

The Avau of Papua New Guinea



The Avau people live on the southern coast and islands of West New Britain. Their vernacular language, Avau, has two dialects, but most adults can understand both dialects without any problems. Ten villages in all speak Avau. The total population of these villages is approximately 1,500 people.

They make their living by selling produce and goods to their neighbors, especially within the language area, and other travelers. Copra, which is made out of coconuts, is their only cash crop. Produce and animals such as greens, sweet potatoes, fish, pigs and coconuts are also sold within the villages. The Avau people must rely on personal sales as there are no trade stores within the language boundaries. Only a few Avau people have found work with a timber company located to the west of Gasmata.

Water travel is used frequently by the Avau people, due to their location. Canoes are the most widely used mode of transportation, and dinghies are used occasionally. Travel by air is highly rare, but travel on foot is common.

Children and adults alike speak their vernacular language a majority of the time, even if they speak other languages such as English, Tok Pisin, or even a neighboring language.

There are only three churches in the entire Avau language area, two of which are Roman Catholic. The other is the Apostolic Local Church, which began in 2008 and has very limited membership. The Avau people are very interested in having a Bible in their language.

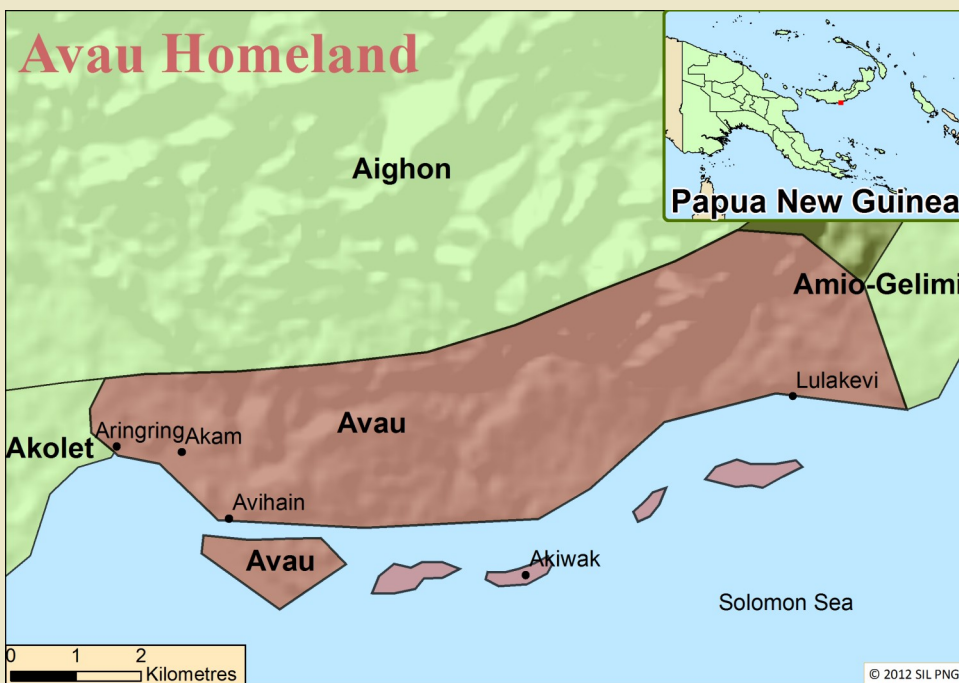
Primary Religion:
 Christianity

Disciples (Matt 28:19):
 60%

Churches:
 3

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):
 None

Population (date):
 1,500



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

| | |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Call Themselves Christian | 95% |
| Believe In Jesus As God And Only Savior | 60% |
| Comment | Percent based off of reported church attendance |
| Believe In The Local Traditional Religion | 35% |
| Comment | Percent based off of use of magic, sorcery, etc. |
| Have Not Heard Who Jesus is | 0% |
| Number Of Pastors | 3 |
| Attitude to Christianity Comment | Somewhat receptive The Avau people have taken to the Roman Catholic church, which is shown by the low numbers of people joining the Apostolic Local Church since it started in 2008. There are a good number of people who have been baptized into the church, but who don't regularly attend church or church activities. |
| Number Of Churches Comment | 3 Two are Roman Catholic, and one is the Apostolic Local Church, which was started in 2008. Only a few people left the Catholic church to join the ALC. |
| Number of Communities | 10 |
| History of Christianity: Year Began By Whom | 1938 Papua New Guinean catechists from Pililo came and started the church in Valonguo. The Anglicans were reportedly in the area before this, but left prior to the Catholics arriving. |
| Is The Word Of God Translated? | Tok Pisin - Yes, Avau - No |

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Group Description

Geography & Environment

Comment

The Avau language area is located on the southern coast of West New Britain. Some villages are located along the coast while others are on small islands. Avau is the vernacular language of ten villages.

Literacy

Literacy Attitude

Comment

Somewhat receptive

Many adults in the Avau area can read and write fairly well in English and/or Tok Pisin, but "not big words."

Economics

Subsistence Type

Comment

Craftsmen

The sale of goods to neighbors, especially within the language area, and visitors is how most Avau people make their living.

