

**MISSIONS ATLAS PROJECT
AFRICA
EQUATORIAL GUINEA**

Snapshots Section

Country Name: *Republica de Guinea Ecuatorial* or Republic of Equatorial Guinea

Country Founded in: October 12, 1968

Population: 616,459

Government Type (national, regional and local):

The type of government is officially listed as a republic; however, the current president has retained power since 1979.

Geography/location in the world:

Equatorial Guinea is located between Cameroon and Gabon on the coast of West Africa. The country is divided into sections: Rio Muni (the mainland) and Fernando Poo (the main island). There are also four smaller inhabited islands.

Number of people groups: 22

Picture of flag:



Religion Snapshot:

Major Religion and % of population: Approximately 83.95% are nominally Roman Catholic.

All religions and % for each:

Catholic:	83.95%	Traditional Religions:	2.9%
Protestant:	3.19%	Non-religious:	1%
Independent Christian:	3.63%	Muslim:	.60%
Marginally Christian:	1.18%	Bahai:	.38%
Unaffiliated Christian:	4.58%		

Government interaction with religion:

Generally religious groups must register with the Ministry of Justice, Worship, and Penitentiary Institutions. Catholic Churches and Reformed Churches sometimes do not have to register because they are shown preference as a result of their longstanding influence in the country. All religious activity is regulated by a 1992 presidential decree which provided for religious freedom. During Macias' reign, religious freedoms were severely restricted. Many pastors were jailed or forced to leave the country. The current regime upholds the religious freedom promised by the Constitution. The president and his security forces expect any religious leaders or personages to refrain from political concerns and focus on spiritual matters only.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90095.htm>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ek.html>

Country Profile

Basic Facts

Country Name: Republic of Equatorial Guinea *Republica de Guinea Ecuatorial*

Demographics:

The estimated population of Equatorial Guinea is 616,459. Children up to fourteen years of age account for 42% of the population. There are 131,696 male children between the ages of newborn to fourteen years of age. There are 127,253 female children between these same ages. Adults between the ages of fifteen and sixty-four years of age account for 53.8% of the population. There are 162,458 males in this age category and 169,445 females. In the last age category, sixty-five years and above, there are 11,394 males and 14,213 females. This 65 and over group accounts for 4.2% of the population. The median age for males is 18.3 years, and the median age for females is 19.5 years.

The birth rate is 37.04 births for every 1,000 people. There are an estimated 5.16 children born to every woman. The infant mortality rate is 83.75 deaths for every 1,000 live births. The death rate is 9.72 deaths for every 1,000 people. The life expectancy for the total population is 61.23 years. The life expectancy for males is slightly lower at 60.36 years while the life expectancy for females is slightly higher at 62.13 years.

There are approximately 22 different people groups in Equatorial Guinea. About 85.7% of the people belong to the Fang people group while about 6.5% come from the Bubi ethnic group. Another 3.6% of the people belong to the Mdowe people while 1.6% are part of the Annobon. The Bujeba account for 1.1% of the population and various other people groups comprise the remaining 1.4%. This information is based upon data taken in the 1994 census.

The risk of infectious diseases is very high. Travelers should be aware that bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever may all be contracted from polluted water or food. Malaria preventions should also be taken.

The risk of AIDS infection is also problematic. In 2001, about 3.4% of the population had been infected with the virus. About 370 had died from the effects of the disease although another 5,900 people were still surviving.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ek.html>

Language:

Spanish was introduced to Equatorial Guinea by the colonial overseers who retained power until 1968. While some people groups received instruction in Spanish under colonial rule, many remained uneducated. Thus, while Spanish is one of the official state languages, few people actually can speak it fluently. School children may be taught in Spanish today.

The people use three or four other major languages for communication. Because of the proximity to Gabon and because of the Spanish colonials' use of imported workers, French is also an official state language. In fact, some sources have reported the increasing use of French in public venues because of the support France has given to the current regime. Most people prefer to use a form of Pidgin English or a major ethnic language like Fang or Bube.

Society/Culture:

Equatorial Guineans believe that family ties are very important. People usually find their identity closely tied to their clan which may include parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and even ancestors. Children are expected to follow the expectations of their families even when these desires might be in conflict with personal aims. The children will help their families by completing household chores and watching younger siblings. Children are expected to be quiet in the presence of adults. Western visitors who wish to interact with children should always greet their adult guardian first. Adults who are not greeted properly and given the most attention could easily be offended by a visitor's immediate attention to a child.

Women follow very traditional roles. The marriages of girls are arranged by her family, and she is expected to join her husband's family upon her marriage. Every groom must pay a dowry to the girl's family before the marriage can occur. Any children that a girl has before her marriage are under the authority of her family while any she has after her marriage belong to her husband and his family. Thus, if a girl has any children before her marriage, they will remain with her clan even though she goes to live with her new husband.

In cases of divorce or widowhood, the children born in the marriage belong to the husband's clan. Divorced women are either left to provide for their own economic needs or have to return to their family of origin. Their families are sometimes dismayed for the divorce to occur as cultural norms dictate that the dowry paid by the husband must be returned to him. Since these dowries are often quite substantial economic investments, the woman's family may encourage the couple to simply separate instead of actually divorcing. Such an agreement allows the woman's family to keep the dowry and also avoids costly legal proceedings. The husband may be agreeable to such an arrangement because societal norms allow the practice of polygamy and he is also able to avoid the cost and hassle of legal proceedings.

Women who need to support themselves or help earn money for their families often find themselves with few options. Many grow crops on small plots of land while others produce small handcrafts to sell. The market for these small handcrafts has diminished with the rise of modern Westernized products. Constanca Mangué de Obiang, the President's wife, established a training center for women in Malabo in an attempt to help develop a deeper knowledge of handcrafts that would be economic boons to families. Some communities have developed cooperatives where women work larger tracts of land in order to produce more crops. Such endeavors are also aimed at providing a better economic for women and their families.

