it is received and acted upon by churches. Since GEC does not control denominational mission departments, its research influence depends on whether churches, leaders, and partner organisations take the findings seriously. This reinforces the article's broader argument that GEC's research role is best understood as mediated influence rather than direct control. The contribution of the Committee lies in diagnosis, interpretation, dissemination, consultation, and strategic persuasion.

Research, Publication, and Dissemination as a Single Mission Process

A ninth key finding is that research, publication and dissemination are not undertaken as distinct activities in GEC. Vision 2027 includes conducting surveys, publishing the findings, relaunching the UPG document, relaunching The Task magazine, and strategically making the research findings accessible to churches and para-church organisations.³⁹ In GEC's 2016 and 2017 Annual General Meeting reports, mention is made of the reintroduction of The Task and the New Survey Project as part of missional operations.⁴⁰

This is institutionally important. Research will only become catalytic when its results are spread out. A survey that is not read mobilises not. An interpretation of findings can take the form of a magazine article, a seminar, a publication, or a consultation. GEC seems to know this; its literature strategy, thus, is not independent of its research strategy; it is a method that makes research missionally intelligent.⁴¹

DISCUSSION

The results of this research can provoke a broader reflection on the role of research and strategic intelligence in Christian mission, particularly in African interdenominational institutions. They propose that the role of the Ghana Evangelism Committee (GEC) cannot be adequately explained when mission is perceived solely in terms of preaching campaigns, church-planting events, or even visible evangelistic programmes. Instead, the history of GEC shows that mission too requires the disciplined kinds of discernment by which the church comes to see the field in a truer light, to judge it in a more critical light, and to act upon it in a more motivated way. In this regard, the school of GEC research highlights something significant not just about the institution per se, but about the broader nexus between missionary obedience, ecclesial intelligence, and strategic coordination.

Research as Missionary Discernment

The initial significant implication is theological. The evidence suggests that research and strategic intelligence are not hostile to mission but are practices of discerning mission. When the Great

³⁸ Interview with IP01 (Ps. Jones, pseudonym), Former Steering Committee Member and Leader of a Partner Organisation, Accra, 2026; Interview with IP08 (Mr. Attah, pseudonym), 2026; Interview with IP09 (Ps. Main, pseudonym), Kumasi, 2025; Interview with IP10 (Ps. Dan, pseudonym), 2026; Interview with IP11 (Ps. Ken, pseudonym), 2025.

³⁹ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Vision 2027*, 31–32.

⁴⁰ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *GEC Half Year General Committee Meeting, 5th July 2017* (Accra: GEC Archive, 2017); Ghana Evangelism Committee, *2016 GEC Annual General Meeting*; Carol H Weiss, "The Many Meanings of Research Utilization," in *Social Science and Social Policy* (Routledge, 2021), 31–40.; Sandra M Nutley, Isabel Walter, and Huw T O Davies, "Using Evidence," *How Research Can Inform Public Services*, 2007; Everett Rogers, "Diffusion of Innovations 5th" (Free press, 2003).

⁴¹ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Vision 2027*, 31–32; Ghana Evangelism Committee, *National Church Survey: Facing the Unfinished Task of the Church in Ghana* (Accra: Ghana Evangelism Committee, 1989) 5, 10–11; Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Research on Unreached People Groups in Ghana* (Accra: Ghana Evangelism Committee, n.d.).

Commission is comprehended in its broader disciplining sense, as opposed to its customary interpretation as a limited call to occasional proclamation, the church is obliged to pose concrete questions of itself concerning where it is, where it is not, which peoples are still poorly reached, how social and demographic movements modify the missionary environment, and what kinds of witness are required of it. In that regard, research cannot be considered a secular complement to spiritual work. It is one of the means through which the church tries to be responsible in its obedience. The reading of Matthew 28 by R. T. France is educative here in that he demonstrates that the core of the Great Commission is to make disciples, which is an activity that, according to him, must be sustained, intentional and organised and cannot be just spontaneously announced.⁴² This is further reinforced by David Bosch's description of mission as part of a *missio Dei*: when mission is the redemptive movement of God into history, the church must pay close attention to the historical realities into which it is dispersed.⁴³ The greater biblical theology by Christopher J. H. Wright comes to a similar conclusion, defining mission as involvement in God's purposes toward peoples and nations, which means that the church must not think in abstraction about the field.⁴⁴

