

Missionary Atlas Project

West Africa

Gabon

Snapshots Section

Country Name: Gabonese Republic (*Republique gabonaise*)

Country Founded in: August 17, 1960

Population: 1,454,867

Government Type: Gabon is formally a republic but there have only been two presidents during the entire time of independence. The current president has an immense amount of power.

Geography/location in the world: Gabon is located in West Africa between the countries of Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of the Congo. It is in the tropical zone so the climate is both hot and humid.

Number of people groups: 44

Picture of flag:



Religion Snapshot

Major Religion and % of population: Christian 73% (This figure represent syncretized Christianity. Many people profess to be Christians while still practicing certain elements of their traditional religions as well.)

All religions and % for each

Roman Catholic 54%

Islam 12%

Ethnic Religions 10%

Atheists 5%

Government interaction with religion:

The government encourages all religious groups to register with the Ministry of the Interior. The constitution provides for religious freedom. Religious groups who wish to operate private schools may be monitored by the Ministry of Education to ensure that schools meet state requirements.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/71302.htm>

Gabon Country Profile

Basic Facts

Country Name: Gabonese Republic

Population: The estimated population of Gabon is 1,454,867. Children up to fourteen years of age account for 42.1% of the population. There are 307,444 male children between the ages of newborn to fourteen years of age. There are 305,468 female children between these same ages. Adults between the ages of fifteen and sixty-four years of age account for 53.9% of the population. There are 391,194 males in this age category and 393,103 females. In the last age category, sixty-five years and above, there are 23,978 males and 33,680 females. This 65 and over group accounts for 4% of the population. The median age for males is 18.4 years, and the median age for females is 18.8 years.

The birth rate is 35.96 births for every 1,000 people. There are an estimated 4.71 children born to every woman. The infant mortality rate is 53.65 deaths for every 1,000 live births. The death rate is 12.45 deaths for every 1,000 people. The life expectancy for the total population is 53.99 years. The life expectancy for males is slightly lower at 52.85 years while the life expectancy for females is slightly higher at 55.17 years.

There are approximately 44 different people groups in Gabon. People of Bantu descent including the Fang, Bapounou, Nzebi, and Obamba comprise a large portion of the population. About 10,700 French people live in Gabon and an additional 11,000 people hold dual citizenship in France and Gabon.

The risk of infectious diseases is very high. Travelers should be aware that bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, malaria, and typhoid fever may all be contracted. HIV/ AIDS is also a societal problem. Many people still do not understand how HIV/ AIDS is contracted or how to receive proper treatment.

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

Language: French is the official language and is the common language used for communication between different language groups. Fang is another common language used because of the predominance of Fang speaking peoples. Most of the ethnic groups belong to the Bantu peoples so some language constructs may be similar. Teen-agers in urban areas are more prone to speak French and may be less inclined to maintain their own ethnic language.

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

Society/Culture: The Gabonese people live in one of the more stable countries in Africa. Oil revenues provide wealth, but this wealth is not equally spread among the Gabonese. Many Gabonese live in poverty. In the rural areas, people usually grow their own food and locally produce other products that they need. Houses in rural areas usually are constructed from mud

with the wealthier villagers putting some cement over the mud. Cinder blocks may be used as well. Tin roofs are valued. In urban areas, wealthier Gabonese will live in modern state-of-the-art apartment buildings while refugees or other immigrants will live in poorly constructed huts on the outskirts of town. Poor sanitation and a lack of clean water often cause health issues. Cement houses are considered a sign of wealth in many areas. People who hold government jobs or are extremely well-educated may be proud and somewhat condescending towards those who have not been able to advance economically or those who have been unable to receive a quality education. Overall, people are glad for the stability of the region in a part of the world that has known increasing violence in other countries. However, people wish that the wealth was more even distributed among all Gabonese.

The major holiday celebrated by all Gabonese is Independence Day which occurs on August 17th. People will dance and give speeches in the center of town. Muslims celebrate the end of Ramadan and the Feast of the Sacrifice. These are also recognized as public holidays. Roman Catholics celebrate Easter Monday, Assumption, Whit Monday, All Saints' Day, and Christmas Day. Other holidays include Renovation Day on March 12th, Labor Day on May 1, and Women's Day on April 1th. People are apt to hold larger celebrations on New Year's Day than on Christmas.

People who know each other well often offer kisses to either cheek in the French manner. However, strangers may be greeted with great reserve and silence. Usually a host offers beer to a stranger but may stand in silence for a time. People who attempt to talk too much to a new acquaintance are thought to be rude, but friends chat freely. Gabonese also stand in close proximity to one another because they do not have the same sense of personal space that most Westerners do. Men may hold hands in public as a sign of brotherly concern for one another. At most gatherings, though, men and women congregate into same sex groupings.

Medical help is sometimes very hard to obtain in Gabon as in many other West African countries. Doctors and hospitals are often seen as a last resort for the desperately ill because of the high cost of medical care. Many people will consult the "nganga" or traditional healer before going to the doctor. The nganga will brew medicines from local herbs or offer fetishes and charms that will supposedly heal the sick person or keep away vengeful spirits.

The Bwiti ceremony which is celebrated throughout Gabon is associated and controlled by the nganga and local secret society. The ceremony originated in rural areas where women were desirous of having children but either found themselves to be infertile or simply had too few children by societal standards. The women and then men would attend the Bwiti ceremonies where they would receive a hallucinogenic drug called Iboga which would carry them into a trancelike state where they supposedly communed with kind ancestors who would tell the drugged person how to break the problem of infertility.

Family life is very community-oriented in Gabon. Usually in rural areas the entire village will have responsibilities in rearing a child. Many of the villagers are interrelated by family ties through a tribal system. Lines of descent may be patrilineal or matrilineal depending upon the individual ethnic group. Women will usually work inside the home caring for children and doing housework. They will sometimes have small gardens or businesses to supplement their income. A woman will have a hut called a cuisine where she does her cooking and where she sleeps. Men

will have open areas where they congregate to conduct business or discuss village life. Men usually plant the fields and may also hold office jobs.

Children will help their parents and attend school when possible. Boys and girls may both be initiated into secret societies as a way of teaching them traditional cultural values. Also, some girls and boys may be loaned or sold to other individuals as a way of supplying the family with much needed cash while also supposedly providing the child with a chance to receive an education. While many Gabonese do not participate in this particular custom, refugees living in Gabon may. Children whose services have been purchased are often carried to the city where they serve as house servants or are sometimes exploited sexually. Usually the promises concerning the education of the child are not fulfilled.

Marriage in Gabon may be polygamous or monogamous. Men who can afford to support multiple wives are wealthy according to societal standards. Girls may be married at the age of fifteen. Traditionally, the father or mother or uncle of a girl will arrange a marriage for her when she is born or soon after birth. This marriage will usually be to a much older man. The girl will usually grow up being told that she will marry this man and is accustomed to the idea. Sometimes she will even be sent to live with the man and his family during her childhood so that her own family will not have the burden of supporting her.

Girls, however, may also be allowed to be promiscuous before the official marriage. Sometimes parents will tacitly allow a girl to cohabit or have sexual relations with men beside their betrothed as a way of bringing financial gain to the family. Having children before an official marriage is also sometimes viewed as being advantageous for a girl because the children born out of wedlock will belong to her while children born within a marriage legally belong to the husband or his family.

