The Northeast Brazil Union (NEBUM) is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the territory of the South American Division (SAD). It is based at José Bezerra de Albuquerque, 210, CEP 54315-580, in Jardim Jordão neighborhood, in the municipality of Jaboatão dos Guararapes, in the state of Pernambuco, Brazil.

The missionary territory of NEBUM covers the states of Alagoas, Pernambuco, Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte, Ceará, and Piauí. This 245,445,041 sq. mi. (635,699,737 km²) territory is home to approximately 32 million inhabitants, a quarter of the Brazilian population. Among the five regions in the country, this is the one with the third largest economy with agriculture, vegetal and mineral extraction, and strong tourism. Among the inhabitants of the territory, there are 206,331 Adventists meeting in 1,004 churches in the fields of the Ceará Conference, Pernambuco Conference, Central Pernambuco Conference, Alagoas Mission, Northeast Brazil Mission, and Piauí Mission. There is about one Adventist per 158 people across this region.

Currently, NEBUM has about 100,869 members enrolled in Sabbath School representing approximately 48 percent of
NEBUM also has 1,351 Pathfinder Clubs with around 33 thousand participants and 704 Adventurer Clubs with almost 15 thousand members. In addition, inhabitants of the states covered by NEBUM can watch Hope Channel Brazil through five retransmission channels located in the cities of Recife, Palmares, Maceió, João Pessoa, and Fortaleza.

NEBUM manages two ADRA Development Centers in the state of Rio Grande do Norte (RN). One of them is located at Serra João do Vale, 41, in the Nova Parnamirim neighborhood, in the city of Parnamirim. And the other is at Araçá, 199, in downtown Apodi. Also in the area of social assistance, the Potyrom Center (“Mãos que se unem para ajudar” [Hands that join to help]), a support center for homeless people in the state of Ceará is located at Martinópolis, 81, in the Benfica neighborhood, in the city of Fortaleza, capital of the state.

In addition to these, there are centers of influence in the cities of Caruaru, Recife, and Olinda, in the state of Pernambuco; in Fortaleza, Ceará, in Natal, in Rio Grande do Norte; in João Pessoa, Paraíba; in Teresina, Piauí; and in Maceió, in the state of Alagoas. All of these also function as Adventist churches and serve the community by promoting workshops and events that work as part of the evangelism strategy.

For the smooth running of the work, NEBUM has 76 servers. Among them, there are seven ordained pastors who work directly at the administrative headquarters and two other pastors who work at Pernambuco Adventist Academy, one of whom is ordained.

### Organizational History

Until 1995, the country of Brazil was organized into four unions: South Brazil Union, Central Brazil Union, East Brazil Union, and North Brazil Union. However, that year the creation of the Northeast Brazil Union Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (NEBUM) was authorized through action 95-323. The commission that authorized this new formation took place between November 27 and December 6, 1995. It was agreed to reorganize East Brazil Union and North Brazil Union to create a new union mission composed of the Bahia Conference, the Sergipe-Alagoas Missão (now the Sergipe Mission), the Northeast Brazil Mission, and the North Coast Mission (now Ceará Conference). Thus, the progress of the work in the states of Piauí, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Alagoas, Sergipe, and Bahia came under the administrative care of NEBUM.

In the territory in which NEBUM was established, there were 489 organized churches and 131,463 Adventists among almost 39 million people (an average of one Adventist per 295 people). In about a hundred years since Adventism arrived in that region, the Seventh-day Adventist Church had reached, by the grace of God, 900 cities in the territory. However, although the evangelistic advance was significant in all the states that were part of the union, there were still many challenges to be overcome. An example was the almost 1,000 cities that were still without any Adventist presence.