From this perspective, the tradition of surveying that runs through GEC sounds like a form of missionary discernment. Its anxiety about the unfinished business, about the distribution of churches, about the community without a church, about urbanised or displaced peoples, should not be understood as an administrative usurpation or the managerial rationality encroaching on the spiritual labour. Instead, these issues are an effort to ensure that mission does not go blind. This research role of the Committee reflects the belief that faithful evangelisation needs a precise focus.

Strategic Intelligence as Catalytic Mission

Second, there is evidence that research has been one of the most significant catalytic influences of GEC. The importance of GEC is not in what it owns directly but in what it allows other bodies to do. This assertion is strongly validated in the research discussion. GEC does not frequently use mission by proprietary control. It does not customarily overtake the denominational evangelism departments or directly own the churches' results. Rather, it assists churches in seeing the missionary field in a new light and, through the nature of its shaping, affects the forms of action they feel they need. Mission intelligence, in this sense, is among the most significant catalytic processes within this institution.

This form of indirect impact deserves close attention, as it remains largely unrecognised in traditional mission effectiveness narratives. Mission history has tended to be more at home with quantifying the visible results, such as churches planted, converts counted, meetings held, than with the strategic conditions which predisposed to such results. However, they are important mainly because catalytic institutions influence circumstances rather than outcomes. A good example is GEC's research function. The Committee contributed to the development of the conceptual field by prompting churches to re-evaluate church planting, the priorities of unfinished tasks, and the necessity of coordinated action, producing surveys, convening consultations, publishing findings, and disseminating strategic information. To that extent, GEC can be viewed as a mediating institution, as some organisational theorists would call it: an entity whose power lies in facilitation, translation, and coordination rather than command.⁴⁵ That is why the recurring self-definition of GEC as a catalyst is not merely rhetoric. It is a true institutional logic. Research is catalytic because it does not end in the office that generates it, but changes the imagination and behaviour of its recipients.

Mission Intelligence as an Ecumenical Good

Third, the results indicate that mission intelligence could serve as an ecumenical good. This is among the most significant and least realised aspects of GEC's inputs. The National Church Survey and the consultations that have followed did not simply inform isolated mission actors. They provided a

⁴² France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1114–20.

⁴³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 389–93.

⁴⁴ Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 62–67, 533–39.

⁴⁵ On institutions that operate through mediation and coordination rather than direct control, see Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications*, 15–18; and compare the GEC's own catalytic self-description in *Evangelism Committee of Ghana (GEC) Vision 2023–2027*.

common image of missionary reality across denominational lines. The survey tradition established a shared sphere of reflection by recognising the work done incompletely in national, rather than narrowly denominational, terms. Denominations were thus allowed not only to coexist or compete, but also to discuss a common missionary issue. In this regard, research as such became an instrument of interdenominational collaboration.

This aspect is worth highlighting since ecumenical literature tends to dwell on doctrinal discussion, observable unity or church-state liaison, and neglects the impact of shared knowledge. However, knowledge can also be ecumenically relevant when it helps churches identify the same challenge and discuss it in the same strategic language. Lesslie Newbigin argued that where divisions in the church obstruct the reconciliation the church is preaching, Christian witness is diminished.⁴⁶ Bosch also asserted that there is an ecumenical logic of mission, since it is born of God's overall purpose rather than of a denomination's interests.⁴⁷ In the GEC, research and consultation helped give practical form to that ecumenical logic. They gave a forum through which various churches challenged the missionary state of affairs in Ghana.