If a divorce or separation occurs within a legal marriage, the woman is left with no children. She is often sent away or returns to her father's or mother's house. Sometimes girls are simply sent to live with their husband without an official marriage taking place. Because the government charges fees for an official wedding ceremony, parents of both families will have traditional ceremonies while simply ignoring the official paperwork. Such practices give women less legal standing. Should a woman attempt to exert her property rights at the death of a spouse or at the event of a separation or divorce, the lack of a legal marriage certificate can significantly hamper her efforts.

Because of such cultural practices, HIV/ AIDS has increasingly become a health problem. Families who discover that a person has HIV/ AIDS may renounce kinship with the person because of the fear and misunderstanding surrounding how the disease is contracted. Also, because the person may not be able to easily access medical help, the family can see the person as a financial liability. Babies who are born with HIV/ AIDS may be abandoned—especially if the mother is close to death or ill. The fortunate HIV/ AIDS babies will be brought to an orphanage or taken in by a charitable relative. Churches and NGO's are working with the government to increase AID's awareness and educate people about the disease.

Government: Gabon calls its government a republic, and according to the amendments made to the Constitution in 1991, a multiparty system exists. Gabon is first sectioned into nine major provinces. They are called Estuaire, Haut-Ogooue, Moyen-Ogooue, Ngounie, Nyanga, Ogooue-Ivindo, Ogooue-Lolo, Ogooue-Maritime, and Woleu-Ntem. Within the nine provinces there are thirty-six prefectures.

El Hadj Omar Bongo has been in power for over three decades. He was re-elected under the multi-party system in 1993, 1998, and in 2005. Oppositional groups have accused the government of causing irregularities during the voting process; however, the election results continue to stand. In 2003, Bongo's government changed the constitution so that a president can renew terms for as long as he can be elected and chooses to run. The president is imbued with broad powers. Bongo decides who will serve as prime minister, and he also decides upon the members of his cabinet and the members of the independent Supreme Court. Bongo is furthermore responsible for deciding who will serve as governors and prefects. He also has the right to tell the National Assembly to quit meeting and to refuse to allow legislation to proceed. Didjob Divungi Di Ndinge serves as Vice President, and Jean Eyeghe Ndong serves as Prime Minister and head of the government.

Gabon has many different political parties. President Bongo's Party is the Gabonese Democratic Party or PDG. General Jean Boniface Asselle leads one called the Circle of Liberal Reformers or CLR. The CDJ or Congress for Democracy and Justice is led by Jules Aristide Bourdes Ogouliguende. Divungui-di-Ndinge Didjob heads the Democratic and Republican Alliance or ADERE. The Gabonese Party for Progress or PGP is guided by Pierre-Louis Agondjo-Okawe. Pierre Emboni directs the Rally for Democracy and Progress or RDP while Pierre Mamboundou controls the Union of Gabonese Patriots or UPG. The Gabonese Union for Democracy and Development or UGDD is headed by Zacherie Myboto. The National Rally of Woodcutters or RNB and the National Rally of Woodcutters-Rally for Gabon or RNB-RPG (Bucherons) are led by Fr. Paul M'ba-Abessole. Louis Gaston Mayila guides the People's Unity Party or PUP while Pierre Claver Maganga-Moussavou directs the Social Democratic Party or PSD. The Union for Democracy and Social Integration or UDIS also exists.

Bongo's party holds the most seats in the National Assembly. The National Assembly allows for 120 delegates who are elected every five years. The last election was held in 2006. In that election the PDG won 82 of the possible seats while the RPG got eight seats. The UPG also won eight seats while the UGDD only have four representatives there. The ADERE got three people in while the CLR have two representatives. Other miscellaneous parties got thirteen seats.\

In 1997, the Senate was created as part of the change towards a multiparty system. While the National Assembly is elected through a direct vote of the people, the members of the Senate are elected by politicians from local councils and departmental assemblies. The Senators can hold their seat for six years. There are ninety-one Senators in all. The last elections were held in 2003, and the next elections will be held in 2009. The PDG controls the Senate by holding fifty-three of the ninety-one seats. The RNB has twenty senators while the PGP has four. ADERE gained three seats while the RDP and CLR both gained one seat a piece. There are nine senators that ran independently.

The Judiciary branch is based upon the French system and upon traditional justice practices of Gabonese culture. The Supreme Court has three different parts--the judicial, administrative, and accounts. There is a constitutional court that monitors legislation. There are also local courts. In rural areas, people still often prefer to go the tribal leader before they use the court system.

<http://www.infoplease.com/country/profiles/gabon.html#political>
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Economy: Gabon's economy is stronger than many other West African countries because of the monies brought in from the oil industry. Yet, international monitoring agencies like the IMF and the World Bank are concerned about what will happen to the economy when the oil reserves have been depleted.

The lumber industry and manganese exports also help contribute to the GDP, but these, too, could be depleted in coming years.

International observers have criticized the Gabonese government for their spending habits and have been concerned because the wealth of the country seems to be held by a small minority of the population while many live in poverty. The national GDP is \$10.19 billion. The GDP per capita is \$7,100. Agriculture contributes six percent to the GDP while industry provides 58.4%. The remainder of the GDP comes from services which accounts for 35.6%. Public debt accounts for 49.1% of the GDP.

The Gabonese labor force is approximately 574,000 people. Sixty percent of the labor force is involved in some type of agricultural endeavor. Agricultural products include: cocoa, coffee, sugar, palm oil, rubber; cattle; okoume, and fish. Fifteen percent work in industry. Industrial products include: petroleum extraction and refining, manganese, gold, chemicals, ship repair, food and beverages, textiles, lumbering and plywood, and cement production.

The remaining twenty-five percent of the labor force is in some type of service related position. The unemployment rate is twenty-one percent

Export partners include: US, China, France, Trinidad and Tobago, and Thailand. Imports usually come from France, US, Netherlands, Cameroon, and Belgium.

<http://www.infoplease.com/country/profiles/gabon.html#political>
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gb.html#Econ>

Literacy: Education is compulsory and supposedly free; however, the poor often cannot afford to buy books or uniforms for their children. Usually families will attempt to send children to primary school, and the fortunate will also be able to attend high school. Schooling may be challenging in rural areas because of the lack of proximity to a school. Sometimes a child will have to travel ten or more miles to simply attend school every day.

The literacy rate is actually quite high for a West African country with 63.2% of the population being able to read and write. The literacy rate for males is substantially higher at 73.7% while the literacy rate for females is lower at 53.3%. Families will usually choose to educate boys first because the boys will be breadwinners for the family while girls will only bring wealth to their families through advantageous arranged marriages or cohabitations with wealthy men. Many NGO's are working to change societal attitudes towards the early marriages of girls and the lack of emphasis on the education of girls.

From *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gb.html#Intro>

Land/Geography: Gabon is located in West Africa between the countries of Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of the Congo. It is in the tropical zone so the climate is both hot and humid.

Like many other countries in the area, there are two types of seasons—the rainy season and the dry season. May to September is usually when the dry season occurs. During the rainy season, travel becomes more precarious. People usually travel by boat or bush taxi. Bush taxis are especially treacherous during the rainy season.

