

# The Utugwang of Nigeria

Originating from Uturu in Benue State, the Utugwang [afe] people traveled south and now reside in Obudu local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria. There are four different dialects in this area: Utugwang, Mgbenege, Okworogung, and Ukwortung. Utugwang, means “Let’s come together,” and is the name used by the people themselves to identify this whole group.

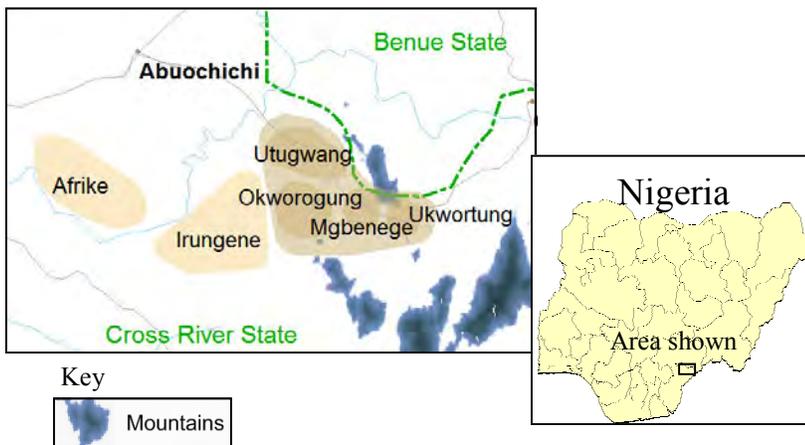
Many members of the community are civil servants or small business owners. Some make baskets and woven mats, but most are farmers. The major crops of this area include yams, groundnuts, cassava, and rice.

Although there are villages with a high percentage of Christians, many Utugwang people fear witchcraft and evil spirits. Some people protect themselves by consulting oracles in the forest and using a talisman while others go to the church for prayer. One pastor boldly stated, “God is the only Protector. We depend on God for our protection.” Between 65 and 90% state that they are Christians. Most others tend to follow traditional religious practices. For the most part, church attendance is very high and heart response to the Gospel is growing gradually.

Their language has no written form which means that there is no Bible or even portions of Scripture available for them to read in their heart language. No videos, recordings or films are in existence either. A language development project in Utugwang would give these people access to the Word of God in the language they understand best.

Multilingualism amongst the Utugwang people is high. The language of instruction is English, however the vernacular is used in the lower primary classes. The Utugwang speak Nigerian Pidgin English, Standard English, and the vernacular, but most feel strongly that their own language is superior to English and Pidgin.

Although there are many churches and local pastors, the people express their desire for outside assistance from cross-cultural missionaries. They would like support with Bible translation, seminary training, Bible teaching, evangelism as well as help with medical care and training.



When asked, “Which language do you think God likes?” one of the elders answered, “Your own language because you express yourself better in your own language.”



Woman at a grinding stone

**The Utugwang ask for your prayers!**

**Please pray:**

- for a Bible translation project in the language they understand best.
- for unity among church members and the salvation of souls.
- that the people would be free of the fear of witchcraft and evil spirits.
- for help meeting their financial needs in the various church building projects in process.
- that the people would continue to respond to the Gospel.