This can also be understood sociologically, as it helps to describe the bonding and bridging social capital outlined by Robert Putnam. Denominations on their own produce bonding capital, whereas interdenominational, cross-ecclesial institutions can produce bridging capital.⁴⁸ The research role of GEC helped with that bridging work by creating a common missionary map. The survey did not eliminate denominational differences; it simply provided the various ecclesial traditions with a common access to the same unfinished-task horizon. It is a significant ecumenical service.

Adaptation to a Changing Missionary Field

Fourth, the shift from surveys of the early church to subsequent UPG research, urban-centre studies, communities without churches, and census interpretation shows that GEC's research imagination has developed in response to a shifting missionary environment. This flexibility is one of the most potent signs of the conceptual relevance of an institution that is still alive. It demonstrates that the Committee was not treating research as a one-time affair or as an established method passed on to a new generation. Rather, it progressively changed its strategic optic to adapt to new realities. Whereas previous survey efforts focused heavily on the presence, growth, and national distribution of churches, more recent efforts have paid greater attention to population mobility, urban migration, under-churched communities, and the distinction between unreached people groups and communities that simply lack churches.

The importance of this broadening lies in its indication of a more mature missiological approach to social change. African Christianity, and Ghanaian Christianity in particular, has become more urban, mobile, and demographically dynamic. The outdated territorial presumptions are no longer adequate. Internal migration, educational movement, economic change, religious plurality, and uneven ecclesial density reform communities. The latest indications of GEC, in terms of their proposals to research urban UPGs, communities without churches, and census patterns, indicate that the institution has come to appreciate that the missionary field is not static. Movement and complexity are reconfiguring it.

In this case, the broader literature on World Christianity is particularly applicable. Andrew Walls, Lamin Sanneh, Dana Robert, and Kwame Bediako all demonstrate, in one way or another, that the spread of Christianity has never been anything other than a process of translation into evolving cultural and social forms.⁴⁹ The new research agenda of GEC can be interpreted as a Ghanaian institutional reaction to such change. It is an effort to maintain missionary intelligence in line with the country's changing social geography.

African Christian Agency and the Production of Mission Knowledge

⁴⁶ Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 147–62.

⁴⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 463–74.

⁴⁸ Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 22–24.

⁴⁹ Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 3–15; Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 1–29; Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion*, 73–108.

The fifth implication is the African Christian agency. The research agenda of the survey tradition and subsequent studies indicates that GEC has not merely imbibed missionary ideas from elsewhere. It has been prolific in creating mission knowledge in Ghana. This constitutes a valuable correction to older accounts that portray African churches as the primary recipients of strategic constructs produced in Europe or North America. The unfinished-task mapping, church survey, and UPG research work of GEC demonstrate how Ghanaian Christian actors make sense of their own field, create their own data, and suggest their own missionary responses.

This argument is closely related to the study of World Christianity and African theology. Bediako maintained that African Christianity should be viewed as a historical, generative fact rather than as a passive derivation of the Western mission.⁵⁰ Ogbu Kalu and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu also demonstrate that African Christianity is institutionally creative and adaptive to strategy.⁵¹ This interpretation is backed up by the GEC case. It shows that African parachurch institutions are not only mobilisation vehicles but also producers of mission intelligence. In that regard, the role of research in GEC must be acknowledged as part of the intellectual history of the African mission, not as a technical side story of evangelistic activity.

The Vulnerability of Strategic Intelligence

Lastly, the evidence also indicates that GEC's research is institutionally vulnerable. Strategic intelligence is costly, time-consuming, and teamwork-intensive, and is readily jeopardised by organisational weaknesses. It relies on trained staff, logistics, data-gathering mechanisms, publishing tools, collaborations, and, most importantly, ecclesial welcome. The sort of survey that is never circulated, never discussed, and never converted into denominational and interdenominational planning is of little catalytic value. That is to say, past success does not guarantee the continued existence of a GEC research tradition. It has to be maintained intentionally.