The improvised headquarters of the new union mission was at Estrada de Belém, 885, Campo Grande, in the city of Recife, capital of the state of Pernambuco. The commission appointed by the South American Division (SAD) also deliberated on the first NEBUM leaders. Thus, through action 95-333, the following administrators were elected: Helder Roger C. Silva as president and Ivo de Azevedo Vasconcelos as secretary and treasurer. Its first executive session took place on December 5, 1995, with Helder Roger Cavalcanti Silva, Ivo de Azevedo Vasconcelos, Alípio B. da Rosa, Erich Olm, Gustavo Pires da Silva, José Elias Zanoteli, Ruy H. Nagel, Samuel Ramos, and Zeferino Stabnov being present. Guests Carlos Alberto Rosa de Oliveira, Clóvis Ferreira Bunzen Júnior, and Josemir Azevedo were also present.

NEBUM started its activities on January 1st, 1996. Since its foundation, the declared mission of this administrative unit of the Church has been “to make disciples of Jesus Christ who live as His witnesses of love and proclaim to all people the eternal gospel of the three angels message in preparation for His soon return.” In its first year of existence, NEBUM baptized 18,423 people, 85.5 percent of the proposed target. In the North Coast Conference, the target was exceeded by 7 percent and in the Sergipe-Alagoas Mission, by 2 percent. The Northeast Mission reached 85.3 percent and the Bahia Conference 75.01 percent of their respective targets.

The initial phase was marked by the formation of new leaders. Based on research among 500 Northeastern Union Adventist members, the decision made was that administrative departments should have 50 percent lay members. The research also showed there was a need to improve some aspects of the work, namely unity, integration, communication, information, and planning. Another aspect highlighted by the interviewees was better preparation of the pastors for the realities of the region, including topics such as the orientation of young people, pastoral visitation, and observance of the health message.
The 1997 research culminated in the first District Leaders Training Meeting. About 500 people participated in the meeting held between March 20 and 23 in Maceió, capital of the state of Alagoas. The concerns for the union were answered and in response a small group model emerged, which became a very efficient form of interaction and evangelism. Similarly, in the city of João Pessoa, about 70 percent of active members in the small groups were people who came back to the church as a result of this type of work. This was an important milestone in the way NEBUM started to evangelize.

Another memorable event in the history of this union was holding its first camporee for Pathfinders in the union, with the theme “Sempre Vencendo” [Always Winning]. This event was held in the city of Feira de Santana, in the state of Bahia, between November 11 and 15, 1999. On the other hand, the union experienced a significant financial loss on August 1, 2000, when Northeast Brazil Academy (ENA) was seriously damaged by a flood. Estimated losses were approximately US$ 250,000 (R$ 1 million). The report by civil engineer Nicanor dos Santos Modesto, who NEBUM sent to investigate and assess the damage, stated that ENA’s geographic position was one of the factors that contributed to the calamity that took place.

The academy was in a valley surrounded by hills and the Panelas Stream encircled the academy in the shape of a “u.” The erosion process widened the stream by 150 meters and destroyed three bridges that connected the schoolyard with the teachers’ homes, between the sanitation network and the electrical installations and among other annexes that no longer exist. Interestingly, the chapel building protected other buildings from even greater damage. However, a hole approximately 13 feet (4 meters) in diameter was made in one of the walls of the chapel and all the benches and the piano were dragged downstream.

After the catastrophe, pastor Enilson Pedreira (college chaplain and restoration coordinator), held a meeting with all the administrative leadership and the church elders. During the meeting, the decision was reached was to transform ENA into the Adventist Training and Recreation Center (CATRE). That decision ended the school's 57-year history.

Other facilities were built in the state of Bahia, where Bahia Adventist College (FADBA) still operates today. The fact that the area where FADBA is located later became part of the territory of the East Brazil Union created the need to establish a boarding school in NEBUM territory. This need was met with the construction of Pernambucano Adventist Academy.

