



Western Karaboro of Burkina Faso

The Syem, or Western Karaboro, are one of the many small groups inhabiting the southwestern corner of Burkina Faso. As far as culture is concerned, they are quite similar to the Kai, or Eastern Karaboro. Linguistically, however, their speech varieties are quite distinct. That is the reason for this separate profile.

The Syem live in a pretty region: their homeland is dotted with hills and small lakes. While the Kai are noted for their millet and maize farming, the Syem focus less on that. Their main crop is rice. They are also involved in various crafts and money making trades: they produce palm wine, grow vegetables to be sold at the local market, make pottery, weave baskets, and other things.

As far as development needs of the group, the Syem are better off than many peoples of Burkina. A hospital is within 10 miles (15km) of most Syem villages. At least five of eleven Syem villages have elementary schools. Middle and high schools are quite close. However, much could be done regarding local health education and nutrition.

The Syem are almost entirely Muslim. Their occupation as merchants encourages this attachment. Non Muslims have a hard time establishing themselves in the local markets. It is also a question how much they still adhere to traditional religion.

In any event, the Gospel has had very little success in penetrating the Syem culture. Pray that the Lord opens hearts to His truth. A further complication is that the Gospel will probably only be presented to them in the Jula language, which is a second language to them. They are very proficient in Jula, but it is not the language of their heart. Pray that the Lord uses His means in his timing. As a final prayer request, pray that the Syem will be stimulated to become literate in Jula. This will greatly help them in all basic education, learning about agriculture and health and it may also open up the spiritual truth they so very much need.

Primary Religion:

Islam, Muslim-Animism

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

Churches:

2

Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

None in their language

Population (date):

24,000 (1996)



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Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Comment (Jesus As God & Only Savior)	very few	
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	90	
Have Not Heard Who Jesus is (%)	10	
Number Of Pastors	2	
Number Of Communities	11	
Number Of Churches	2	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	No	
Translation Medium	Only in Jula, their second language.	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	It is unusual for those who are not Christians to see the need to buy the Scriptures. Evangelism and discipleship must take place among the Syem before they will make use of the Scriptures.	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	Only in Jula.	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	For evangelization, church planting, literacy, Christian teaching and example.	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	24000	
World Population (Date)	1996	
World Population (Urban Percent)	3600	
Comment (World Population)	The people are called Syem. In Burkina Faso there are 19,500 of them. 4,000 to 5,000 are in Cote d'Ivoire.	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Burkina Faso	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	Southwestern Burkina Faso, 10 to 20 km from Banfora	
Country	Burkina Faso	
Ecosystem Type	Scrub Forest	
Geological Type	Plains	
Elevation	200 to 400 meters	
Longitude	5W	
Latitude	11N	
Climate	hot year round, cooler and dry in December and January, warm and dry in February hot and humid in March through May, warm and rainy June through September, again hot and humid in October, and hot and dry in November.	
Language & Linguistics		Group Description
Comment (Language)	The Syem speak Syer, their mother tongue at home or anywhere where there are other Syem. Only in the market or around non Syer speakers they use Jula, their trade language.	
Alternate Language Names	Syer, Tenyer is the name of the same language spoken in Tengrela	
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Somewhat receptive	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	JULA	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	JULA	
Comment (On Other Mother Tongues)	Jula is the language of commerce. French is the official language in Burkina and is the medium of almost all formal education and of government administration. The extent of knowledge and use is largely dependent on the number of years spent in formal education.	
Linguistically Related Languages	KARABORO, EASTERN	

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Item Name	Item Note	
Linguistically Related Languages	KARABORO, EASTERN	
Comments (Related Languages)	All of the Senoufo languages	
Neighboring Languages	CERMA	
Literacy		Group Description
Literacy Attitude	Very receptive	
Active Literacy Program	Yes	
Comment (Literacy)	Some Syem are literate in Jula, as the literacy program, which is government run, is in Jula. They are interested in having written materials on health and agriculture.	
Economics		Group Description
Subsistence Type	Agriculturalists	
Average Annual Income	300\$	
Occupation	Farming by most people, some have jobs in Berekadougou and Banfora. Many have jobs in Cote d'Ivoire.	
Income Sources	Sale of agricultural products, especially rice.	
Products / Crafts	Palm vine, pottery and baskets.	
Trade Partners	Neighboring ethnic groups at the local markets. Wholesalers from the larger cities come into the area for rice and other commodities.	
Modernization / Utilities	None.	
Comment (Economy)	As a result of a somewhat predictable rainy season, and of their proximity to Banfora , the Syem have been able to establish an economy based on the sale of their agricultural products, rather than being subsistence farmers only.	
Community Development		Group Description
Health Care (Quality)	Poor	
Comment (Health Care)	There is no dispensary in the Syer area. The Syem must go to Berekadougou or Banfora, which is at least 10 km from most villages, for health care. There is a hospital in Banfora.	
Diet (Quality)	Fair	
Comment (Diet)	Millet or maize is the staple, eaten with a vegetable sauce, occasionally with some meat and fish.	
Water (Quality)	Poor	
Comment (Water)	Simple wells are the main source of water. Some villages have dams. Parasitic infections are common.	
Shelter Description	Rounds homes made from sun baked mud bricks, with a thatched roof. The homes are arranged around a common courtyard, each courtyard , each courtyard housing an extended family.	
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	None	
Comment (Energy)	Firewood is the main energy source for those in the villages, and is used for cooking and warmth. Kerosene is used in small quantities for lamps. Flashlights are also used. Electricity is available in Berekadougou and Banfora.	
Clothing	The women wear traditional skirts with a top, the cloth mainly produced in Burkina Faso or in neighboring countries and fashioned by local tailors. Men wear usually western type clothing. There is a large market for second hand clothing. Large quantities of all sorts of second hand clothing are imported. Children wear second hand clothing.	
Transportation	Walking and bicycles are the usual mode of going somewhere. Some have mopeds and motorbikes. Bush-taxis and rides with merchants are available on a irregular basis to take people into Banfora, from where buses and other forms of public transportation are available for longer journeys.	
Infant Mortality Rate	16%	
Life Expectancy	47 years	
Leading Cause Of Death	untreated illnesses	
Comment (Community Development)	The figures below are from UNICEF for whole Burkina.	