There are two reasons why this vulnerability is significant. First, it helps us remember that mission research is not self-executing. It requires institutional commitment. Second, it intensifies the paradox that catalytic institutions can be historically important yet physically weak. The research legacy of GEC is an intellectual powerhouse, but its future relies on tangible investments in its personnel, resources, communication and implementation systems. The task, though, is not merely to glorify the National Church Survey tradition, but to ensure that strategic intelligence remains another vital element in GEC's modern mission, not a holy relic.

Limitations of the Study

This study has some limitations. First, it relies substantially on institutional archives produced and preserved by the Ghana Evangelism Committee. Although these documents provide valuable evidence on GEC's programmes, surveys, strategic plans, consultations, and self-understanding, they may preserve the organisation's official memory more strongly than its internal tensions, failures, or contested interpretations. Therefore, the study treats them as important but interpretively situated sources.

Second, the study recognises the possibility of organisational bias. Some documents were produced by GEC or persons closely related to it, while some interviewees also had institutional, denominational, or historical links to the Committee. Therefore, their testimonies were treated as institutional memory, requiring careful interpretation. To reduce this limitation, interview claims were compared with archival records, survey documents, annual reports, strategic plans, and other documentary evidence.

Third, the study does not claim that GEC's research directly caused all later denominational mission decisions in Ghana; rather, it argues that GEC's surveys and unfinished-task materials

⁵⁰ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*, 252–67.

⁵¹ Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction*, 1–28; Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context*, 1–24.

functioned catalytically by making mission gaps visible, discussable, and actionable. The emphasis is therefore on mediated influence rather than direct institutional control.

Finally, the article focuses specifically on GEC's research and strategic intelligence role, not on the full institutional history of the organisation. Other issues, such as finance, leadership transitions, public visibility, and contemporary denominational ownership, require separate treatment. Despite these limitations, the study offers a credible account of how research became one of GEC's major tools for mission mobilisation in Ghana.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a few recommendations based on the findings. To begin with, GEC needs to continue to rebrand mission research as part of its mandate and not a peripheral practice. This is already supported in the current vision documents, but funding, staffing, and ongoing implementation should now support it.

Second, the Third National Church Survey must be undertaken rigorously and with strong denominational involvement. Its success will not be in technical performance but in ecumenical ownership.

Third, the relaunch of The Task magazine, along with the broader publication strategy, should take precedence. Only after research is presented in an accessible and strategic manner to churches, mission bodies, and Christian leaders does it become catalytic.

Fourth, the GEC should improve partnerships with universities, seminaries, the Ghana Statistical Service, the Office of the Registrar of Companies, and Christian research networks. This would improve the technical quality and institutional credibility.

Fifth, national and denominational consultations must always be conducted after research outputs are produced so that findings can be put into action. The unfinished task consultations of 1989 and 1993 are still a valuable paradigm for this.

Sixth, urban mission, migration, communities without churches, and denominational density must continue to be areas of focus, as these realities seem to be gaining greater significance in Ghana's future missionary landscape.

CONCLUSION

This paper has asserted that research and strategic intelligence are more central than peripheral to the missionary history of the Ghana Evangelism Committee. From the early tradition of the National Church Survey to subsequent UPG work and modern proposals on analysing church distribution and urban mission, GEC has often sought to help the churches of Ghana see the field more clearly and respond to it more strategically.

Evidence demonstrates that the research activity at GEC has several functions simultaneously: diagnosis, strategic intelligibility, ecumenical consultation, dissemination of mission knowledge, and mobilisation catalyst. It shows that one of the greatest ways a parachurch body can serve the wider church is to make the unfinished task visible, discussable, and actionable. That way, GEC research is not only technical but also institutionalised missionary discernment.

In the case of mission studies, African Christian institutions have not only evangelised and planted churches but also created their own mission-knowledge traditions. Literature on para-church organisations indicates that catalytic influence is exercised as much by information and interpretation as by direct programming. And in the history of Christianity in Ghana, it attests that the value of GEC lies not merely in its initial successes in evangelism, but in its long struggle to make the churches realise where the Great Commission still summons them to go.

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