Men, as has been mentioned, generally marry more than one wife. The men will often support their families through fishing or subsistence agriculture. Others may work for the oil industry.

When not working or interacting with their family unit, men will often visit local pubs to drink and discuss local village concerns.

Visiting with neighbors and friends is one of the most popular pastimes in Equatorial Guinea. At such informal gatherings, several different activities can coincide. People may decide to play card games or listen to the radio together. Listening to music and dancing are also popular group activities. Others will enjoy a time of traditional storytelling which not only provides inexpensive entertainment but also helps a younger generation to learn about the history of the family or clan.

Dancing may not only be part of times of entertainment but may also be tied to traditional religious rites. For example, a dance called the *abira* is performed so that a village can purge itself of any evil influences.

Equatorial Guineans generally believe that people should dress very stylishly when appearing in public. Men who possess suits wear them while women usually wear beautiful pleated skirts which have been carefully pressed and shirts that are starched so as not to wrinkle. People who cannot afford such expensive clothes will either wear more traditional clothes made from gorgeous African styled cloth, or they will buy used Western clothing. This used clothing may have English slogans which the wearer does not comprehend.

The normal diet of Equatorial Guineans tends to be full of starchy dishes. Rice is usually served as well as coco yams. *Gari*, a thick stew made from cassava, gourd seeds, leaves, and other natural ingredients, is a common dish. For people living in rural areas, vegetables are easily obtainable from small garden plots. Most meat is expensive and thus may only be served upon special occasions although fish, due to the closeness of the ocean, is usually served as part of a meal. Cooking may be done over an open fire in rural areas.

http://www.massgeneral.org/interpreters/b_eqg.asp

Gall, Timothy L. *WorldMark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life Volume 1 Africa*. Cleveland: Eastword Publication Development, 1998.

Government:

The current government of Equatorial Guinea is a republic. The president serves as the chief of state. Since 1979, the office of President has been held by President Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. As President, Mr. Nguema leads the Armed Forces and has the authority to declare war or to make peace for the nation. Furthermore, he also appoints the Prime Minister and his Council of Ministers. He also has the power to endorse or reject legislation created by the Council of Representatives. Finally, according to items 41-42 of the Constitution, the President has the right to suspend the Constitution in case of a state of siege. This suspension may remain valid for a period of three months in order to protect state assets and interests. However, the President has the right to extend the suspension if he feels that the situation is sufficiently dangerous.

The Constitution has several stipulations regarding the office of President. Item 31 of chapter II states that the President must be elected by a "relative majority of the votes cast through direct, equal and secret universal suffrage." Item 33 indicates that the President must be born in

Equatorial Guinea and must have resided continuously in the country for at least five years before running for election. Additionally, a man cannot become President before he is 40 years of age. Furthermore, the President must have the ability to accurately interpret the laws of the Constitution. Item 34 stipulates that the president is to serve for a seven year term, but this term is renewable.

The legislative branch of the government consists of the House of Representatives or Camara de Representantes del Pueblo. One hundred representatives serve for five year terms. Elections were held in 2008.

The Representatives have several different duties. They must elect a president and vice-president of the House. They must also decide who should serve on a parliamentary committee. They are in charge of passing a budget act and insuring that laws concerning labor and criminal acts are passed. Furthermore, they regulate the constitutional rights of the people while also insuring public liberties. All policy is governed by the current Constitution which was originally adopted in 1991 and amended in 1995.

The House of Representatives usually meets for two sessions but the President can call for special sessions as needed. The normal sessions last for two months. The President also has the power, according to item 72, to call for the open and close of each type of session. All legislation must be approved by the President before becoming law.

The highest branch of the judiciary is the Supreme Court of Justice. The President appoints the justices for five year terms. The President, as Head of State, also holds the title of first magistrate of the nation (item 86 of the Constitution).

On the local level, different ethnic groups may still appeal to traditional leaders for social matters instead of pursuing law suits. Such methods avoid the cost of legal representation while also insuring that traditional customs remain important.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ek.html#Govt>
<http://www.republicofequatorialguinea.net/Government/index.cfm?PageID=26>

Economy:

The economy of Equatorial Guinea has been expanding in recent years due to the discovery oil reserves. In 2007, the GDP was \$15.54 billion. The real growth rate was 12.4% while the GDP per capita was \$28,200.

Approximately 2.9% of the GDP came from agricultural pursuits. During colonial days, the largest revenues of the state came from cocoa production on large plantations. However, this changed with the neglect suffered during the Macias' regime. Now, subsistence agriculture is common. The current government has indicated a willingness to invest some revenue from oil production towards rebuilding the faltering agricultural sector. Current agricultural products include: coffee, cocoa, rice, yams, cassava, bananas, and palm oil nuts.

About 92.2% of the GDP came from industrial endeavors. The remaining 4.8% came from service related fields. In 2007, the industrial growth rate was 10.1%. Industrial products included: petroleum, fishing, sawmilling, and natural gas.

The unemployment rate was 30% in 1998. The number of people living below the poverty line is unknown. The public debt was 3.7% of GDP in 2007 while the inflation rate was 4.6%.

In 2007, exports equaled \$9.915 billion f.o.b. Export products were petroleum, methanol, timber, and cocoa. In 2006, China and the US were the top two export partners. Spain, Taiwan, France, Japan, and Portugal also did business with Equatorial Guinea.

