

## The Buwal of Cameroon

Between the hills of Cameroon’s “Far North,” scattered groups of Chadic peoples spread their clan-based villages on the open plains. This usually warm Sahel region stays dry most of the year, prompting its inhabitants to spend the bulk of their time outside. Huts protect their meager supplies and shelter them while they sleep.

When the short rainy season comes, gardens and fields sprout, providing sustenance that Buwal families will ration for the rest of the year. The farmers dig with hand tools and plow using donkeys or cattle. In addition to needed vegetables and staples, some grow cotton as a cash crop. They work feverishly while the weather allows because they know that soon, temperatures of over 100 degrees Fahrenheit will shrivel whatever vegetation is left.

Over several centuries, the Buwal people have continually resisted waves of invasion pressing them to convert to another major religion. Into the backdrop of African traditional religion, Christians from other parts of Cameroon brought the Gospel to this area in the 1970s. Concurrently, government schools and health clinics are open. By the 1990s, the majority of Buwal speakers had been baptized as Christians, but churches used the majority language, also spoken by their aggressive neighbors who don’t share their religion.

Now that churches have received a few portions in their mother tongue, believers have tasted the difference Scripture in their language will make and they are eager for more. These new Scriptures will also



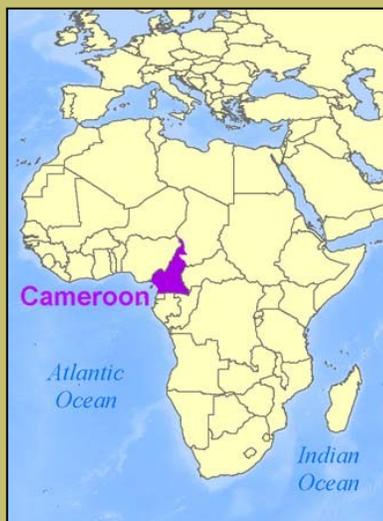
**Primary Religion:**  
Ethnic Religions

**Disciples (Matt 28:19):**  
12%

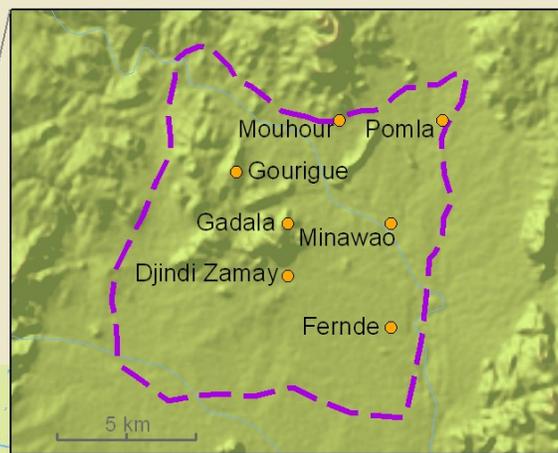
**Churches:**  
2

**Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):**  
Bible portions

**Population (date):**  
7,000 (2001)



### BUWAL HOMELAND



## The Buwal of Cameroon

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### Have They Heard The Gospel?

Call Themselves Christian	Greater than 50%
Believe In Jesus As God and Only Savior	5-20%
Prophet/Good Man/Not God's Son	40%
Believe in Local Traditional Religion	Greater than 50%
Have No Heard Who Jesus Is	Less than 2%
Is The Word of God Translated?	No
Hindrances to Scripture Distribution	Low literacy rate; Buwal's relatively small population may place it low on the priority list for language development. Even when including Gavar in a possible Buwal translation project the combined population is about 10,000. Literacy in Fulfulde might be an alternate strategy.
Kind of Missionaries Are Needed	Someone to develop the Buwal language and to include Gavar in the process and other languages of the sub-family of which Buwal is a part.

## The Buwal of Cameroon

### Group Description

#### Geography and Environment

Location

South of Mokolo, which is a major town near Nigeria and also due west of Cameroon's Far North Province capitol, Maroua.

Climate

Hot and dry

#### Language/Linguistics

Comment

There is a 90% lexicostatistical similarity shared by Buwal and the neighboring language of Gavar. Survey report of Brye (2000) and Cameroon administration recommends developing Buwal and including Gavar into the standard. Residents from both Gadala (Buwal's main village) and Kortchi (Gavar's main village) state that their residents understand the other's speech due to regular contact. Speakers of each language use their own mother tongue and are understood by speakers of the other language. Buwal and Gavar speech varieties are next to each other, and their proximity fosters regular contact at several markets in the area. The two groups intermarry. Other languages of the same linguistic sub-family that are related to Buwal are: Hina (Mesleri), Daba (already has a New Testament), and Mbedam belong to the same linguistic sub-family, and all these languages are related to Buwal. Geographically, the Buwal speaking area is surrounded by Mefele to the north and northwest, Gavar to the west and south, and Fulfulde along the eastern side from north to south.

Attitude Towards Mother Tongue

Very receptive

Second Language

Fulfulde

Comment

Some, perhaps almost all Buwal speakers also speak Fulfulde. Bilingualism in Fulfulde is sufficient for market work. They generally have a low level of competence in French due to the low level of education. (French is the language of education in Cameroon's Far North Province.) Some bilingualism exists with Gavar, Mefele, Cuvok, Mofu, and Mbedam. Buwal speakers understand Gavar better than Mbedam. Older people and those who do not leave their Buwal villages do not understand Gavar. Buwal children acquire Fulfulde by the time they are ten years of age; but surveyors did not measure their degree of competence in Fulfulde. Only those who attend school learn French.

#### Literacy

Adult Literacy

Low

Literacy Attitude

Very receptive

## The Buwal of Cameroon

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### Community Development

Water

The people have water.

Shelter

Mud houses

Transportation

Many Buwal villages are accessible by road that does not require a 4-wheel drive.

### Society & Culture

Authority/Rule

Chiefs over villages, 'quarter-masters' over neighborhoods with the village.

Cultural Change pace

Slow

Attitude to Outsiders

Somewhat receptive

Comment

The good dirt road that goes through several of the Buwal villages fosters contact with outsiders. The Buwal speaking area is only a few miles from the main paved road that extends from the major city of Mokolo and Maroua. Drivable roads pass by most Buwal villages, enabling intercommunication of Buwal speakers whereas the Gavar- speaking area is more remote.

Attitude To Change

Somewhat receptive

### Education

Language Of Instruction Early Years

French

Language Of Textbooks Early Years

French

Comment

School enrollment and percent eligible to be enrolled are both low.

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### Status of Christianity

#### Church Growth

Number of Communities	5 to 6
Comment	Roman Catholic and Baptist churches re present. According to
a	Baptist interviewed during surveyors' research, the Baptist are the larger religious group.

#### Religion / Response

Religious Practices and Ceremonies	Buwal and Gavar speakers share common traditions and culture.
Attitude to Christianity	Somewhat receptive

#### Scripture

Translation Status	Definite need
Comment	There is an expressed interest among Buwal speaking Christians that Bible translation should begin in their language. The Buwal project, with Scripture portions already published, has provided inspiration and impetus for this group of languages as a cluster project. The mobilization stage is essential. It will unify the area's diverse churches and publicize the possibility of language development, appealing to both Christians and non-believers in these people groups. As the mobilizer lays the groundwork, the teams will be translating narrative material and recording it for audio distribution, making Scripture available to their people. This is a sensible first step, as most people prefer oral to written communication in the Buwal society.

#### Mission/Churches

Organization	Roman Catholic Church
Organization	Union des Eglises Baptistes du Cameroun