Land covers 257,667 sq km while water covers 10,000 sq km. Some of the main waterways in Gabon are the Ogooué, the Ngounie, and the Ivindo Rivers. Gabon is also blessed to have a coastline that covers 885 km which is dotted with swampy lagoons that are good for the fishing industry.

Going further inland, the land becomes savanna and plateaus before extending into forested mountains. Most of the land is actually forested and has been cleared or is in the process of being cleared for agricultural use.

From *The Historical Dictionary of Gabon* by David E. Gardinier and Douglas A. Yates
From *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*
<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0858317.html>
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/gabon/>

History

Gabon was originally inhabited by the Pygmies who liked the dense forests. The Myene may have been the next people group to discover Gabon. Slowly, the Bantu peoples begin to migrate into the area from the north. Some historians believe that the Bantus were originally one family group but slowly separated and formed different ethnic groups as they migrated into different areas. The Fang arrived later from Cameroon, and they sought easier access to the European traders that were arriving to do business along the coast.

The Portuguese explored the area now known as Gabon in the mid to late fifteenth century. They actually named Gabon by calling the area “gaboá” that meant “hood.” They made contact with the Mpongwe people. Later, other European traders began to arrive as well to take advantage of the slave trade. The French eventually begin to establish firm control over Gabon and its inhabitants as they created a stronghold in 1843 and later began to make treaties either peaceably or by force with the local leaders.

Through their desire to oust the Belgians from the Congo, the French eventually went further inland. In the late 1800's, the French and Germans reached an agreement about the control of the northern area of Gabon. Often in this quest for power, the Europeans almost completely ignored the divisions of different people groups. Whole ethnic groups were split apart. Also, the French navy was at first in charge of the area. They demanded food and supplies from the indigenous peoples as they explored the area. Later, as a colonial administration was formed, local peoples had to suddenly pay taxes and perform unpaid labor tasks.

In 1910, France created a new entity called French Equatorial Africa of which Gabon was a part. The French continued to administer Gabon through the FEA until after World War II when Gabon received recognition as a separate part of the French community and eventually received independence in 1960.

In the 1950's, three major political leaders emerged—Jean Hilaire Aubame, Leon Mba, and Paul Gondjout. Eventually Mba and Gondjout formed an alliance and created a party known as the Bloc Democratique or BDG. Aubame formed a group called the UDSG. Mba eventually emerged as the primary leader and became the first president of Gabon. He was ousted from power temporarily in 1964 before being reinstated through French intervention. He continued to consolidate his power base until his death in 1967 when the current president El Hadj Omar Bongo was instated. Mba decided that Bongo should succeed him. Bongo sought to relieve tensions from the 1964 coup by allowing many of the instigators to re-enter Gabonese society or leave the country.

In 1968, Bongo reorganized the BDG and renamed it the Parti Democratique Gabonais or PDG. It became the only legal political party. Through the 1970's and 1980's, Bongo remained in complete control of the country. Oil revenues helped prosper some Gabonese while others remained in abject poverty. Many people began moving into urban areas to work in industry related fields at this time. People in urban areas generally had better access to education and a higher style of living. Whenever oil prices dropped, people would, of course, suffer. Bongo and his close associates were often accused by opponents and reporters of misappropriating government funds for their own private use.

In the 1990's, students and others begin to rebel against Bongo and his party. Multiparty elections were re-established, but Bongo managed to retain political power. In 2007, Bongo celebrated forty years of holding power in Gabon. In January of 2008, his government appointed new ministers and reshaped the cabinet positions somewhat. Some analysts believe that Bongo could be hoping to put his son in power at his death.

www.everyculture.com

From *The Historical Dictionary of Gabon* by David E. Gardinier and Douglas A. Yates

Christian History

Catholics began arriving in Gabon around 1766. They started to work with the peoples living around Loango, but eventually they left because of the continual battle with disease.

Another attempt was made by Italian priests in 1777 along the Estuary, but they too had to leave. The Portuguese government did not want missionaries working among the indigenous peoples.

Finally in 1844, French priests began a permanent work among the peoples living along the Estuary. Nuns started a women's ministry in 1849. The missionaries focused their attention on the Mpongwe people but worked with the Bengas, too. Between 1881 and 1900, they were allowed to expand their efforts to the Fang, the Galoa, the Bakele, the Vili, the Adouma, the Seke, the Nkomi, the Loumbou, and the Eshira.

The mission stations received financial aid from the French authorities because they were spreading knowledge of the French language through their educational efforts. The priests' overt opposition to the practice of polygamy kept many adults from converting to Catholicism, but many young students turned to a belief in Catholicism after being influenced by their teachers. The priests and nuns did make efforts to teach the people in their own languages. They managed to prepare educational materials in fifteen different languages.

The European missionaries also encouraged indigenous people to train at a seminary which had been established in Southern Gabon. In 2000, there were thirty-seven indigenous priests. There were also many Gabonese monks. About 60,000 students attended Catholic schools in 1998. Nuns generally teach in these educational centers.

Protestant missionaries began arriving in Gabon around 1842. Congregationalists and Presbyterians came from Boston to work among the Mpongwe, the Bakele, the Seke, and later the Fang. Many of the missionaries perished due to disease and harsh living conditions. The Presbyterians also started mission work among the Benga around 1870.

While American missionaries had started the Protestant work in Gabon, much of the work was transferred to *Societe des Missions Evangeliques* when the French colonial government insisted that schools be conducted in French only. Some American missionaries continued working in Libreville while French missionaries expanded into Port Gentil and other areas. Some Gabonese were resistant to the gospel because of the emphasis on monogamy and the restriction against drinking alcohol.

CMA missionaries began work in the 1930's. Albert Schweitzer, a doctor and theologian, is probably Gabon's most famous missionary personage. He worked to establish a hospital in order to give people access to quality health care.

In 1985, the Evangelical Church started a movement among young people that became the Bethany Church.

From *The Historical Dictionary of Gabon* by David E. Gardinier and Douglas A. Yates
World Christian Encyclopedia Vol. 1

Religions

All information unless otherwise noted is taken from the World Christian Encyclopedia Vol. 1 and Operation World

Non-Christian:

Christianisme Celeste (Heavenly Christianity)—This church was founded by Samuel Oschoffa, a Beninese self-proclaimed prophet, who began his work as a result of a Pentecostal movement in Benin in the 1930's and 1940's. He himself was a former Methodist but was joined by congregants from the Aladura and Worshippers churches. This church emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's receiving of gifts such as prophecy, healing, and discernment of biblical truth. Attendees also focus strongly on the power of prayer intervention. The Gabonese church was started by Beninese immigrants who migrated to Gabon in search of better employment opportunities. In 1993, approximately 60,000 people had joined this denomination.

From *The Historical Dictionary of Gabon* by David E. Gardinier and Douglas A. Yates

Eglise des Banzie (The Church of the Initiates)—This indigenous church was founded around 1890 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. Sometimes Gabonese also call it the Bwiti movement. In 1995, there were 1,200 congregations and a total of 76,900 congregants. There were 125,000 affiliates.

