

## The Yabong of Papua New Guinea



The Yabong people live in eight villages located in the eastern part of Madang Province, about 20 kilometres to the west of Saidor and within 10 kilometres of the northern coast of Papua New Guinea. Many Yabong villages are in the foothills of the Finisterre Mountains.

Their diet consists primarily of sweet potatoes, taro and greens. Houses are made with black palm floors and woven bamboo walls. Roofs are thatched with dried sago palm leaves. Houses are set on posts 2-3 meters above the ground. They have woven bamboo walls with thatched roofs made of palm leaves.

The Yabong people generally live in villages of 100 to 300 people, although some have moved to smaller settlements.

The first church in the Yabong area was a Catholic church established in the 1930s by a German missionary named Father Offinger. There are now both Catholic and Lutheran churches in the Yabong area.

The Yabong people do not have the Bible in their mother tongue. During church services the Bible is read in Tok Pisin, the language of wider communication.

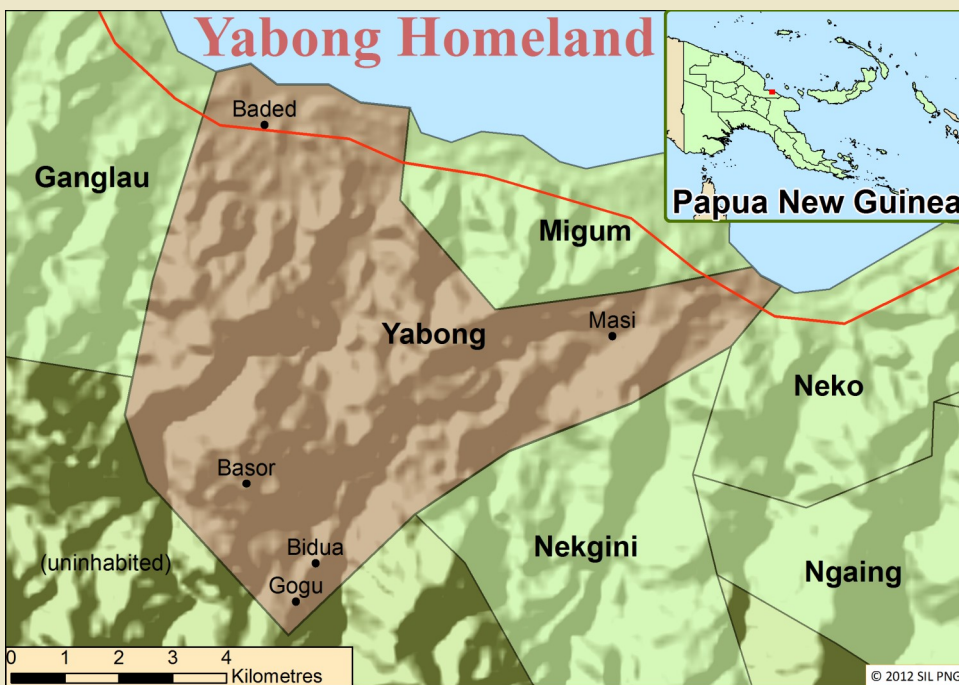
**Primary Religion:**  
Christianity

**Disciples (Matt 28:19):**  
90%

**Churches:**  
3

**Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):**  
No

**Population (date):**  
1500 (2000)



## The Yabong of Papua New Guinea

### Have They Heard The Gospel?

Call Themselves Christian	90%
Believe In Jesus As God And Only Savior	
Comment	Although nearly everyone claims to be a Christian, church leaders reported that there are many nominal Christians in the Yabong area.
Believe In Local Traditional Religion	
Comment	Although no numbers were given, it was reported that some people still use traditional magic.
Have Not Heard Who Jesus is	0%
Attitude to Christianity	Somewhat receptive
Attitude to Religious Change	Somewhat receptive
How Have They Responded To The Gospel?	Most Yabong people have accepted the gospel nominally, but church leaders reported that they did not always see the evidence of the gospel in people's lives.
Number Of Pastors	2
Comment	Neither of these pastors has had more than one month of formal training. There are also three lay workers.
Number Of Churches	3
Comment	There are two Lutheran churches and a Catholic church.
Number Of Communities	8
History of Christianity	
What Year	1930
By Whom	A German missionary named Father Offinger started the first Catholic church in the area. Pastor Jerome, from Samoa, and Reverend John Kuder, from New York, USA, began Lutheran churches around the same time.
Significant Events	At one point, one Yabong village began following Yali, a cargo cult leader, and the villagers reportedly chased the Catholic missionary out of their village.
Is The Word Of God Translated?	No.
Forms of Gospel Presentations Available	The Bible is available in Tok Pisin, the language of wider communication, and in English.

