



The Lobi of West Africa

The Lobi are a large ethnic group of approximately 450,000 speakers. Almost two thirds of the group, 285,000, are found in Burkina Faso, while just over one third, 156,000, are located in Cote d'Ivoire's northeastern corner. Ghana also has scattered villages along the Volta River.

The Lobi are subsistence farmers. While millet is their staple crop, they grow also maize, peanuts, yams, and beans. They generally earn money through the sale of surplus crops.

Like other ethnic groups, a major concern for the Lobi is health care. Their diet, usually a millet paste with a vegetable sauce, lacks certain vitamins. As a result, malnutrition is a great problem. Other diseases are common as well: measles, malaria, meningitis, and AIDS take their toll on the population. Many Lobi consult the traditional healers when sick; this is due in part to lack of modern dispensaries and part out of tradition.

The traditional religion is strong, especially in Burkina Faso. According to their worldview, the world is inhabited by spirits; man can appease them, thus avoiding sickness, poor harvest and other hardships, by sacrificing to them. Islam has made few inroads into the people group.

The Christian community is quite large, relatively speaking- almost 14% of the total population, including the Catholics. In Burkina Faso there are only 5,000 evangelical Protestant believers in some 85 churches; in Cote d'Ivoire, the number of both, believers and churches are even fewer. Pray that the Lord will raise up Lobi to evangelize their own people.

While a New Testament translation already exists in one Lobiri dialect in Burkina Faso, another one will be needed for the people in Cote d'Ivoire. The Old Testament translation has begun in Burkina Faso too. Pray for the translators in these projects. Pray also that the Lobi will have the motivation to learn to read and write so they may benefit from the translated Word and gain from general written materials.

Primary Religion:

Animism

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

Churches:

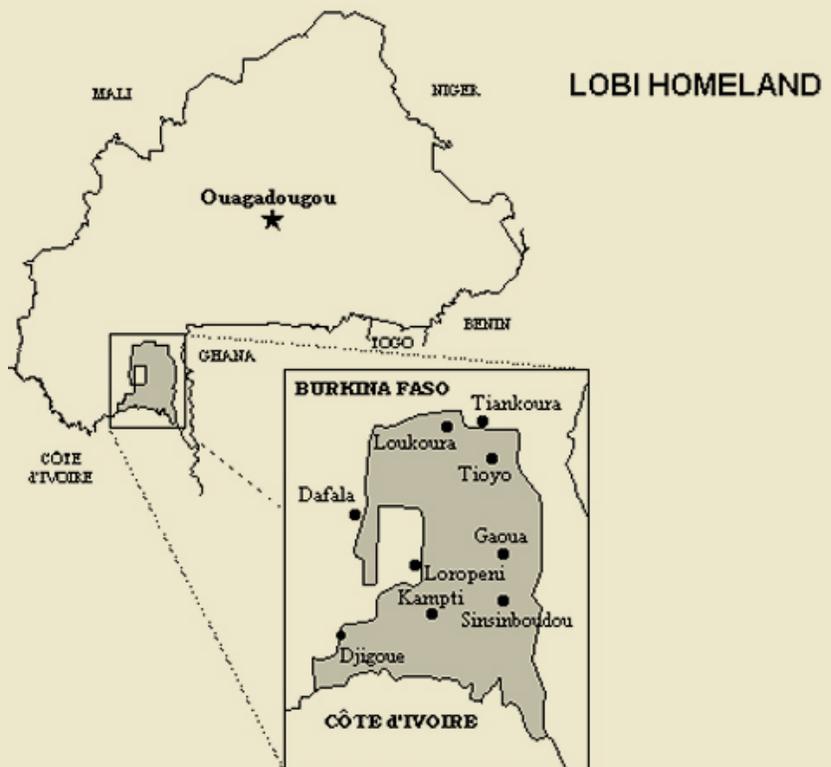
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Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

New Testament

Population (date):

450,000 (1996)