Eglise Kimbanguiste (Church of Christ on Earth through Prophet Simon Kimbangu)—This group was started by missionaries from Zaire around 1955. In 1995, there were fifty churches and a total of 1,000 members. There were 2,000 affiliates.

Eglise Neo-Apostolique—This church was founded around 1980. It was a mission of Neuapostolische Kirche out of Zurich Switzerland. In 2001, there were thirty-six congregations and a total of 1,250 congregants. There were 3,000 affiliates.

Indigenous Religions—Every ethnic group has their own religion based on cultural norms. Most believe in some type of remote but omnipotent god figure. Most groups engage in some form of ancestor worship. The Bwiti and Mwiri societies are powerful secret groups for men. The Njembe secret society functions similarly for women.

Islam—Islam has a growing influence in Gabon. The president's conversion to Islam in the 1970's spurred this growth. More mosques have been built and conversions have been occurring. Approximately twelve percent of the people are Muslim. Presently, Islam claims as many as 12% of the population (Operation World records 6.5%).

Temoins de Jehovah (Jehovah's Witnesses)—This group began work around 1945. In 2001, there were forty-five congregations and a total of 2,226 members. There were 7,500 affiliates.

Catholic Church—Catholic work began in Gabon around 1766. Today the archdiocese is located in Libreville. Basile Mvé Engone is currently serving as the archbishop. Libreville was elevated in 1958. The archdiocese covers 15,979 square miles. In 2004, 289,500 people attended mass in the Libreville archdiocese, and forty-three priests worked in the area. Many of the people who follow the Roman Catholic Church practice syncretistic religion with traditional factors.

Franceville, Mouila, Oyem, and Port-Gentil are also Gabonese dioceses. The Franceville diocese covers 23,919 square miles and was elevated in October of 1974. Timothée Modibo-

Nzockena currently serves as the bishop. In 2004, twenty-three priests were helping about 82,150 mass attendees.

Dominique Bonnet leads the Mouila diocese, which was elevated in December 1958. In 2004, 46,200 people attended mass, and fifteen priests served in the area. The Mouila diocese covers 22,802 square miles.

The diocese of Oyem was elevated in 1969. Jean-Vincent Ondo Eyene currently leads the diocese as the bishop. In 2004, twenty priests helped the 78,020 members of the diocese.

The diocese at Port Gentil was just elevated in 2003. Mathieu Madega Lebouankehan serves as the bishop. In 2004, 70,500 people attended mass. Eleven priests served in the Port Gentil area which covers 8,825 square miles.

Makokou is a Prefecture Apostolic. It was erected in 2003. Joseph Koerber currently serves as the prefect. In 2004, 50,000 people attended mass and were served by six priests.

<http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/country/dga2.html>

Christian or Evangelical

Eglise Bethany—This group was started as a youth camp in 1983. In 2001, there were twenty-nine churches and a total of 12,000 congregants in all. There were 30,000 affiliates. It is an independent denomination.

Eglise Adventiste du Septieme Jour (Seventh Day Adventist)—This denomination began work around 1980. In 2001, there were eleven churches and a total of 1,854 members in all. There were 4,000 affiliates.

Eglise Evangelique de Pentecote (Evangelical Church of Pentecost) This denomination began work in 1936. In 1995, there were twenty congregations and a total of 6,200 congregants in all. There were 10,000 affiliates.

Eglise Evagelique du Gabon (Evangelical Church of Gabon)—This group was established in 1842. It was originally a mission of the PEMS group out of France. In 2001, there were sixty-eight churches and a total of 10,000 members in all. There were 25,000 affiliates. About ninety-six percent of the members are from the Fang people. Approximately eighty percent of the members are also women.

Eglise de l'Alliance Chretienne due Gabon—This is a mission of the CMA. The denomination was founded in 1934. There were great revivals in 1968. In 2001, there were 189 congregations and a total of 21,269 members in all. There were 50,000 affiliates.

People Groups

All information unless otherwise noted comes from www.peoplegroups.org, www.joshuaproject.net, and www.ethnologue.com

13176**Baka (3,825)**

The Baka people live along the Cameroon border. They speak a language called Baka and are part of the Pygmy people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Pygmy-E, Pygmees, Bebayaka, Bebayaga, Bibaya, Pygmees de L'est, and Babinga. The Baka people are considerably different in appearance from many of the surrounding Bantu people groups. They are usually no taller than four feet.

The Baka people are predominantly animists. The traditional religion of the Baka people revolves around their dependence and belief in the protection of the rain forest upon which their entire culture and lifestyle have been built. The Baka believe that a supreme god whom they call "Tore" created the world. They associate "Tore" with the forest because the forest provides their medicine, their food, and their shelter.

Boys must undergo a circumcision ceremony called Jengi when they undergo initiation into manhood. Traditionally, this occurred after an elephant hunt, but because of the scarcity of large game, other animals are now being used.

The Baka people have always been hunters and gatherers. Their culture depends upon forest products and the hunting of wild game. There are other groups that have moved into the forests that the Baka may have inhabited for the last 4,000 years. There have been adjustments on both sides. Most of the Baka have movable campsites when they go hunting for wild game.

Among the Baka the number of evangelical Christians is unknown. There are not many medical facilities or formal educational opportunities for the Baka. Teachers and doctors are desperately needed to minister to this people group.

The Bible has not been translated into their language, and the Jesus film is not available. Gospel recordings can be found.

13174**Bakwele (5,858)**

The Bakwele people live northeast of Mekambo in the Ogooue Ivindo Province. They speak a language called Bakwel and are part of the Bantu people cluster. They live in the rain forest and are mainly fishermen and farmers. Some alternate names for this people group include Bakwil, Bekwel, and Okpele.

Masking ceremonies have been an important part of Bakwele culture in the past as a way of gaining dominance over one's enemies and as a way of acquiring positions of leadership.

The predominant religion of the Bakwele people is listed by People Groups as Christianity; however, only 3.6% of the population is evangelical Christian. Many people belong

to the Roman Catholic Church. The gospel has not been translated into their language, and the Jesus film is not available. Gospel recordings can be heard.

13175

Barama (7,170)

The Barama people live in two different areas of Gabon. Some live east of Omboue in the Ogooue Maritime Province while others live west of Moabi in the Nyanga Province. They speak a language called Barama and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Gibarama, Ghibarama, Bavarama, or Yibarambu.

People Groups lists Christianity as the predominant religion; however, only .92% of the population is evangelical Christian. Most people attend the Roman Catholic Church. There are no ministry tools in their language.

13777

Benga (2,390)

The Benga people live north of Libreville. They speak a language called Benga and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Many of the Benga speakers are elderly. This people group can also be found in Equatorial Guinea. The Benga people may have originally migrated to Gabon from the Cameroon grasslands. They were important ivory and redwood traders during the nineteenth century before their population later migrated towards Libreville or simply decreased. Some intermarried with the Mpongwe people and were absorbed into their ethnic group.

Christianity is the predominant religion; however, the number of evangelical Christians is unknown. Most people attend Roman Catholic mass. Missionaries first worked among the Benga in the early 1840's. Presbyterians arrived in 1850 to found a mission station.