In 2007, imports equaled \$3.098 billion f.o.b. The top two imports were petroleum sector equipment and other types of industrial equipment. Import partners included: the United States, Spain, China, France, Cote d'Ivoire, South Korea, Italy, and Great Britain.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ek.html#Govt>

Literacy:

During colonial days, the educational system on Bioko was fairly well established. Early Protestant missionaries established some schools. Later, Catholic priests and nuns used education as a way of not only teaching the students reading and writing but also in educating them in the beliefs of the Roman Catholic faith. During the Macias' years, the educational system waned considerably. Macias did not favor intellectuals and actually tortured several schoolteachers and students.

The current regime has worked to rebuild the educational system through several different initiatives. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports has worked to expand the number of schools. The current government has also partnered with the Hess Corporation to increase teacher training and the availability of materials. Teacher to student ratios and better provision of materials remain aims that the current initiatives hope to achieve.

In Part I of the Constitution, Item 23 declares that the state shall provide free primary education for all people. Furthermore, religious education may occur if the educational plan meets state standards. All educational endeavors must be careful not to teach any type of material that would cause students to "propagate ideological or partisan tendencies."

In 2000, 87% of the population could read and write. This percentage was higher among males at 93.4% and lower among females at 80.7%. Because traditionally girls are trained by family members in order to prepare for marriage, fewer are able to access higher educational opportunities.

<http://www.republicofequatorialguinea.net/Initiatives/?PageID=147>

http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/equatorialguinea_1379.html

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ek.html#People>

Land/Geography:

Equatorial Guinea is a small country in West Africa which lies at the geographic coordinates of 2 00 N, 10 00 E. The country is divided into several parts with Rio Muni, a section on the mainland of the African continent, and the island of Bioko, which lies about 20 miles off the coast of Cameroon, being the main points of settlement. Other areas include the islands of Corisco, Elobey Chico, Elobey Grande, and Annobon.

The climate is hot and humid due to the presence of the forest and its location near the equator. The landscape is changing though because of deforestation. Currently there are abundant water resources, but this may change if the climate becomes drier due to the heavy loss of the forest acres.

Rio Muni, the section on the mainland of Africa, lies between Cameroon and Gabon. This area is sometimes called Mbini. Its land is mostly coastal plain and rain forest. Bata is one of the largest cities in the area. Politically, it is subdivided into the regions of Centro Sur, Kie-Ntem, Litoral and Wele-Nzas. Most of the inhabitants of this area are connected with the Fang ethnic group.

The island of Bioko was formerly known as Fernando Po. Its name was changed by former President Macias during the 1970's. However, after his death, the island came to be commonly known as Bioko

The island of Bioko is about 779 square miles long. . Rainforest covers much of the island but two volcanic peaks rise above the island's surface. Santa Isabel Peak is the highest. Malabo, at the northern edge of the island, is both the capital city of Equatorial Guinea, and where most people currently reside. Luba, which is about a two-hour drive from the capital city, is another important center of population and also an area with beautiful beaches. The southern end of the island is actually much less populated. The average rainfall per year is about 64 inches while the humidity often registers as 85%. The temperature usually is about 87 degrees Fahrenheit.

Annobon is only about 7 miles long. It lies south of Bioko. For a time, this island was called Pagalu. Today, the largest city is San Antonio. Most of the people are involved in the fishing or timber industries.

Corisco, which is sometimes also called Mandj, was first settled by the Benga people. Spain gained control of the island in 1843 but did not expend much time or money building infrastructure on this small island which lies about 29 kilometers from Rio Muni. This tiny island, whose area is only 14 square miles, ignited the interest of the government and foreign investors in the early 1980's when the prospect of oil was discovered in Corisco Bay.

Since the discovery of oil in the area, the Gabonese government has been in dispute over the ownership of the island. While Corisco was once a French holding, the colonial authorities allowed the Spanish to take power in the 1950's without protest. Since the advent of independence from Spain in 1968, Corisco has been considered part of Equatorial Guinea. At the time of this writing, the dispute between Gabon and Equatorial Guinea over the island's ownership had not been settled.

The two small islands of Elobey Chico and Elobey Grande are virtually uninhabited. The air is generally moist and warm. The land is primarily sandy. The islands were claimed by the Spanish empire about 1846 and were used for trading purposes. However, the islands have not been of strategic importance to the current regime.

Annobón. " Encyclopædia Britannica. 2008. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 05 Sep. 2008
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/26377/Annobon>>.
<http://www.bioko.org/ecotourism/default.asp>
<http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Annob%C3%B3n>
<http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Corisco>
<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=48239>
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_1741500267/elobey_grande.html

Bioko. " Encyclopædia Britannica. 2008. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 05 Sep. 2008
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/65951/Bioko>>.

History

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to explore the area now known as Equatorial Guinea. A man by the name of Fernao do Poo first discovered the island of Bioko. The Portuguese gave control of this island to the Spanish government around 1778 because the Portuguese crown had decided to further their interests in South America. The exchange of South American land for Equatorial Guinean lands was finalized in the Treaty of Pardo.

The Spanish claims to Equatorial Guinea received approval from the entire European community with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1900. However, in the years prior to this time, the Spanish discovered that the volcano soils on Bioko were ideal for growing cacao. They leased lands from the Bubi people and proceeded to establish large plantations in order to mass produce the cacao. Because the Bubi people did not wish to work on the plantations, the Spanish authorities and landowners recruited different ethnic groups from the mainland to come and work. The workers were sometimes from the Rio Muni area and sometimes from Nigeria. The Spanish overlords did not usually treat these workers well. Often they would describe the monetary benefits to be found on Bioko but neglect to mention the horrific working conditions.

The exploration of Rio Muni occurred much more slowly than the development of Bioko. Around 1886, Catholic representatives began to attempt to explore the area and create mission stations among the different ethnic groups. Governor Angel Barrera worked hard between 1926 and 1927 to establish authority over inland areas.