With further advancement of the work, in 1999 the Pernambucana and Bahia Sul Conferences were created. The following year, the Adventist Church in Northeast Brazil already had 191,000 members in 154 pastoral districts and was present in 58 percent of the northeastern cities. In fact, in the first five years of NEBUM’s existence, around 103,000 new members were baptized. Another highlight of this five-year period was the completion of Maceió Adventist Academy, with 32,292 sq. ft. (3,000 m²) of floor space, which the Ministry of Education of Brazil considered the most modern school in the state at the time.

That same year, an SAD executive meeting, held between December 4 and 6, named pastors who would be the next leaders of NEBUM. They were: Helder Roger Cavalcanti Silva as president, Jair Garcia Gois as secretary, and Ivo de Azevedo Vasconcelos as treasurer. During another meeting, which took place from December 18 to 20, 2000, the opening of six new Adventist churches was celebrated in the city of Juazeiro do Norte, in the state of Ceará, the land of the late Father Cicero (a well-known Catholic priest of great social, political, and religious influence in the Northeast Region). Nevertheless, amid the challenges of such stancheness, the eternal gospel has advanced, and the Northeast Union has jumped from 84 to 146 cities with an Adventist presence.

Later, between June 19 and 24, 2003, the second NEBUM Pathfinder camporee took place. The city of Aracaju, in the state of Sergipe, hosted the event that brought together 8,500 Pathfinders. Adventist youth blessed the city by planting trees, cleaning Atalaia beach, donating blood, distributing 1,500 food baskets to needy communities, and a march to fight drug use and violence. In the following year (2004), the Bahia Central Mission was created. The Adventist message continued to advance on northeastern soil.

Among the main missionary movements developed in the Northeast Union territory, the Caleb Mission Project stands out. The first project in NEBUM happened in 2007 when the number of volunteers surprised even the most optimistic forecasts. The initial target was to form a team of 100 young Adventists from across the northeast, but instead 545 young people joined the program. Each student received a missionary kit with sermon guides, a Bible, Bible studies, and other evangelistic tools. The cost of transportation to the assigned site was paid by each volunteer, while the lodging and food were provided by the local churches. This first evangelistic advance lasted 30 days. They preached at night and visited those interested during the day.

At the end of the vacation period, the work carried out at the 48 missionary sites chosen by the organizers of the Caleb Mission resulted in 2,421 baptisms and another 12,100 people heard the Adventist message. This great success marked the beginning of one of the world’s largest youth evangelism projects. Currently, missionaries from eight South American countries dedicate their January and/or July vacation to “Salvation and Service.” These volunteers form an army of more than 33,000 people who carry the message of hope throughout the South American Division.

Another evangelistic project widely held in the territory covered by the Northeast Brazil Union is Hope Impact. In 2010, through this project, about 2 million missionary books were distributed to the community. This is one of the ways in which the gospel has been preached and the mission has been fulfilled. However, these are not the only evangelistic programs that take place in the Northeast Union.

In addition to the programs already mentioned, other projects such as One Year in Mission (OYIM), Holy Week,
Over the years and through the experiences transmitted from one administration to another, the leadership and the number of converts that know the Church through Adventist friends have increased. The strengthening of ties between church members, greater involvement in the mission and, consequently, the growth in Adventists were involved in the process of discipleship by this means. All this engagement has provided the basis for the development of small groups.

In the first quarter of 2019, NEBUM counted 7,776 small groups. Up to this point, about 80 percent of northeastern Brazil were planted in the territory covered by NEBUM.

In 2017, there were 22,144 baptisms throughout NEBUM. The following year, 21,968 people were baptized in this area. The number of baptisms has been gradually increasing, with a target of 1,000 congregations in the 650 cities that did not yet have an Adventist presence. However, the growth of Adventists in NEBUM required structural and administrative changes in early 2011. Sergipe-Alagoas Mission divided into two missions: Alagoas Mission that began operating on January 1st, 2011, following the recommendations of a survey and approved by actions 2009-020 and 2010-022 of NEBUM, and Sergipe Mission. Also in 2011, Bahia Central and North Coast Missions were converted into conferences and the Southwest Bahia Mission was created from the reorganization of the territory of South Bahia Conference.