Roman Catholic priests and nuns worked to educate and convert the Benga people with some success. In 1885 and again in 1859, ethnoreligionists threatened the lives of the missionaries and the converts. Eventually, the Catholic contingent withdrew to Libreville. They later returned for brief stints before centering their efforts around the population at Libreville.

The New Testament has been translated into the Benga language, but the Jesus film is unavailable. Gospel recordings do not exist.

From *The Historical Dictionary of Gabon* by David E. Gardinier and Douglas A. Yates

13178

Bhubhi (5,858)

The Bhubhi people live west of Koulamoutou between M'Bigou and N'djoli in the Ogooue-Lolo Province. They speak a language called Bubi and are part of the Northwest Bantu

people cluster. Some people may also speak Getsogo. Some alternate names for this people group include Ibubi, Ibhubhi, Pove, or Eviia. The people may prefer to be called Bapove.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic or practice ethnic religions. Many practice a mixture of the two. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The Bible has not been translated into their language and the Jesus film is inaccessible. Gospel recordings exist.

13180

Duma (8,368)

The Duma people live in the Franceville area of the Haut Ogooue Province. They speak a language called Duma, but some may speak Njebi. They are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. They are related to the Nzabi people. Some alternate names for this people group include Liduma, Aduma, Douma, Adouma, or Badouma. Most of the men handle canoes well as they fish and trade with others along the upper Ogooue River. In the past, they often traded slaves, salt, and other products. Lastourville, which was named for the French explorer De Lastours, was an important Duma city. Some people have migrated to the Port Gentil area in recent years.

The people either practice ethnic religions or attend Roman Catholic mass. They often adhere to a syncretic mixture of both. Only .96% of the people are evangelical Christians. The Bible has not been translated into their language, and the Jesus film is inaccessible. Gospel recordings exist.

From *The Historical Dictionary of Gabon* by David E. Gardinier and Douglas A. Yates

13181

Eshira (20,317)

The Eshira people live west of Mouila and southwest of Fougamou and Mandji in the Ngounie Province. They speak a language called Sira and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some also may be familiar with Punu. Some alternate names for this people group include Gisira, Eshira, Isira, Ichira, Ishira, Yichira, Shira, or Shire. The people are either Roman Catholic or practice ethnic religions.

The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. Portions of the Bible had been completed by 1954, but the Jesus film is inaccessible. Gospel recordings exist.

13182

Fang (500,299)

The Fang live in the Estuaire and Woleu-Ntem provinces. They speak a language called Fang and are part of the Central-Congo Bantu people cluster. There are three dialects--Make, Ntum, and Ogowé. Some alternate names for this people group include Pamue or Pahouin.

The Fang were known as very fierce and courageous fighters who knew how to use their jungle home to their advantage. Today they are farmers and merchants. Polygamy is still an acceptable cultural practice, and many people continue to live in small villages led by a single

leader. The single leader is generally descended from the founder of the clan and maintains power by reinforcing the idea that he is the conduit through which communication with dead ancestors can occur.

The people primarily attend Roman Catholic mass or practice ethnic religions. Only one percent is evangelical Christian. The complete Bible had been translated by 1951. The Jesus film and other Christian videos are accessible. Gospel recordings exist.

<http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/people/Fang.html>

13185

Fon (16,403)

The Fon speak a language called Fon and are part of the Guinean people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Fo, Fon-Gbe, Fonnu, Fogbe, Dahomeen, or Djedji.

The Fon have a patrilineal society. A man may have more than one wife and may choose to divorce his wife if he wishes. When someone dies or on the anniversary of an important person's death, the Fon will hold dances and have drumming ceremonies for days. The Fon believe in reincarnation.

The people predominantly practice ethnic religions. These ethnic religions involve sacrifices to ancestors. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The New Testament had been translated by 1993. Tracts are also available. The Jesus film and other Christian videos also can be shown. Gospel recordings exist.

13186

Fulani (5,746)

The Fulani people speak a language called Adamawa Fulfulde and are part of the Fulani-Fulbe people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Adamawa, Fellata, Fula, Falata, Gueve, and Igboro Fulani. They are one of the least reached people groups.

The people are predominantly Muslim. Even those that are professing Muslim practice some of the ancient traditions. For instance, there are certain social taboos that everyone follows. Goat meat is taboo because they fear that it will carry leprosy. Parents don't ever speak the first name of a firstborn child.

Scholars believe that the Fulani originally migrated from North Africa or the Middle East. The Fulani are physically set apart from other African people groups by their lighter skin and thinner noses. They take pride in the fact that these physical differences may point to Caucasian ancestry.

The Fulani do not believe in ever showing fear, but the greatest emotional stress to the Fulani is to feel lonely. People may talk to friends and family in order to eradicate their loneliness; however, they should never show their desire for companionship in public. This fear of loneliness would probably make it very difficult for people to consider conversion because

they must be aware that they would be excommunicated from their friends and family if they decided to become a Christian.

For boys to be considered men, they must undergo a test of manhood in which their friends beat them with sticks. The boys must not acknowledge any feelings. In fact, boys should look like they wish for the trial to continue. The boys that succeed in the trial become men and may see their scars as a source of pride. There have been deaths because of this ritual.

The Fulani raise cattle and goats and their whole culture is centered around herding. Being a nomadic people, the Fulani will move with the herds as the cattle and goats need different grazing areas during the different seasons. For example, during the rainy season, the herds can feed near a central village. However, during the dry season, the herds may have to be moved to other areas to find food. A man's social status is determined by the number of animals he possesses and the bride price also centers around how many animals the prospective bride will bring to her husband and his family.

The men's jobs in the village differ greatly from that of the women. While the women are responsible for raising the children and making meals for the family, the men tend the herds and make their own clothes. In fact, making clothes is a way for men to show pride in themselves.

The number of evangelical Christians among the Fulani is unknown. The complete Bible has been translated into their language and the Jesus film has been reproduced in their language. Gospel recordings and radio broadcasts can be heard.

13187

Gun (16,403)

The Gun people speak a language called Gun and are part of the Guinean people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Gugbe, Gun-Alada, Gun-Gbe, or Seto-Gbe.

The people predominantly practice ethnic religions. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The complete Bible had been translated by 1972. Gospel tracts also exist. The Jesus film and other Christian videos are accessible along with Gospel recordings.

13188

Hausa (8,619)

The Hausa are originally from Nigeria. In fact, they are the largest group in Africa. They speak a language called Hausa. The Hausa language is a major trade language in West Africa, and many different people groups have adopted not only the Hausa language but also many of the Hausa customs and beliefs. Some alternate names for this people group include Adarawa, Arawa, Arewa, Fellata, Hausa Fulani, Hausa Ajami, Maguzawa, Hausawa, Soudie, Kurfei, or Tazarawa.

Oral legends among the Hausa state that the people are descended from a man called Bayajida who killed a snake that threatened the village thereby winning the hand of the queen. The sons of Bayajida founded Hausaland.

The Hausa may be involved in many different types of work. Many in rural areas are farmers who grow traditional crops like millet or rice while others are traders or professionals. Markets are very important gathering places for men to come and discuss issues facing the village. Women are expected to make different types of items to be sold at the market.