The political scene began to change rapidly after World War II. Spanish colonial authorities ruled the area until 1958 when Equatorial Guinea became an overseas province. In 1964, Bioko and Rio Muni were divided into two provinces under the administration of an autonomous localized government. Then in 1968, Francisco Macias Nguema gained support and won the right to rule the newly established country as the President.

The years when Macias ruled the country were quite chaotic. Gains made in pre-independence days were quickly lost. Macias assumed complete control of the government and attempted to bring about a policy of Africanization. Educational and religious groups were considered to be

harmful to this process and thus received negative attention. Citizens were required to refute their European names and adopt African names. Anyone who resisted the decrees of Macias were put in jail, tortured, or forced to leave the country.

In 1979, the current President, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, seized power in order to restore order to the country. Macias was deposed. Since that time, the President has allowed the creation of a new constitution and has worked to establish good relations with the international community.

WorldMark Encyclopedia of the Nations Africa 10th edition.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/7221.htm>

<http://www.republicofequatorialguinea.net/about/index.cfm?PageID=12>

Christian History

In 1841, Baptists from the West Indies landed on Bioko to begin missions work. Their work continued until 1858 when the Spanish colonial authorities forced them to leave because the Spanish government wished to encourage the growth of Roman Catholicism instead of Protestant ideals.

In 1850, Presbyterian missionaries from New Jersey arrived and began church planting efforts on the island of Corisco. They later expanded their efforts to Rio Muni where they were able to establish several more congregations. In fact, in 1870, an Equatorial Guinean was commissioned as a pastor. However, after the Spanish gained control of the mainland, the efforts of the Presbyterian missionaries were severely hampered. Again, Roman Catholicism was emphasized by the Spanish government. First, schools and medical clinics were closed. In 1924, foreigners were advised to leave the country.

Missions work later was allowed again, briefly. In 1932, a Presbyterian couple was able to return for a time in order to train young people. They established a Women's Association that still remains very influential today. However, in 1952, the Spanish government demanded that all churches close. Later, churches that had been established before the Franco era were allowed to re-open.

The Presbyterian churches in Equatorial Guinea, at this time, tried different methods of organization. For a year, they chose to form a synod with the Presbyterian churches of Cameroon. However, they later decided to join a synod in New Jersey. Missionaries from the United States were able to help the efforts of national pastors along with help from Cameroonian pastors. Finally, in 1960, several delegates met and decided to draft their own constitution. This group of churches formed the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Equatorial Guinea which still remains in existence today.

Other Protestant groups came to Equatorial Guinea at different times. Methodist efforts in Equatorial Guinea begin in 1870. Primitive Methodist missionaries came to the island of Bioko. The Worldwide Evangelization Crusade from Great Britain sent mission personnel to work with the Okak people during the 1930's. The WEC churches generally chose to merge with the Evangelical Church of Equatorial Guinea during the 1970's.

Roman Catholic priests began arriving in Equatorial Guinea during the 1400's. The first missions effort culminated in the building of the first prefecture built on Bioko (then Fernando Po) in 1855. Roman Catholic work grew steadily. When the Spanish assumed control of the area, Catholicism was greatly favored. This prestige caused most islanders to become nominal Catholics. Catholicism remains the primary religion of the masses today.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/fr/eglises-membres/regions/africa/equatorial-guinea/reformed-presbyterian-church-of-equatorial-guinea.html>

World Christian Encyclopedia Volume I

Religion

Non Christian

Islam—Approximately .60% of the population are Muslims. The influx of foreign workers due to the oil boom is causing the influence of Islam to increase.

Baha'i—The Baha'i faith came to Equatorial Guinea in 1954 when an American missionary named Elise Lynelle came to Bata on a one month visa. She converted Jose Ramos Espinosa to the Baha'i faith who then helped her make contact with the inhabitants of the island of Corisco. The king of the island, Santiago Uganda Mdelo, decided to convert to the Baha'i faith. In 2001, approximately .38% of the population were Baha'i adherents. In 2004, Ms. Lynelle returned to Equatorial Guinea to help the converts celebrate their Golden Jubilee. At the time of her visit, there were four local assemblies.

<http://news.bahai.org/story/330>

Iglesia de los Banzie (Church of the Initiates)—This indigenous church was founded around 1890 in Gabon and grew out of a syncretistic mixing of the Fang secret societies and certain tenets of the Christian faith. It is sometimes called the Religion d'Eboga because its members use a drug called eboga. Some members also call this church the Bwiti movement. Work in Equatorial Guinea began around 1910. In 1995, there were 50 churches and 1,000 members. There were an additional 2,700 affiliates.

Iglesia Nueva Apostólica (New Apostolic Church)—This church started work around 1980. In 2001, there were 19 churches and 4,790 congregants. There were an additional 8,000 affiliates.

Non-religious—Approximately 1% of the population claims no religious affiliation at all. During the 1970's and early 1980's, religious freedoms were curtailed. These circumstances led to a rise in people either claiming no interest in religion or practicing a nominal Christianity.

Testigos de Jehová (Jehovah's Witness)—This group began operating around Bioko in 1949. Additional efforts were started around Rio Muni in 1964. In 2001, there were 11 congregations and 645 congregants. There were an additional 3,200 affiliates.

Traditional Ethnic Religions—Each ethnic group has its own ancestral religion. Usually, these religions believe in the existence of a creator god who distances himself from the human population. To communicate with the spirit realm, ancestors are worshipped with the help of a traditional healer. Because of the strong influence of the Catholic Church during the colonial era, many people have nominally accepted some tenets of Catholic doctrine while still retaining some of their traditional rituals. Thus, although only about 2.9% of the population is listed as ethnoreligionists, the actual number of practitioners is probably much higher.