The Lobi of West Africa

Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Call Themselves Christian (%)	14	
Comment (Jesus As God & Only Savior)	work in progress	
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	5	
Have Not Heard Who Jesus is (%)	31	
Number Of Pastors	65	
Number Of Missionaries Working	12	
Number Of Churches	85	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	Yes, in Burkina Faso, the New Testament.	
Translation Medium	printed	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	Illiteracy is still quite high. Many Christian are used to the pastor spoon-feeding them. As Christians become literate they do buy the Scriptures and what is available and they can afford.	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	Films translated on the spot, cassette recordings, weekly radio broadcast.	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	The church can evangelize, but needs assistance in teaching, training and disciple making and some encouragement, stimulation and direction.	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	450000	
World Population (Date)	1996	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Burkina Faso	
Country Name	Côte d'Ivoire	
Country Name	Burkina Faso	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	Southwestern Burlina Faso, Poni and Noubiel provinces, around the town of Gaoua.	
Country	Burkina Faso	
Ecosystem Type	Scrub Forest	
Geological Type	Plains	
Elevation	200 to 400 meters a. s.	
Longitude	3-4	
Latitude	10	
Climate	Hot the year round. Very dry and somewhat cooler in December and January, accelerating to be very much hotter and more and more humid until the rains start in June through to September. Hot and humid in October, getting dryer and cooler towards November/December.	
Language & Linguistics		Group Description
Comment (Language)	The people are Lobi and the language they speak is Lobiri or Miv.	
Alternate Language Names	Lobiire, Lobi, Miwa	
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Somewhat receptive	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	BIRIFOR, MALBA	
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Comment (On Other Mother Tongues)	This is the trade language and is spoken mainly by the men, mostly only for trading purposes. Jula is the trade language in the southwest, but spoken with less proficiency than further west, as most use Birifor to do trade. French is the official language in Burkina Faso. It is the medium of almost all formal education and of government administration. The extent of knowledge of it is largely dependent of the number of years spent in formal education and use of it.	

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Item Name	Item Note	
Linguistically Related Languages	TEEN	
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Comments (Related Languages)	Also Tiefo and Vige	
Neighboring Languages	BIRIFOR, MALBA	
Neighboring Languages	DYAN	
Literacy		Group Description
Adult Literacy Percentage	1.9	
Literacy Attitude	Somewhat receptive	
Active Literacy Program	Yes	
Publications In Vernacular	50	
Comment (Literacy)	<p>There is quite a lot of Sunday school books, Bible school material, pastors guide, the New Testament and parts of the Old Testament.</p> <p>But illiteracy is still quite high. But it is said to be 19% not as the System falsely puts it. Moreover this is the literacy rate of the country of Burkina Faso, not necessarily the rate of the Lobiri area.</p> <p>Those who have been educated in primary schools are literate in French, but are in danger to loose their knowledge again, because they lack money, time and motivation to go on reading in French.</p> <p>The Churches offer literacy courses in Lobiri. Christians are quite eager to learn.</p>	
Economics		Group Description
Subsistence Type	Agriculturalists	
Average Annual Income	300\$	
Occupation	Subsistence farmers, small businesses, carpentry and small engine mechanics in Gaoua and other towns.	
Income Sources	Sale of surplus farm produce and earnings from their trades.	
Products / Crafts	Pottery and baskets mostly for utilitarian purposes. Millet, maize, beans. They are also known for their sculptures.	
Trade Partners	Mossi and Jula traders	
Modernization / Utilities	The capital in the area GAOUA has electricity. Flashlights are used in the area.	
Comment (Economy)	The figure of the average income is the UNICEF figure for Burkina Faso as a whole. It does not reflect the income earned by bartering and the assets like livestock.	
Community Development		Group Description
Health Care (Quality)	Poor	
Comment (Health Care)	Health care is available, but it is not sufficient for all the people. There are pharmacies and dispensaries in many villages.	
Diet (Quality)	Poor	
Comment (Diet)	Millet is the staple, which is usually eaten with a vegetable sauce, and very occasionally with a little meat. Many important nutrients are missing in the every day diet.	
Water (Quality)	Fair	
Comment (Water)	Water is supplied by village dams and wells, some of them very deep boreholes. But contamination is a problem and water born diseases and guinea-worms are quite common.	
Shelter Description	Mud fortresses with small windows and mud roofs . The houses are traditionally built in mud layers rather than with mud bricks.	
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	Fair	
Comment (Energy)	Firewood is the main source of cooking energy and for warmth. Kerosene is used in small quantities for lamps. Flashlights are also used. GAOUA the provincial capital has electricity.	
Clothing	Cloth is mainly produced in Burkina Faso and neighboring countries and fashioned by local tailors. Large quantities of second hand imported clothing of all sorts is available. Women wear African skirts and tops, men wear more western style clothing, and children mostly wear second hand clothing.	

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Item Name	Item Note
Transportation	Walkin is the primary mode of traffic, followed by bicycles, mopeds and motorbikes. From GAOUA some public transportation is available for longer journeys.
Infant Mortality Rate	16%
Life Expectancy	47 years
Leading Cause Of Death	untreated illnesses
Comment (Community Development)	The child mortality rate and the life expectancy is the one figure for the whole of Burkina Faso by UNICEF.