Men may marry more than one wife, with girls being promised in marriage by age 12 to 15. Women are expected to care for the children and attend to household duties. Divorce is a societal problem, but many women will remarry because society expects them to do so. Extended families are usually very influential in rural areas. Males and females are both expected to listen to their elders.

The Hausa are predominantly Muslim. About 150 years ago, Muslim missionaries came to Hausaland and succeeded in converting the Hausa to Islam. They are considered one of the least reached people groups. The Bible has been translated into the Hausa language and the Jesus film is accessible. Gospel recordings and radio broadcasts can also be found.

Hausas that do convert to Christianity face severe persecution in the form of shunning and betrayal by non-Christian family members. Since a Hausa's identity is tied to his family and clan, the emotional and physical persecution is extremely hard on new believers. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

<http://www.global12project.com/2004/profiles/clusters/8035.html>
<http://www.sim.org/pg.asp?pgID=2&fun=1>
<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=103733&rog3=UV>

13189

Kande (1,427)

The Kande people live west of Booue in Ogooue-Ivindo Province. They speak a language called Kande and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Kanda or Okande. Linguistically, their language could possibly be in danger of extinction.

The people predominantly attend Roman Catholic mass or practice ethnic religions. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. There are no ministry tools available in their own language.

13190

Kaningi (8,567)

The Kaningi people live south of Franceville in the Haut Ogooue Province. They speak a language called Kaningi and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people include Lekaningi and Bakanike.

Most of the people are Roman Catholic or practice ethnic religions. Only about 1.33% of the people are evangelical Christians. There are no ministry tools available in their language

13220

Kele (10,774)

The Kele people live around Mimongo in groups in or near Middle Ogooue Province. They speak a language called Kili and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Akele, Bakele, Dikele, or Western Kele.

In the past, the Kele people were well known for their hunting prowess. They were also one of the most influential Gabonese ethnic groups to participate in slave raids. Most have migrated from their original territorial lands due to pressure from Fang families and for economic reasons.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic or practice ethnic religions. American missionaries started to work among the Kele around 1849. They worked to develop literacy materials. Transitions in the area caused the missionaries to withdraw to the island of Nengenenge where Presbyterian missionaries eventually took over the work. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

Portions of the Bible were translated by a missionary in 1879. The Jesus film is inaccessible. Gospel recordings exist.

From *The Historical Dictionary of Gabon* by David E. Gardinier and Douglas A. Yates

13191

Kota (53,780)

The Kota people live in the Ogooue-Iwindo Province. Their neighbors are the Kwele, Aduma, and Fang. They may have originally migrated to Gabon from Sudan. The Kota are also found in the Congo. They speak a language called Kota and are part of the Central-Congo Bantu people cluster. There are many different dialects of this language. Some alternate names for this people group include Ikota, Ikuta, or Kotu.

Most of the Kota people today are farmers who grow plantains and manioc. Their cultivation is usually done by hand. Land is cleared each year and then planted. The next year new land is cleared so that the soil will not erode.

The people practice a mixture of ethnic religions and Christianity. Missionaries began arriving among the people in the early 1900's. In traditional religious practices, ancestors are venerated. Usually the leader of the village is in charge of maintaining the reliquaries that hold the bones of the ancestors. Their reliquaries are covered with copper.

The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. Portions of the Bible had been translated by 1948. The Jesus film is inaccessible. Gospel recordings do not exist.

<http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/people/Kota.html>

13192

Lumbu (13,515)

The Lumbu people live between the Nyanga and Bangua rivers and on the southwest coast in the Nyanga Province. They also live along the Congo border. They speak a language called Lumbu and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Two alternate names for this people group are Ilumbu and Baloumbou. They are mostly farmers and hunters. Some have intermarried with Vili women.

People usually attend Roman Catholic mass or practice ethnic religions. Often the people practice a syncretistic mixture of Catholicism and traditional religious beliefs. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. Portions of the scripture had been translated by 1966. The Jesus film is inaccessible. Gospel recordings exist.

13193

Mahongwe (4,875)

The Mahongwe people live in the Mekambo area in the northeast corner of Gabon. They speak a language called Mahongwe and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. This language may be in danger of becoming extinct.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. There are no ministry tools available in their language.

13194

Mbaama (9,373)

The Mbaama people live south of Okondja in the Haut Ogooue Province. They speak a language called Ombamba and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Lembaamba, Gimbaama, Bambaama, Mbamba, Obamba, or Bakota. Sometimes some of the Mbaama people will marry people from the Sake ethnic group.

The people practice ethnic religions or attend Roman Catholic mass. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The Bible has not been translated into this language and the Jesus film is inaccessible. Gospel recordings exist.

13195

Mbahouin (2,297)

The Mbahouin people live south and west of Franceville in the Haut Ogooue Province. They speak a language called Mbangwe and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Mbahouin or M'bahouin.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic or practice ethnic religions. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. There are no ministry tools available in their language.

13196

Mbede (103,381)

The Mbede people live in the Okondja area of the Haut Ogooue Province. They speak a language called Mbere and are part of the Central-Congo Bantu people cluster. Ngwii is a dialect of the language. Some alternate names for this people group include Mbédé, Limbede, Mbété, or Ambede.

The people predominantly practice Roman Catholicism. Only .71% of the people are evangelical Christians. The Bible has not been translated into their language and the Jesus film is inaccessible. Gospel recordings exist.

13197

Mbwisi (1,609)

The Mbwisi people live in the far southern part of the Nyanga Province. They also live in the Ndende area on the border with Congo. They speak a language called Bwisi and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. An alternate name for this people group is Ibwisi.

The people predominantly practice Roman Catholicism although many still also continue to participate in traditional religious rites. Approximately about 1.5% of the people are evangelical Christians. There are no ministry tools available in their language.

13198

Minduumo (5,029)

The Minduummo people live from Lastoursville to the north of Franceville. They speak a language called Nduma and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. The four dialects of the Nduma language are Epigi, Kanandjoho, Kuya, and Nyani. Some alternate names for this people group include Mindoumou, Lendumu, Ndumbu, Nduumo, Ndumbo, Ondoumbo, Ondumbo, Mindumbu, Doumbou, Dumbu, or Bandoumou.

The people predominantly practice ethnic religions. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. There are no ministry tools available in their own language.

13199

Miyangho (7,140)

The Miyangho people live in Haut Ogooue around Mamidi and Bakoumba. They speak a language called Yangho and are part of the Central-Congo Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Yongho, Miyangho, and Bayongho.

The people usually attend Roman Catholic mass; however, many also still continue to practice traditional ethnic rites as well. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. There are no ministry tools available in their language.

13200

Myene (41,828)

The Myene people mainly live in the Ogooue-Maritime and Moyen Ogooue provinces. Their territory stretches from Lambarene to the coast. The people who speak the Mpongwe dialect live on both sides of the Gabon Estuary which lies south of Libreville and the Port Gentil area. The people who speak the Ajumba dialect generally live north of Lambarene while the people who use the Enenga dialect have villages northeast of Lambarene. The people who use the Galwa dialect also live in the Lambarene area. The people who speak the Nkomi dialect generally live close to the coast just southeast of Port Gentil. Two alternate names for this people group are Omyene or Pangwe.