Roman Catholic—The Catholic Church has been strongly influential upon the cultural and spiritual lives of the people of Equatorial Guinea. When the Spanish ruled the country during colonial times, the Catholic Church received special favor to do missionary work. At this time, many of the inhabitants of the area were either forcibly converted or chose to adopt Roman Catholicism as their main belief system. Some of the converts chose to maintain certain rituals from their traditional religion as well. This mixing of Catholicism and traditional rites has caused some confusion about doctrinal issues. During the Macias' years, Catholic priests and nuns endured the displeasure of the government because they took a stand against societal abuses.

Malabo, the archdiocese, was first erected in 1855 under the name Vicariate Apostolic of Annobon, Corisco and Bioko Islands. In 1904, it was split and became Vicariate Apostolic of Fernando Poo. In 1966, the church was elevated to a diocese and renamed the Diocese of Santa Isabel. In April of 1974, it became the diocese of Malabo and became immediately subject to the Holy See in Rome. Ildefonso Obama Obono, currently serves as the archbishop. In 2004, there were 238,923 people attending mass. Twenty-two priests served in the 32 parishes. The archdiocese covers 785 square miles. The address of the offices of the archdiocese is Apartado 106, Malabo, Bioko Norte, Guinea Ecuatorial.

The diocese of Ebebiyin was erected in 1982. The bishopric was vacant as of August of 2008. The diocese covers 4,635 square miles. In 2002, 174,040 people were attending mass in the diocese. Twenty-five priests served in the ten different parishes. The address of the diocese offices is Apartado 117, Ebibeyin, Kie Ntem, Guinea Ecuatorial.

The diocese of Bata was first erected in 1965 and was called the Vicariate Apostolic of Río Muni. In 1966, it was elevated to diocese status and renamed. In 2004, 136,642 people were attending mass. Sixty-one priests were serving in 27 different parishes. The diocese covers 6,416 square miles. The mailing address of the offices of the diocese is Apdo 82, Bata, Litoral, Guinea Ecuatorial. <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/country/dgq2.html>

Christian/Evangelical

Asamblea de los Hermanos (Assembly of Brothers)—This denomination was founded in 1937 as a result of a schism from the Kombe Presbyterians. In 1995, there were 2 congregations and 150 congregants. There were an additional 455 affiliates.

Asambleas de Jehová (Assemblies of God)—This denomination began work around 1985. In 2001, there were 14 congregations and 540 congregants. There were an additional 2,240 affiliates.

Dove Evangelical Center—This group is listed as an independent church. In 2001, there were 9 congregations and 900 members. There were an additional 1,980 affiliates.

Iglesia Vida Profunda (Deeper Life Bible Church)—Work began around 1985. Many of the congregants are expatriates from Nigeria. The current churches are missions of the DLBC of Lagos, Nigeria. In 1995, there were 2 churches and a total of 35 members in all. There were an additional 58 affiliates. Pastor William F. Kumuyi, the founder of the DLBC denomination, first started a Bible study group in Nigeria while serving as a lecturer at the University of Lagos. In 1983, the members of the group founded the denomination and continued to spread the word of God.

<http://www.geocities.com/missionalia/ojo1.htm>
<http://www.africasia.com/uploads/Deeper%20Life.pdf>

Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo Día (Seventh Day Adventists)—This denomination started work in 1961. In 2008, there were 20 churches and 2,183 congregants. The churches of Equatorial Guinea are under the auspices of the Central African Union Mission.

<http://www.adventistdirectory.org>

Iglesia Bautista (Baptist Convention)—Southern Baptist missionaries who arrived in 1981 began to found these churches. In 2001, there were 9 congregations and 90 congregants. There were an additional 225 affiliates.

Iglesia Betania (Bethany Church)—Work started in 1990. In 1995, there was one church with 50 members. There were an additional 100 affiliates.

Iglesia del Evangelizacion Mundial (World Evangelization Church)—This denomination began work in 1986. In 1995, there were 4 congregations and 110 congregants. There were an additional 300 affiliates.

Iglesia Evangélica Cruzada (Gospel Crusade Church)—This denomination began work in 1937 and is a mission of WEC. In 2001, there were 44 churches and 720 members. There were an additional 1,800 affiliates.

Iglesia Evangélica en la Guinea Ecuatorial (Evangelical Church of Equatorial Guinea)—This church was started by missionaries from the United States in 1850. In 2005, there were 29 congregations and a total membership of 8,230. The churches of this denomination belong to WCC, AACC, CIEGE, WARC, and ARCA. (For more historical information, please see the Christian History section.)

<http://www.oikoumene.org/fr/eglises-membres/regions/africa/equatorial-guinea/reformed-presbyterian-church-of-equatorial-guinea.html>

Iglesia Evangelica Episcopal Libre (Free Protestant Episcopal Church)—This denomination arrived in 1968. Many of the members were Nigerians. The churches are under the authority of

the Diocese of West Africa. In 1995, there were 210 congregations and 1,000 congregants. There were an additional 3,000 affiliates.

Iglesia Metodista (Primitive Methodists)—This denomination first began work on Bioko around 1870. In 1995, there were four congregations and 300 members. There an additional 600 affiliates.

Iglesias radiotónicas solitarias (Isolated Radio Listeners)—There may be as many as 70 church bodies that are not affiliated with a specific denomination but who gather to listen to ELWA radio broadcasts. Possibly 1,000 people are members.

Independent churches found in the country—There are about 20 independent congregations that are not representatives of a major denomination.

People Groups

All information unless otherwise noted is gleaned from www.peoplegroups.org, www.joshuaproject.net, and www.ethnologue.net.

13152

Annobonese Eurafrikan (2,987)

This people group lives on the small island of Annobon (which is sometimes called Pigalu or Pagalú). Many of the people originally migrated from the Angolan area. They often intermarried with Portuguese explorers. Their tribal language is Fa D'ambu. They also speak Spanish and Sãotomense.

