

The Nakame of Papua New Guinea



Boy in a tree by K.M.Johnson cropped cropped CC

The Nakame people live in the Saruwaged mountain range in Morobe Province in a mixture of villages and hamlets ranging from 600 to 1000m above sea level. From the southern villages it is possible to catch a PMV (Public Motorised Vehicle) to Lae, the provincial capital, which takes about 3 hours when the road is open. During the rainy season, landslides often close the road.

The people live in houses built on posts between one and one and a half metres above the ground. Houses were traditionally made with woven bamboo floors and walls and thatched roofs of grass. Habitat for Humanity has been working in the area and now some houses are made of lumber and have tin roofs, while others are built in the traditional way.

People mainly eat what they grow in their gardens. Staple foods are taro, sweet potato, yam and cooking bananas. They grow a variety of fruit and vegetables, including a fruit that is a cross between a cucumber and a cantaloupe melon which is only grown in this part of the world. They also grow and sell coffee.

Christianity was introduced to the Nakame area in the first half of the 20th century. Now everyone calls him or herself a Christian. Despite the official practice of Christianity, belief in the traditional religion remains strong. Lack of scriptures in their heart language has led to misunderstandings of spiritual truths. The Nakame people currently read the Bible in Tok Pisin. They would like the Bible in their own language. As one man expressed it: 'Tok Pisin doesn't have meaning'.

Primary Religion:

Christian

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

5—30%

Churches:

15

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

None

Population (date):

1,540 (2000)



NAKAME HOMELAND



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Response to the Gospel	Everyone in the language area would claim to be a Christian. However, many still believe in their traditional religion and magic is still practiced in the area. A number of people in the area believe there are hidden secrets in the Bible that will enable them to get cargo. Everyone in the area is baptized as a child.
Estimated Number of Christian Congregations	15
Is the Word of God Translated?	There is no scripture translated into Nakame. Tok Pisin scripture is available, and for some of the young people in some of the villages, this is their mother tongue. Scripture is also available in Kâte [kmg].
Other Forms of Gospel Presentations	
Recordings:	None
Literature:	None
Films/videos:	None
Radio:	None
Bible Stories:	None
Hindrances to Scripture Use	There is no scripture currently translated into Nakame. Also, there are four mutually difficult or unintelligible dialects of Nakame It would take at least three translations to reach all of the Nakame speakers.
Bilingualism	Language use is vigorous. An estimated 5% are monolingual. Some young people, however, speak Tok Pisin as their mother tongue.
Language of Wider Communication or Trade Language	Tok Pisin

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Group Description

Geography & Environment

Location	Morobe province: west and northwest of Boana Saruwaged Range south side.
Topography	Tropical forest on mountain slopes
Communities	12; Some of these are hamlets connected with larger villages. There may be other hamlets. 6 villages.

Language

Alternate Names	Nakama
Dialects	North Nakame, South Nakame
Other Mother Tongues	Tok Pisin
Neighboring Languages	Nek [nif], Nuk [noc], Nafi [srf], Numanggang [nop]

Literacy

Men	71%
Women	59%
Adult Literacy Program?	Yes

Economics

Type	Swidden agriculturalists
Occupation	Subsistence farmers
Income Sources	Coffee, garden produce
Products/Crafts	String bags, hand held drums
Modernization/Utilities	Some villages have running water. Habitat for Humanity has been working in some of the villages, introducing houses made of lumber with tin roofs

Community Development

Health Care	There are two aid posts in the language area
Diet	There is a variety of food and plenty of it. Staple foods are sweet potatoes, taro, yams, and cooking bananas. There is a shortage of meat and other sources of protein.
Water	some of the villages have tap water in them. The other villages have streams nearby.

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Shelter Description	The houses are built on posts about one to one and a half metres above the ground. Traditionally the walls and floors are made of woven bamboo and the roofs are thatched with grass. There are now some houses made with lumber and tin for the roofs, constructed with the help of Habitat for Humanity working in some of the villages.
Electricity	One or two houses have solar power
Fuel	There is plenty of wood available
Clothing	Secondhand, western style
Transportation	Walking. There are one or two cars in the area. PMVs (Public, Motorised Vehicles) can be taken from some of the villages to go to Lae
Infant Mortality Rate	5%
Life Expectancy	65
Comment:	The infant mortality rate and the life expectancy given are the national averages. It seems likely that the infant mortality rate is higher and the life expectancy lower than these figures.

Society and Culture

Family Structures	Patrilineal society. People belong to an extended family within the village.
Neighbor Relations	Generally good relations
Authority / Rule	Church and government leaders work together
Social Habits / Groupings	People live together in villages and hamlets of between 40 and 350 people ⁴ .
Cultural Change Pace	Culture is changing more rapidly in the southern villages on the road.
Celebrations	Christmas, weddings
Recreations	Chewing betel nut, story telling, playing sports

Education

Primary Schools	1 plus 4 elementary schools
Secondary Schools	0
Secondary School Enrollment	26+
Instruction Early Years	Nakame
Language of Textbooks	English
Instruction Later Years	English

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Status of Christianity

History of Christianity

Year Began	Missionaries introduced Christianity somewhere between the 1930s and 1950s.
By Whom	Lutheran missionaries

Religion and Response

Translation status	There is a need for Bible translation into Nakame. Some outside assistance would be needed for this, but as a computer adaptation may be a realistic option, the program may not need to be a traditional program. Many still practice and believe their ancestral ethnic religion.
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Missions and Churches

Organization #1	Evangelical Lutheran Church
Adherents	1400 (the majority)
Number of Congregations	11—in each of the villages and most of the hamlets
Number of workers	1
Language Used by Workers	A mixture of Nakame and Tok Pisin is used
Organization #2	Revival
Year Started	1994
Adherents	24
Number of Congregations	1
Organization #3	Pentecostal
Year Started	1990s
Adherents	10 families
Number of Congregations	1
Organization #4	New Apostolic
Year Started	1993
Adherents	35+
Number of Congregations	2
Number of Workers	2