The Nkomi work as fishermen but may also seek work in the oil fields. The people have become closely associated with the Fang people and may have been partially subsumed into their ethnic group.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic. Only .2% of the people are evangelical Christian. The Bible had been translated into their language by 1927. Gospel recordings exist.

13203

Ndasa (2,872)

The Ndasa people live south of Franceville in the Haut Ogooue Province. They speak a language called Ndasa and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Andasa, Ndash, or Ndassa.

The people predominantly practice ethnic religions and participate in Roman Catholic mass. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The Bible has not been translated into their language and the Jesus film is not accessible. Gospel recordings can be found.

13204

Ngom (9,625)

The Ngom people live in the extreme northeast around Mekambo, but also have villages in the Ogooue-Lolo Province. They speak a language called Ngom and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Alternate names for this people group include Ungom, Angom, Bangom, Bangomo, Ongom, or Ngomo.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. Portions of the Bible had been translated by 1910. There are no other ministry tools available in their own language.

13205**Northern Teke (14,283)**

The Northern Teke people are found east of Franceville in the Haut Ogooue Province. The Northern Teke may have migrated to their current location sometime during the 1400's. They began to cultivate palm trees in order to sell palm oil and related products. The word "teke" may mean to "buy or trade." They speak a language called Northern Teke and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Njiningi and Tegekali are two dialects of the Teke language. Some alternate names for this people group include Teghe, Katege, Iteghe, Tege, Teke, or Ketego.

Today many of the Northern Teke people are agriculturalists who also enjoy hunting non-protected indigenous wild game.

While researchers generally list Christianity as the predominant religion of the Northern Teke people, only about .68% of the people are evangelical Christians. The majority of the people are listed as Christian adherents that often mean that the people have adopted certain Christian doctrines while still also continuing to practice certain traditional religious rites. The *butti* is an important fetish used by ethnoreligionists in their rites. The Kiduma is a secret society that uses masks and teaches its initiates about traditional religious customs and beliefs.

There are no ministry tools available in the Northern Teke language.

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13207**Nzebi (127,714)**

The Nzebi people inhabit villages west of Franceville, but their homeland also extends to the Lebamba area. They speak a language called Njebi and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Injebi, Yinzebi, Yinjebi, Njabi, Bandzabi, Ndjabi, or Ndjevi.

The Nzebis are active in the cultivation and production of tobacco, rubber, and groundnuts. In the past they participated in the slave trade. During World War I, they rebelled against the French presence in Gabon.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The Bible had been translated into their language by 1979. The Jesus film and other Christian videos are also accessible. Gospel recordings can be found. Tracts are also available.

The Peoples of Africa by James S. Olson

13208**Pinji (7,140)**

The Pinji live in villages that lie east of Mouila between Eleke and Fougamou in the Ngounie Province. They speak a language called Pinji and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. People may also speak the Getsogo language. Some alternate names for this people group include Gapinji, Apinji, Apindji, or Apindje.

The Pinji people may have originated from the area around the Upper Ogooue River. They were expert sailors but also traded goods like raphia cloth and iron products with neighboring peoples. Much of the population died during epidemics or famine between 1877 and 1922. The Bwiti ceremony, which is famous among the Fang people, actually started among the Pinji.

The people are predominantly ethnoreligionists or Roman Catholic. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The Bible has not been translated into their language and the Jesus film is inaccessible. Gospel recordings can be found.

From *The Historical Dictionary of Gabon* by David E. Gardinier and Douglas A. Yates

13209

Punu (146,820)

The Punu people live in the Nyanga and Ngounie provinces. They speak a language called Punu and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Ipunu, Yipunu, Pouno, Puno, or Yipounou.

Ethnoreligions use a mask called the "duma" or "mvudi" in female initiation ceremonies as well as funeral processions to symbolize a spirit. There is also a secret organization called the "Mukui" society. Sometimes the person who is wearing the mask will dance during the occurrence of a full moon. The dancer often uses stilts.

The people usually attend Roman Catholic Mass. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The New Testament had been translated by 1977. The Jesus film and other Christian videos are accessible. Gospel recordings exist. Tracts are also available.

13210

Sake (3,346)

The Sake people live in the Booue area of the Ogooue-Ivindo Province. They speak a language called Sake and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. They are ethnically similar to the Dambomo people. Some alternate name for this people group include Asake or Shake.

The Sake are known for their ability to produce different types of iron and copper products. This made this people group popular with the French colonists.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. There are no ministry tools available in their language.

13211**Sangu (28,573)**

The Sangu people live in the Ngounie Province. They speak a language called Sangu and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Isangu, Yisangu, Chango, Shango, and Yisangou.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. Portions of the Bible had been translated by 1959 and tracts are available. The Jesus film is inaccessible and gospel recordings do not exist.

13212**Seki (1,399)**

The Seki people live along the Northwest coast around Cocobeach. 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, or Seseki.

The Seki people were once very influential traders of ivory and redwood. Later, they worked with the European traders to procure slaves from people groups living in the interior part of Gabon. Today they mainly work as agriculturists or day laborers around the capital of Lambarene.

The Seki people are predominantly Protestants. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. There are no ministry tools in their language.

13213**Sighu (1,427)**

The Sighu people live in the Koulamoutou-Lastourville area of the Ogooue-Lolo Province. They speak a language called Sighu and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Lesighu or Mississiou.

The people primarily practice some form of Christianity. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. There are no ministry tools available in their language.

13214**Simba (4,285)**

The Simba people live in the Ogooue-Lolo Province. They speak a language called Simba and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. An alternate name for this people group is Nsindak.

The people predominantly practice indigenous religions. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. There are no ministry tools in their own language.

13215

Tsangi (5,975)

The Tsangi people live west and southwest of Franceville. They speak a language called Tsaangi and are part of the Central-Congo Bantu people cluster. They are ethnically linked to the Nzabi people. Some alternate names for this people group include Itsaangi, Itsangi, Icaangui, Tcengui, Tchangui, or Batsangui.

Most Tsangi only manage to grow enough food to provide for themselves and their families.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The Bible has not been translated into their language and the Jesus film is inaccessible. Gospel recordings exist.

13216

Tsogo (37,047)

The Tsogo people live north and east of Mouila in the Ngounie Province. They speak a language called Tsogo and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include Getsogo, Ghetsogo, or Mitsogo.

The Tsogo moved to their current location with the hope of escaping Bakele slave raiders but still suffered considerably at the hands of their foes. The French came and founded a military garrison in their region in 1899 which offered protection from other people groups; however, the French often demanded large amounts of products in exchange for such protection. Roman Catholic missionaries also established a presence among the Tsogo people at this time.

During the late 1930's, gold was discovered in the Tsogo territory and many different peoples invaded in order to prosper from the newfound riches. Today, most of the Tsogo people make a living agriculturally.

The people remain largely Roman Catholic. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The New Testament had been translated by 1983. Tracts and audio recordings are also available.

From *The Peoples of Africa* by James S. Olson

13217

Vili (4,311)

The Vili people live in the southern part of Gabon near Mayumba. They speak a language called Vili and are part of the Kongo Bantu people cluster. Yoombe is a dialect. Some alternate

names for this people group include Tsivili, Bavili, Civili, Fiote, or Fiot. Some people have learned to read and write in Ipunu or Lumbu.