Regarding evangelistic contacts, on April 16, 2011, the "Amigos da Esperança" (Friends of Hope) project took place. About 50,000 non-Adventist invited guests visited 3,320 churches and another 46,000 were invited home to lunch in 23,000 Adventist homes that were willing to share their faith and spend pleasant moments together. The schedule of this special day was prepared months in advance, had multimedia support, and dissemination materials were made available to church members.

At this missionary pace, the growth of Adventists in NEBUM required structural and administrative changes in early 2011. Sergipe-Alagoas Mission divided into two missions: Alagoas Mission that began operating on January 1st, 2011, following the recommendations of a survey and approved by actions 2009-020 and 2010-022 of NEBUM, and Sergipe Mission. Also in 2011, Bahia Central and North Coast Missions were converted into conferences and the Southwest Bahia Mission was created from the reorganization of the territory of South Bahia Conference.

Other changes were made after a reorganization meeting that took place on November 11, 2012. At this meeting it was decided that NEBUM would be divided and that a new union would be established, the East Brazil Union. This new union started operating on January 1, 2013, in accordance with NEBUM actions 2010-071 (request for a survey) and 2011-094 (record of the recommendations proposed by the survey). At that time, the states of Bahia and Sergipe became the territory for the East Brazil Union, and the remaining states made up NEBUM’s territory.

Also in 2013, the Central Pernambuco Mission had its status changed to conference As the administrative reorganizations occurred, which further enhanced the evangelistic pace, 2014 saw 23,662 new Adventists and in 2015, 25,574 baptisms were celebrated in NEBUM.

A further reorganization was needed in 2016 when the former North Coast Conference was renamed to Ceará Conference and had its territory divided with the state of Piauí becoming the territory for the new Piauí Mission. That year, the eight countries of South America celebrated "Small Group Assemblies." There was an emphasis on serving others that revitalized the proposal of small groups and has since attracted new generations to the project. Due to this, and other evangelistic initiatives, at the end of 2016, 26,826 baptisms were recorded throughout NEBUM.

In the midst of this missionary activity, the fourth Pathfinder Camporee of this union took place between November 15 and 19, 2017, with the title "INABALÁVEL - do Poço ao Palácio" (UNSHAKABLE – from The Well to the Palace). The event brought together about 10,000 Pathfinders and leaders in the city of Paramirim again, in the same exhibition park where the previous camporee had taken place.

In 2017, there were 22,144 baptisms throughout NEBUM. The following year, 21,968 people were baptized in this region. In the first quarter of 2019, NEBUM counted 7,776 small groups. Up to this point, about 80 percent of northeastern Adventists were involved in the process of discipleship by this means. All this engagement has provided the strengthening of ties between church members, greater involvement in the mission and, consequently, the growth in the number of converts that know the Church through Adventist friends.

Over the years and through the experiences transmitted from one administration to another, the leadership and
members of NEBUM, even in view of the success achieved, have been cognizant of the fact that the Church cannot limit its focus to programs and events. There is a risk of performing the best worship service schedules, but the church isn’t edified, doing many things to just fill a calendar. Members need to be involved in a continuous process of discipleship, where people frequently come to the church to celebrate what they live and do daily for the mission. However, the biggest challenge facing the field is asset expansion. The costs for the implementation of churches have been very high because real estate in the northeast region, especially in coastal areas, is extremely expensive, and can cost up to R$ 4 million (about US$1 million). The same reality is noted when it comes to buying land for school construction. Despite the challenges, a trend has become noticeable in NEBUM over the years: the strong involvement of members, including young people, on evangelistic fronts. An example of this is that there are currently 1,351 Pathfinder Clubs throughout the union, a number that exceeds even the number of churches in the region, which is 1,004 congregations.