Annobon Island was first discovered by the Portuguese on New Year's Day in 1471. Many of the inhabitants are descendents of Africans brought from Angola by way of Sao Tome and Principe. Because of this early Portuguese influence, some people still have an interest to certain aspects of Portuguese culture.

People live fairly simple lives on the island. Families often live in the capital city of Pale (where there is running water and better living conditions) for part of the year and then return to their small farms in order to benefit from the growing season. The men mostly fish or engage in whaling during the whale migration. Women usually stay at home in order to take care of housework and raise their children.

Marriages in the past have always been arranged by the parents. However, that practice is changing. Today the most important concern for the couple who wishes to become engaged is to secure their parents' blessings because inheritance rights are tied to the familial blessing. Marriages may be polygamous.

When someone seeks justice on Annobon, there are three different authorities to summon. For family matters, the father makes the final decisions. For legal problems, people must seek out a government official. Social matters are referred to community councils called vidgils. These vidgils might sanction a person who committed an unneighborly act (such as refusing to help someone else put their canoe into the ocean).

The people are predominantly syncretistic. They practice a mixture of Roman Catholicism and traditional ethnic religious rites. People are superstitious and fear the power of the occult. They are resistant to changing their current syncretistic practices.

Protestant mission efforts have been few. Seventh Day Adventist missionaries arrived in 1965 and have built one small church. However, no other Protestant groups have established a presence. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

There are currently no ministry tools in their language. The only available literature is the Roman Catholic catechism. The Jesus film and gospel recordings have never been produced.

http://www.joshuaproject.net/profiles/text/t102980_ek.pdf

13154

Batanga (9,840)

The Batanga people live near the coast and are often fishermen. They speak a language called Batanga. Some alternate names for this people group include: Banoho, Bano'o, Noho, Nohu, Noku, or Banoo. This people group are not the same as the ones found in the South West Province of Cameroon (Balundu-Bima). The people are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster.

The people are predominantly Protestant. Ninety-five percent of the people are "Christian adherents," but only 7.12% of the people are evangelical Christians.

Portions of the Bible were translated by 1953. The Jesus film has not been reproduced in their dialect. Gospel recordings exist.

13157

Benga (3,585)

The Benga people live around Rio Muni and on Corisco Island. Approximately 80% have left the area to migrate to Gabon. Traditionally their homeland was Corisco Island, but many migrated because of poverty and the need for better economic opportunities. Most of the people who remain continue to fish for a living. They are related to the Batanga people. They speak a language called Benga and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Many of the speakers are elderly.

Most people attend Roman Catholic mass. Roman Catholic priests and nuns worked to educate and convert the Benga people with some success, but in 1885 and again in 1859, ethnoreligionists threatened the lives of the missionaries and the converts. Eventually, the Catholic contingent withdrew to Libreville, Gabon.

Presbyterians arrived in 1854 and worked to found a mission station. The Protestant churches among the Benga can trace their heritage to the efforts of these mission pioneers. Workers remained among the Benga until 1943.

The New Testament has been translated into their language. Also 18 books of the Old Testament were translated. However, these translations have not been reprinted since before 1943. The remaining copies are old and tattered. No literacy program exists. There are a few people who can read Spanish, but biblical resources are difficult to obtain. The Jesus film is unavailable. Gospel recordings do not exist.

Children and adolescents need educational opportunities and also would be receptive to different forms of entertainment. Most children help their parents at home or work to supply extra income. Different types of sports activities would provide volunteers with opportunities to interact with these young people. People who wish to plan such activities must first approach the elders of a family. Families expect visitors to show interest in adults and their needs first. Once the approval and consent of the elders have been obtained, some activities for children and youth can be planned. Attempting to engage the interest of the children or adolescents before interacting correctly with the adult population of a village is highly offensive.

From *The Historical Dictionary of Gabon* by David E. Gardinier and Douglas A. Yates
http://www.joshuaproject.net/profiles/text/t101253_ek.pdf

13158

Bube (47,803)

The Bube people were one of the first groups to make contact with the Spanish colonists. Their traditional homeland of Bioko Island became one of the major cocoa producing areas after they traded or leased lands to the Spanish. The Spanish tried to convince the Bube to work for them, but the Bube did not wish to become low paid or forced labor in the huge Spanish plantation system. As a result, the Spanish resorted to importing labor from other areas of West Africa, but because they wanted to take the Bube land, they offered small pensions or educational scholarships to the Bube.

When different ethnic groups, particularly the Fang on the mainland, began to explore nationalistic ideas, the Bube were courted by the Spanish in the hopes of the colonial powers retaining influence if not authority on the profitable Bioko Island. However, Fang candidates won the first elections.

In the south, Bube culture is patriarchal while in the north, family ancestry lines are traced through the mother's lineage. Family life is extremely important. The fathers usually work as fishermen and train their sons to do the same. Girls work with their mothers in the home to learn how to take care of children and how to complete basic household tasks.

The Bube people are predominantly Roman Catholic because of their historic ties with the Spaniards. Many have mixed traditional ethnic beliefs with Catholicism. These traditional beliefs cause many of the people to be highly superstitious and resistant to giving up Catholicism.

Only .72% of the people are evangelical Christians. The Bube were actually exposed to the gospel fairly early. Some U.S. Baptist missionaries arrived and began to teach the people.

However, with the influx of Spanish Catholics, their influence diminished rapidly. Protestant missionaries returned in 1983 and resumed work. Several different missions group now operate on Bioko.

Bible translators began work in 1992. Portions of the Bible have been successfully translated but more work is needed. Also, literacy classes are needed. Less than one percent of the Bube people can read and write in their own language. Those that are literate usually write in Spanish because this is the language of instruction used in primary educational efforts. Other educational materials like the Jesus film or gospel recordings do not exist.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bube_language

<http://www.republicofequatorialguinea.net/about/index.cfm?PageID=22&sPageID=14>

http://www.joshuaproject.net/profiles/text/t101684_ek.pdf

<http://www.bioko.org/bubi/default.asp>

13161

Eurafrican (13161)

The Eurafrian population in Equatorial Guinea speaks Spanish. They are predominantly Christian adherents. The number of evangelicals is unknown. Translations of the Bible are available. Gospel recordings and the Jesus film are also accessible.