The Vili people migrated to their present location sometime during the end of the 1200's and the beginning of the 1300's. They engaged in hunting, fishing, and farming, but also traded salt and palm cloth with other neighboring peoples.

With the advent of the Europeans, the Vili expanded their trade efforts to include ivory and later slaves. In the 1800's, many Vili worked for the French and gained an education in European ways and attitudes. This allowed some of them to become influential in Libreville and Port Gentil.

Women often supplement their incomes by weaving and selling mats in the marketplace. This provides them with funds to buy other essential products like soap. Mats are also used during the traditional courtship rituals.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The Bible has not been translated into their language. However, the Jesus film and other Christian videos are accessible. Gospel recordings also exist.

From *The Peoples of Africa* by James S. Olson
<http://www.mayumbanationalpark.com/mats.html>

13218

Vumbu (15,537)

The Vumbu people live west of Mouila in the Yetsou area. They speak a language called Vumbu and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. An alternate name for this people group is Yivoumbou. They often choose to intermarry with people from the Pygmy ethnic group.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The Bible has not been translated into their language and the Jesus film is inaccessible. Gospel recordings exist.

From *The Peoples of Africa* by James S. Olson

13219

Wandji (12,240)

The Wandji people live in Ogooue-Lolo and Haut Ogooue. They speak a language called Wandji and are part of the Central-Congo people cluster. An alternate name for this people group is Bawandji. They are ethnically tied to the Duma people.

The French colonial authorities enacted harsh punishment against the people and their leaders between 1928 and 1929 when the Wandji rebelled against the demands of the commercial company that controlled their area. The company tried to force people to work for

free and to pay a head tax. The company also refused to pay fair prices for goods brought by traders.

The Wandji people primarily attend Roman Catholic mass or practice ethnic religions. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The Bible has not been translated into their language and the Jesus film is inaccessible. Gospel recordings exist.

From *The Historical Dictionary of Gabon* by David E. Gardinier and Douglas A. Yates

13221

Western Teke (38,244)

The Western Teke people speak a language called Yaka and are part of the Northwest Bantu people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include West Teke, Yaa, or Iyaka.

There are several Teke groups throughout the Republic of the Congo and these living in Gabon. When combined, they are one of the largest ethnic groups. The French, who colonized this part of the Congo River, first gained authority in the area when a leader called the Makoko of the Tio kingdom signed a treaty with them. While the Makoko had some prestige among the Teke people, he did not possess complete authority. Sub-groups had their own leaders who, although supposedly served at the appointment and pleasure of the Makoko, functioned somewhat autonomously. When the last Makoko passed away in 1918, the French took control and appointed leaders who pledged loyalty to them.

Eighty percent of the population are “Christian adherents.” However, only .59% of the people are evangelical Christians. There are no ministry tools in their language.

Decalo, Samuel, Virginia Thompson, and Richard Adloff. *Historical Dictionary of the Congo: African Historical Dictionaries 69*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1996.

13222

Wolof (7,184)

The Wolof people are probably the most influential people group throughout West Africa. The Wolof had many opportunities to interact with the European colonists and learned much about education and European practices. They put that knowledge to good use as they became traders, merchants, and very influential members of the government.

Usually, the Wolofs belong to one of three brotherhoods—the Tijani, Mouridism, or Qadiri. Some women still practice traditional beliefs and most people believe that spirits must be appeased by following the orders of the marabout and by wearing amulets.

In rural areas, the Wolof mainly raises peanuts, sorghum, and millet. The peanuts are raised to sell while the millet is used as the staple crop. Women will also have gardens in order to have other types of food for consumption. A favorite dish of the Wolof is rice and fish. Men

will cut down the vegetation in an area and then plant their crops. Cutting down all the vegetation and overuse of the soil has led to poorer crop yields.

More and more Wolof head to the cities where they hope to find employment. In the city, both boys and girls are allowed to attend school. Women may become teachers or nurses or even enter other professions.

There is a very definite social strata in the Wolof culture. People may belong to a freeborn class. This class has the highest social rank but can also contain peasant farmers. People of nobility or high social rank are expected to behave very circumspectly in public both in their manner of dress and in their attitudes and actions. What might be permissible for a lowborn person would be frowned upon in one of high rank.

The second social strata is made of people whose ancestors were once slaves. The social rank in this class depends on what type of family owned the ancestors as slaves. If the family was owned by a high ranking family of the nobility, then the descendants have a higher ranking than those of a family whose former masters were peasants.

The third social class is a class of artisans. The artisan class will have blacksmiths, weavers, singers, and other types of specialized professionals. Blacksmith skills are greatly appreciated. Pottery, also a necessity in village life, is also greatly prized.

Polygamy is allowed. Men and women in the city are less likely to engage in polygamy than in rural areas because the women have more autonomy in their choices. Marriage across social castes is not generally allowed. In rural areas, extended families live in the same compound, but each wife will have her own house for herself and her children. In the city, there is a trend for nuclear families to live in separate houses from their extended families, but usually they will all live in the same neighborhood.

The Wolof are staunch Sunni Muslim. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The New Testament had been translated by 1988. The Jesus film and other Christian videos are accessible. Gospel recordings exist.

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Wumbvu (21,404)

The Wumbvu people live east of Lebamba in the Ngounie Province. They speak a language called Wumbvu and are part of the Central Congo people cluster. An alternate name for this people group is Wumvu.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. There are no ministry tools in their language.

Missiological Implications

1. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to aid the believers in Gabon to reach out to the peoples (*Baka, Pinji, Sangu, Simba, Wandji, Nadasa, Minduumo* traditional religions. The Evangelical groups should develop a methodology for sharing the Good News with followers of Traditional Religion and train local Christians in the use of the materials.
2. Evangelical Christians and churches should develop a methodology for sharing the Good News with Roman Catholics and train local believers in the use of the plan.
3. Evangelical Christians and churches should share in ways to provide Christian resources, especially Bible translations and the Jesus Film, to aid in the evangelization of these peoples (See People Group section for the many peoples that have limited or no Christian resources. The Jesus film is lacking among several people groups of significant sizes--for example the Kota, that have over 50.000 people, the *Lumbu* who number over 13,000, and the *Eshira* with more than 20000 population). At least 21 people groups have limited resources for teaching the Gospel.
4. Evangelical Christians and churches should cooperate with Christians and officials in Gabon to help curb the disaster that AIDS continues to inflict on these people. Sex education is a tremendous need.
5. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek ways to contribute to the relief of the physical needs in health and life sustaining materials in this country.
6. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek ways to train more teachers and Christian leaders in this nation.
7. Evangelical Christians and churches should keep Gabon and its peoples in the circle of prayer and concern.

Many people in Gabon are nominally Christian. They will attend mass or church on Sunday while also still visiting the *nganga* or participating in traditional ceremonies. Discipleship is desperately needed among new believers to educate them about the truths of the Bible as well as keeping them from falling back under the influence of traditional religious leaders. Believers also need sex education classes to inform them about HIV/ AIDS as well as to teach them the proper

biblical view of sexual relations between a man and his wife. Medical help is also always welcomed. Many of the converts who came to know Christ did so through religious schools. Teachers and administrators are also needed.

Pictures