In the coming years, the NEBUM administration plans to involve all churches in the field in the process of discipleship through the various evangelistic programs provided for this purpose. Currently, an average of 25,000 baptisms per year has been achieved, among other reasons, by the high rate of members (about 80 percent) being actively involved in the Church's mission. However, with the target of 100 percent member involvement in the mission, NEBUM leadership expects to see 60,000 Bible studies per week and at least 30,000 baptisms per year.

Chronology of Administrative Officers:


SOURCES

ADRA. https://adra.org.br/.


Minutes of the South American Division. South American Division archives, Brasilia, DF, Brazil.


NOTES


3. Talita Nascimento (Executive Secretary of NEBUM), email message to the author, July 5, 2019.

4. The pathfinder club consists of "boys and girls aged between 10 and 15 years, of different social classes, color, religion. They meet in general once a week to learn how to develop talents, skills, perceptions and a taste for nature." These boys and girls "thrive with outdoor activities. They like camping, hiking, climbing, explorations in the woods and caves. They can cook outdoors, make fire without matches." In addition, they demonstrate "skill with discipline through united order and have creativity awakened by the manual arts. They also fight against the use of smoking, alcohol and drugs." Accessed on October 9, 2019, http://bit.ly/2FDRqTh.

5. "The Adventurers Club is a program for children from 6 to 9 years old, created by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1972. [...] In the meetings, children perform activities with a focus on physical, mental and spiritual development." Accessed on January 14, 2020, https://bit.ly/2DH131W.


7. Talita Nascimento (Executive Secretary of NEBUM), email message to the author, July 5, 2019.


9. Talita Nascimento (Executive Secretary of NEBUM), email message to the author, July 5, 2019.

10. Ibid.

11. Minutes of South America Division from November to December 1995, vote No. 95-323.

12. Talita Nascimento (Executive Secretary of NEBUM), email message to the author, July 5, 2019.


15. Talita Nascimento (Executive Secretary of NEBUM), email message to the author, July 5, 2019.

16. Minutes of South American Division from November to December 1995, vote No. 95-333.

17.
Talita Nascimento (Executive Secretary of NEBUM), email message to the author, July 5, 2019.

18. Ibid.


20. Ibid.


26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. For more information read the article “Pernambucano Adventist Academy - IAPE” of this Encyclopedia.


32. Heron Santana, Felipe Lemos and Guilherme Silva, “Jovens atuantes” [Active Youths], Revista Adventista [Adventist Review], November 2018, 49.


34. “Caleb’s Mission Project is intended to mobilize thousands of young people across South America, challenging them to devote part of their vacation to evangelism in places where there is no Adventist presence.” Accessed on November 8, 2018, https://bit.ly/2ZfF5Mz.

35. Carolina Vaz (Secretary of the Piauiense Mission), message via email to the author, June 28, 2019.

36. Ibid.


40. “Harvest evangelism in Holy Week is a very special time to present Jesus and the life we find in Him through the Word of God. The goal of evangelism is to recall the sacrifice, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ for humanity.” Accessed on November 27, 2019, https://bit.ly/2uMWoue.


42. Carolina Vaz, email message to the author, June 28, 2019.


44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.
The Land of Hope project seeks volunteers willing to leave their home city to live in municipalities where the Adventist presence needs to be established. The project conceived by Pastor Geovani Souto de Queiroz (retired) aims to accomplish in a few years, which previous generations of Adventists have done over the decades. Heron Santana, “Um Líder que Tem Pressa” [A Leader Who IS In A Hurry], Revista Adventista [Adventist Review], November 2018, 49.


49. Survey is a careful study conducted to ascertain the feasibility of creating a new mission field with its new administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

50. For more information about the Alagoas Mission read the "Alagoas Mission of the Seventh Day Adventist Church Mission" in this Encyclopedia.


57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.


63. More information about the Northeast Brazil Union Mission can be found on the website: uneb.adventistas.org/ or on social media- Facebook: @adventistasnordeste and Youtube: AdventistasNordeste.

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