13163

Fang (410,081)

The Fang people are the largest ethnic group in Equatorial Guinea and the most powerful. The current President and much of the government belong to the Fang ethnic group. The Fang originally came from Rio Muni. Many have migrated to Bioko for various reasons. They speak a language called Fang and are part of the Central-Congo Bantu people cluster. Two alternate names for this people group are Pamue and Pahoun.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholics. Only about .07% of the people are evangelical Christians. Different missions groups are currently working with the Fang. The Fang appreciate international people who come with a motivation of learning about their culture, but are not interested in foreigners who come simply to convert them. Teachers and medical personnel are generally welcomed.

The Bible has not been translated into their dialect although a version of another Fang dialect from Gabon does exist. Normally the Bible is read in Spanish in services and then translated into Fang. The Jesus film and gospel recordings exist in their language.

<http://www.republicofequatorialguinea.net/about/index.cfm?PageID=21&sPageID=14>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/profiles/text/t102997.pdf>

13164

Fernandino

The Fernandinos generally live in and around the villages of Musola, Las Palmas, Sampaca, Basupu, Fiston and Balveri de Cristo Rey on the island of Bioko. They speak Krio, a pidgin form of English, because they are the descendents of British colonists and freed slaves. They are sometimes called Criollos.

In 1827, the British founded a colony as a port of call to help in their anti-slavery efforts. British soldiers settled the area as did freed slaves from Ghana and Sierra Leone. These slaves had been rescued from slave raiders' ships and sent to Sierra Leone where they learned the Krio language. They most likely came to Equatorial Guinea with the British soldiers as laborers and craftsmen.

The social structure of this ethnic group seems to be somewhat different from that of the mainstream culture. Polygamy is disdained. Men usually marry only once but may engage in extramarital affairs. Mothers usually exercise authority in the home. Children generally help at home.

The people are predominantly nominal Christian. About 90% of the people are "Christian adherents," with the number of evangelical Christians unknown. The Anglican Church had witnessed to the freed slaves that immigrated. However, the slaves adapted to the British culture and may or may not have actually accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior.

In the early 1980's, two different organizations from the United States sent representatives to interact with the Fernandinos. They found that this ethnic group did not have easy access to the Bible in their own language. While a Krio version of the New Testament had been translated in Sierra Leone, that version had never been widely circulated among the Fernandinos. Spanish versions of the New Testament are available for purchase, but since most of the people are extremely poor, buying a Bible is nigh to impossible. The Jesus film and gospel recordings have also been produced in Krio and Spanish; however, the people may have difficulty purchasing copies because of the expense.

http://www.joshuaproject.net/profiles/text/t210076_ek.pdf

<http://www.republicofequatorialguinea.net/about/index.cfm?PageID=151&sPageID=14>

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French (100)

About 100 French expatriates live in Equatorial Guinea. They speak French and have various types of jobs. About 75% of the population are "Christian adherents." The number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

13165

Hausa (9,373)

The Hausa are one of the largest people groups in West Africa. Their original homeland was Nigeria and Niger. Probably the Hausa living in Equatorial Guinea are the descendents of

Nigerian workers brought over by the Spanish to work on the cacao plantations. The Hausa speak a language called Hausa.

This people group is one of the least reached groups even though the Bible, the Jesus film, and gospel recordings are available in their language. The people are staunchly Muslim. Only .10% of the people claim to be “Christian adherents,” and the number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

13166
Ibibio (2,343)

The Ibibio people are descendents of immigrant workers from Nigeria. They speak a language called Ibibio and are part of the Benue people cluster.

The people have primarily adopted some form of Christian belief system, but many have continued to hold to the beliefs of their ancestral worship, too. About 90% of the Ibibio people claim to be “Christian adherents,” but only 6.75% of the people are evangelical Christians.

The Bible has not been translated into their language. The Jesus film and other Christian videos are accessible. Gospel recordings exist. As with all people living in Equatorial Guinea, the ability to purchase or access these materials may be limited due to lack of monetary resources.

Those who continue to practice their traditional ethnic religion tend to believe in the existence of a creator god named Abassi. They also venerate their ancestors for fear that a disgruntled ancestor could bring harm to individuals. The eldest son of each lineage actually maintains a shrine at his house in order to appease the ancestors. A special ceremony called *Obio Ekpo* is held to help spirits enter the world of the dead.

People generally believe that every person actually has two souls—one linked to the human body and one which can enter the body of certain animals. When people die, the human soul can be reincarnated, but the animal soul cannot.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Ibibio.html>

13167
Igbo (18,746)

The Igbo people living in Equatorial Guinea are immigrants or descendants of immigrant workers from Nigeria. The homeland of the Igbo is in southern Nigeria along the Niger River. This people group is quite influential there. They speak a language Igbo and are part of the Igbo people cluster. An alternate name for this people group is Ibo.

The people practice both Christianity and their traditional ancestral religion. About 88.8% of the people claim to be Christian adherents, but only 6.6% are evangelical Christians. British missionaries from the Church Missionary Society and the Catholic Church began evangelistic efforts among the Igbo of Nigeria in the late 1800’s.

Bible translation efforts began around 1860 and have continued to this day. The complete Bible is now available. Gospel tracts have also been published. The Jesus film and other Christian videos exist. Gospel recordings and radio broadcasts can also be heard.