Society & Culture

Group Description

Family Structures	The mothers side of the family is traditionally the important bloodline. The people live rather independently within their own clans. Initiation rites are important for membership in the family clan.
Neighbor Relations	The Lobi are somewhat resistant to ethnic neighbors who have invaded their living areas since land disputes can arise.
Authority / Rule	Each village is independent, with its own chiefs. There is traditionally a chief and a group of elders. They all maintain the authority in the village. Large issues are taken to the civil authorities.
Social Habits/Groupings	Market days provide the chief social interaction.
Cultural Change Pace	Slow
Identification With National Culture	Integrated
Self Image	Neutral
Judicial / Punishment System	Authority in the villages are the elders and the chief. for big issues they call on the civil authorities.
Celebrations	Initiation rites and funerals are the most important celebrations.
Recreations	Young people are playing soccer. Older men hunt together or mainly drink beer and talk and visit together. Women have little recreation but enjoy to visit each other often at the market.
Art Forms	sculpture work, pottery, baskets.
Media	Radio broadcasting 30 minutes per week in Lobiri from the local Gaoua radio station, other broadcasting in their mother tongue is less than 20 minutes daily.
Local Language Broadcasting	20 minutes to 1 hour daily
Attitude To Outsiders	Indifferent
Attitude To Change	Somewhat receptive
Comment (Culture)	Traditionally they have been resistant to change, but tend to show more openness today. If the Lobi see benefit coming from change, they are very much for it.

Youth

Group Description

Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)	Generally the children assist their parents in all farming and domestic tasks as is appropriate for their age as soon as they are able.
Youth Problems (Teens)	Lack of employment opportunities has driven many young people out of their villages. That creates much family conflict
Youth Greatest Needs (teens)	Employment opportunities. There is need to find the balance between modern expectations, population growth and reality.
Comment (Youth)	They get to know modern ideas and innovations which raise a lot of hope, but in reality there are not so many options for them as it seems to offer.

Education

Group Description

Percent Of Eligible Students Enrolled	20
Teacher To Pupil Ratio	57
Language Of Instruction Early Years	French
Language Of Textbooks Early Years	French
Language Of Instruction Later Years	French
Language Of Textbooks Later Years	French

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Item Name

Comment (Education)

Item Note

The figures listed are for the whole province including the major towns, where the percentage of children attending school is considerably higher. It seems to, they have only included the villages in which there are schools. An increasing number of village schools have opened in the last few years.

Church Growth

Status of Christianity

Reached Status

Adopted

Bible Schools

1

Christian Literacy Centers

85

Comment (Church Growth)

Each church conducts literacy classes.
There is a mobile clinic, but its services are waning.
The above figures are only for the Protestant population, stated by the WEC International; the statistics for the other groups are not available.

Religion & Response

Status of Christianity

Religious Practices & Ceremonies

Every seven years there are initiation rites, to allow a young person to become an adult in the clan.
Many consult which doctors and traditional healers.
Funerals are also very important.

Attitude To Christianity

Indifferent

Attitude To Religious Change

Somewhat resistant

Resistance / Receptivity

Recently they have been more open to change.
It is not so clear how deep this openness is.

Religious Analogies & Bridges

Upon birth, the Lobi are dedicated to an idol.
They could be dedicated to the living God.

Spiritual Climate And Openness

Today the church seems to be firmly established in the Lobi society, in spite of relatively few adherents.

Comment (Religion)

Animism 81%
Christianity 14%
Islam 5%

Recommended Approaches

Radio has been an effective way to reach many people.

Current Needs

Pray that the practice of initiation rites will crumble. These rites and the dedicating of the new born to an idol and all sorts of occult practices have still a strong hold on people.

Items For Prayer

Pray that the Gospel is really understood and that Christianity takes root in the daily lives of the people.

History Of Christianity In Group

Status of Christianity

Year Began

37

By Whom

WEC International

Significant Events

When Christians came first to the villages to witness to the Lobi, there was a man who had had a vision and been waiting ten years for a white man carrying a black book.

Comments (History of Christianity)

Work was actually begun by Qua Iboo Fellowship from Nigeria in 1932, and was handed over to WEC in 1937.

Scripture

Status of Christianity

Translation Status

Scripture

Available Scripture

New Testament

Form Of Scripture Available

Printed

Scripture Use

5

Scripture Use

Majority of churches

Comment (Scripture)

A New Testament was completed in 1965 and a revised New Testament printed in 1986. Portions of the Old Testament have been translated. There is quite a bit of Christian literature available in Lobiri:
Reading primers, Sunday school material, Bible school material, a children's picture Bible, pastors guides, and portions of the Old Testament.

Missions and Churches

Status of Christianity

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Item Name	Item Note
Organization Name	WEC International
Main Ministry	Church Planting
Year Started	37
Number Of Adherents	5000
Number Of Expatriate Workers	12
Number Of National Workers	65
Number Of Local Workers	65
Number Of Workers Using Local Language	77
Language Used By Workers	Lobi
Organization Name	Roman Catholic Church
Main Ministry	Church Planting
Main Ministry	Church Planting

Christian Literature And Media Status

Status of Christianity

Literature Available	see comments on Scriptures
Audio Recordings Available	Some recordings exist, but they need revision.
Films Available	Christian films of other languages are shown in the churches, and then translated on the spot.
Radio Programs Available	The church is given half an hour weekly.