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Item Name	Item Note	
Society & Culture		Group Description
Family Structures	The eldest male is the chief of the family.	
Neighbor Relations	The people are friendly with neighbors, but usually only have contact on market days.	
Authority / Rule	Local things are handled by the chief, others by the government authorities.	
Social Habits/Groupings	The men spend social time together; the women work together.	
Cultural Change Pace	Medium	
Identification With National Culture	Similar	
Self Image	Prestigious	
Local Language Broadcasting	None	
Youth		Group Description
Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)	Generally, the young generation helps out in all farming and domestic tasks as appropriate for their age and gender.	
Youth Problems (Teens)	Some young people prefer to live in towns so they can find paying jobs. This can create family conflict.	
Youth Greatest Needs (teens)	Training in methods of agricultural production; training in basic health care. Tied in with this is the need for reconciliation in their minds between modern innovations and ideas and the reality they live in, the population growth and limited employment opportunities.	
Education		Group Description
Primary Schools	5	
Primary School Enrollment	721	
Percent Of Eligible Students Enrolled	42	
Teacher To Pupil Ratio	48	
Language Of Textbooks Early Years	French	
Language Of Instruction Later Years	French	
Language Of Textbooks Later Years	Dyula	
Comment (Education)	<p>The majority of schools are more than 90% homogenous. Only 5 of the 11 villages have primary schools.</p> <p>In the primary schools, the language of instruction is in French, with textbooks in French only.</p> <p>There are also two CFJA schools amongst the Syem, with 58 students. CFJA schools are agricultural schools for older children who have not been able to attend school, where Jula is the language of instruction, and the basics of mathematics, some French, and literacy skills in Jula, are also taught.</p> <p>The figures for the percentage of eligible students enrolled is from the 1994-95 school year.</p> <p>The student / teacher ratio is from the 1992-93 school year. The figures are from the whole province, including the major towns, where the figures would be considerably higher than in the villages. The figures also seem to reflect the situation only of those villages where there are schools.</p>	
Church Growth		Status of Christianity
Reached Status	Evaluated	
Comment (Church Growth)	<p>There are both a Catholic and a Protestant church in Siniena, a mixed village of mostly Ciramba with some Syem. The Protestant church has a Kar (Eastern Karaboro) pastor. A Catholic priest visits some faithful Tengrela. There are no Catholic nor Protestant churches in the main Syem area, nor have any churches or missions targeted them to work among them.</p> <p>The Christian and Missionary Alliance is working near the Syem area, but are not working with the Syem.</p>	
Religion & Response		Status of Christianity
Religious Practices & Ceremonies	Funerals, baptisms, and marriages complete with dancing, singing, and feasting.	
Attitude To Christianity	Indifferent	
Attitude To Religious Change	Somewhat resistant	

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Item Name	Item Note
Resistance / Receptivity	So far the Gospel in Jula has not penetrated the Syem, even though they have no negative attitudes towards their language and are quite positive about literacy in Jula.
Religious Analogies & Bridges	The same as for Muslims.
Spiritual Climate And Openness	The Syem are strongly Muslim. Only the Catholic Church has any adherents, and those are few.
Recommended Approaches	It has to be tried first to come along them in their needs.
Current Needs	Health care facilities, schools, and better roads.
Items For Prayer	That they will hear the Gospel and will become spiritually open for the truth.

History Of Christianity In Group

Status of Christianity

By Whom	Roman Catholic Church
Significant Events	The Roman Catholic church and the Protestant church have been built in Siniena . The Assemblies of God have started to do some evangelization in the area.
Comments (History of Christianity)	No one has really tried to reach the Syem, so one can not say that they are indeed resistant to the gospel.

Scripture

Status of Christianity

Translation Status	Unlikely
Available Scripture	None
Uncertain Need Explained	They are very bilingual in Jula.
Reason For Urgent Need Of Translation	They are very bilingual in Jula.

Missions and Churches

Status of Christianity

Organization Name	Roman Catholic Church
Main Ministry	Church Planting
Number Of National Workers	2
Organization Name	Assemblies of God
Main Ministry	Evangelism

Christian Literature And Media Status

Status of Christianity

Literature Available	Much is available in Jula.
Audio Recordings Available	Some is available in Jula.
Films Available	Some are available in Jula.
Radio Programs Available	None.
Videos Available	Some are available in Jula.
Audio Visual Available	Some are available in Jula.