In the traditional ancestral religion, the earth goddess is an important figure as are ancestral spirits that can bring good or evil to a lineage. Each lineage has a secular leader and a religious leader. The secular leader must bow to the wishes of the religious leader because of the occultic power held by the religious leader. Divination is acceptable.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Igbo.html>

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Indo-Pakistani (500)

The Indo-Pakistani families are probably migrant workers. They speak Hindi. Most are Hindus although about 1% claim to be “Christian adherents.” The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The Bible, the Jesus film, and gospel recordings are available to them.

13169

Ngumba (11,979)

The Ngumba people live in Rio Muni. They speak a language called Ngumba and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include: Mvumbo, Ngoumba, Mgoumba, Mabi, Mabea, or Bujeba.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic. Only .43% of the people are evangelical Christians. Portions of the Bible have been translated into their language, but the Jesus film and gospel recordings are unavailable.

13170

Ngumbi (5,175)

The Ngumbi people live along the coast in Rio Muni. They speak a language called Ngumbi and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include: Combe or Kombe.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic. About 90% of the people are “Christian adherents,” but only .9% are evangelical Christians.

Two major missions initiatives have occurred among the Ngumbi. Presbyterian missionaries came in the 1800’s and started evangelization efforts. However, they were forced to leave during the Macias’ years, and the number of converts dropped significantly. Pentecostals began a new effort in the 1980’s. Presbyterians and a group called the Brethren are also working with this people group.

Portions of the Bible and the New Testament have been translated. The Jesus film is not available. Gospel recordings do not exist.

http://www.joshuaproject.net/profiles/text/t107288_ek.pdf

13160

Saotomense (10,698)

The Saotomense people speak a language called Saotomense. They are predominantly Christian adherents. There are no ministry tools available in their language. No other information is currently available about this population.

13171

Seki (13,459)

The Seki people live in coastal areas in Rio Muni. They also live in Gabon. They speak a language called Seki and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include: Sekyani, Sekiani, Sekiyani, Sekiana, Shekiyana, Sheke, Seke, Beseki, or Bulu.

The Seki predominantly practice a syncretistic form of Christianity. About 90% claim to be “Christian adherents,” but only .99% are evangelical Christians. The Bible, the Jesus film, and gospel recordings do not exist in their own language.

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Spanish (10,000)

The Spanish colonized Equatorial Guinea. The people living there are either descendents of the colonials or ex-patriates who have chosen to work in the country. The people speak Spanish. They are predominantly Roman Catholic. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

13172

Yasa (937)

The Yasa people live in the coastal areas of Rio Muni. They speak a language called Yasa and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include: Yassa, Lyassa, Maasa, and Bongwe.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholics. Although 90% claim to be “Christian adherents,” only .9% are evangelical Christians. The Bible, the Jesus film, and gospel recordings do not exist in their language.

13173

Yoruba (43,931)

The Yoruba people are probably the second largest people group in West Africa today. They speak a language called Yoruba. Those living in Equatorial Guinea probably migrated as expatriate workers.

About 63.4% of the people are “Christian adherents.” Only 7.92% of the people are evangelical Christians.

The complete Bible has been translated into the Yoruba language and the Jesus film is accessible. Gospel recordings and radio broadcasts can be heard.

The Yoruba people were probably originally a Sudanic people who migrated into Nigeria. Their first major city was called Ife-Ife. From the outset, the Yoruba people were more comfortable as city dwellers. While many farmed for a living, they still lived in larger towns. Trading was also important for the Yoruba.

From *Muslim Peoples* by Weekes

<http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Yoruba.html>

Missiological Implications

1. Evangelical Christians and churches should recognize the fact that the population of Republic of Equatorial Guinea includes peoples from many different groups with varying needs in relation to evangelism and church establishment. Missionary strategies should see to minister directly to the different people groups.
2. Evangelical Christians should seek ways to introduce church planting among the peoples. Several people groups are reported to have no churches (Ngumba, Yaka, batanga, and Benga).
3. Evangelical Christians and churches should develop methods to reach nominal Roman Catholics and share these methods with local Christians. These methods should include training in church starting especially by small group approaches.
4. Evangelical Christians and churches should develop methods to reach to peoples who follow Traditional Religions or who follow some form of religion that is a mixture of Traditional Religion and some other religious persuasion (Roman Catholic or spiritism)
5. Evangelical Christians and churches should recognize the deep need for physical aid advance in the country. Christians should seek ways to increase the effectiveness of economic, educational, and health care institutions in the nation. People who are interested in doing missions work would be welcome if they offered educational or economic opportunities or provided residents with health care. The people will welcome these services and will observe the lifestyles of foreign visitors to see if the visitors genuinely care about them.
6. Evangelical Christians and churches working in Equatorial Guinea should adhere carefully to government policies governing Christian work. The current regime allows religious groups to operate within the country so long as the groups refrain from engaging in political activities. Mission personnel and pastors who wish to work with evangelism efforts must complete the proper paperwork and then they are welcome to visit Equatorial Guinea. The government requires that official permits be obtained before groups of more than ten people gather to discuss political matters. In order to avoid any misunderstandings, people who are interested in holding religious meetings should make sure to obtain the proper paperwork and permission before planning any religious

crusades or events. Also, all personnel must make sure that all approved events remain apolitical in nature.

People who are interested in short-term visits should work with and under the direction of a long-term missionary. Again, visitors will need to refrain from criticizing the government or Guinean culture.

7. Evangelical Christians and churches should note Annobon Island as a regions where people are needy in relation to physical matters but also spiritually needy. Evangelicals should respond to the spiritual and physical needs of this region.

Pictures



Links

- <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90095.htm>
- <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ek.html>
- <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/regions/africa/equatorial-guinea.html>
- <http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Equatorial-Guinea.html>
- <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinationEquatorialGuinea.aspx>

"Equatorial Guinea," Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2008