## The Yabong of Papua New Guinea

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### Group Description

#### Geography & Environment

The Yabong people live in a mountainous tropical rainforest.

#### Literacy

Literacy Attitude

Very receptive

Adult Literacy Percentage

47%

Percent Literate for Men

60%

Percent Literate for Women

34%

Active Literacy Program

Yes

Comment

Students are taught to read in Yabong in the vernacular pre school and in English in elementary school.

#### Economics

Subsistence Type

Hunter-gathers

Comment

Most people live off of food grown in their gardens.

Occupation

Subsistence

Income Sources

Selling cocoa, peanuts, betelnut, daka (a kind of pepper eaten with betelnut), tobacco and garden produce. .

Trade Partners

The Yabong people trade betelnut, peanuts and tobacco to Lamtub and Singor (coastal villages in the Migum language area) in exchange for dry coconuts and fish.

#### Community Development

Health Care

Fair

Comment

There are aide posts in Lamtub (Migum language area, north of Yabong) and Reite (Nekgini language area). Yabong people reported that the aide posts are usually open and well-stocked. For more serious health concerns, people go to the Lutheran health centre in Biliau. It can take up to a day for Yabong people to travel to Biliau, depending on which village they start from.

Diet

Good

Comment

Although they do not eat many animal products, the Yabong people have a balanced diet of peanuts, sweet potatoes, taro and greens, along with other produce such as pumpkins and bananas.

Water

Good

Comment

Most Yabong villages have a clear running water source.

## The Yabong of Papua New Guinea

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Shelter Description	Yabong homes are made with woven bamboo walls and black palm floors. Roofs are thatched with dried sago palm leaves. Houses are set on posts 2-3 meters above the ground.
Energy/Fuel Comment	Good. There is plenty of wood for fire.
Clothing	Most people wear second hand western-style clothing. Many women wear a large piece of cloth tied around their waist for a skirt. .
Transportation	Walking
Infant Mortality Rate	5%
Life Expectancy	66
Community Development Comment	The infant mortality rate and life expectancy are national averages. The rates in Yabong are probably higher and lower respectively. .
<b><u>Society &amp; Culture</u></b>	
Neighbor Relations	The Yabong people have a fairly neutral attitude towards their neighbors.
Authority/Rule	The Yabong people recognize the leadership of church leaders, clan leaders and government representatives. .
Social Habits/Groupings	The Yabong people generally live in villages of 100-300 people, although some people have moved to smaller settlements.
Cultural Change Pace	Medium
Identification With National Culture	Similar
Self Image	Neutral
Recreation	Playing volleyball, chewing betelnut
Attitude to Change	Indifferent
Attitude to Outsiders. Comment	Very receptive The survey team was welcomed with traditional singing and dancing.
<b><u>Education</u></b>	
Primary Schools Comment	2 There is one elementary school and one vernacular preschool.
Primary School Enrollment	42 students attend the elementary school and 14 students attend the vernacular preschool.

## The Yabong of Papua New Guinea

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Total Number of Teachers	5
Comment	All teachers come from the Yabong language area.
Language of Instruction Early Years	Yabong is the language of instruction in the vernacular pre school. In the elementary school, Tok Pisin and English are used for instruction, along with some Yabong to clarify concepts.
Language of Textbook Early Years	Textbooks for the vernacular preschool are written in Yabong, and textbooks for the elementary school are written in Tok Pisin and English.
Number of Schools Greater Than 90 % Homogeneous	2

## The Yabong of Papua New Guinea

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### Status of Christianity

#### Religion Population

Religion 1 Ethnic Religions  
Comment Many people still practice traditional magic.

#### Church Growth

Total Baptized  
Comment Most people have been baptized.

Lay Leaders 3

Christian Hospitals/Clinics 1  
Comment There is a Lutheran health centre in Biliau, over a day's walk away.

#### Scripture

Scripture Use Majority of churches  
Comment Most churches use the Tok Pisin Bible

Urgent Need of Translation Tok Pisin is not the first language of most people in the Yabong language area.

#### Missions and Churches

Organization 1 St. Peter Catholic Church

Country of Origin Germany

Main Ministry Church planting

Year Started 1930

Number of Adherents 115  
Comment It was reported that everyone living in the Masi village attends.

Number of Congregations 5

Number of Local Workers 2

Number Workers Using Language 2

Organization 2 Lutheran Church

Country of Origin Germany

Main Ministry Church planting

Year Started 1940

Number of Congregations 2

Number of Local Workers 3

Number Workers Using Language 3