Income Sources

Avau people make money by selling goods to their neighbors and those who visit their village.

Products / Crafts

Copra is their only cash crop and is often sold to ships that travel by their villages. Things such as greens, sweet potatoes, fish, pigs, coconuts, and betel nuts are also sold within the villages. A few Avau people are employed by a timber company that lies to the west of Gasmata. There are no trade stores in the Avau language area.

Trade Partners

Trade with neighboring language areas used to be common, but has stopped almost completely.

Community Development

Health Care

Comment

Fair

The Gasmata Health Centre is the only available source of medical care and it is easily accessible by canoe, though weather can often make it more challenging.

Transportation

As the Avau language area is on the coast and contains islands, water travel is widely utilized. Travel by canoe is the most commonly used. Dinghies are used less often. Even though air travel is within a reasonable distance, it is almost never used. There aren't many roads, but the few there are seem to be used fairly regularly. PMVs are available in select places that can be reached by walking.

Infant Mortality Rate

4%

Life Expectancy

63.83 years (national average according to <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/fact book/index.html>)

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Society & Culture

Neighbor Relations

The Avau people have good relations with their neighbors. They no longer trade with each other as they used to do, but groups that used to be enemies with various villages of the Avau people are now on friendly terms.

Authority / Rule

Each village is composed of clans and each clan has a chief who is in charge of traditional matters, such as planning feasts and settling disputes. Each village also has one chief who is in charge of the rest. The chieftainship is passed down from father to son. Since men marry women from other clans and the son is considered a member of his mother's clan, the chieftainship changes clans each generation.

Identification With National Culture

Similar

Self Image

Prestigious

Comment

The Avau people are proud of their language and are eager to see a Bible in their vernacular. Adults and children alike speak primarily Avau no matter where they are, even though many can speak or understand neighboring languages.

Judicial / Punishment System

There is little to no crime reported by the villages of the Avau people other than petty theft.

Education

Primary Schools

6

Primary School Enrollment

38%

Language of Instruction Early Years

Tok Pisin and English are the primary languages of instruction at five of the six schools. Only three teachers are reported to be able to speak Avau. Since both teachers at Valonguo VTPS can speak Avau it may be used for instruction there.

Language of Textbooks Early Years

Books are only available in Tok Pisin and English.

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Status of Christianity

Church Growth

Total Baptized

Comment

Almost all have been baptized and most have continued to be confirmed.

Scripture

Scripture Use

Comment

Comment

Majority of the churches

Tok Pisin Bible used.

All pastors interview said they would like to use an Avau Bible in their services and that it would help the people understand it better.

Missions and Churches

Organization #1

Roman Catholic Church

Country of Origin

Papua New Guinea

Year Began

1938

Number of Adherents

95%

Number of Congregations

2

Organization #2

Apostolic Local Church

Country of Origin

Papua New Guinea

Year Began

2008