



The Lala of Papua New Guinea

The Lala people live in villages scattered along the Hiritano Highway and the coast of the Gulf of Papua, NW of Port Moresby, the nation's capital. They live in clans, often with several clans living together in one village. The traditional chieftan system is still in place, although chiefs do not have the same level of authority as they held in the past.

Wallaby hunting is a source of income, as well as an important source of protein in the Lala diet, which also includes starchy "cooking" bananas (the staple food), coconut, bread, bandicoot, and breadfruit. Traditionally, construction materials were obtained solely from the land. However, today Lala village construction employs a combination of natural materials, such as bamboo and palm leaves (for thatched roofs), and modern materials such as sawn timber, nails, and corrugated roofing iron.

The Lala people adopted Christianity after the arrival of missionaries from the Catholic Church and the London Missionary Society in the 19th century. Despite the official practice of Christianity, belief in some elements of the traditional religion remains strong. The Lala people read the Bible in English in church, even though they do not fully understand it.

Primary Religion:

Christian

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

5%

Churches:

6

Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

Portions

Population (date):

1,540 (2003)



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Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Call Themselves Christian (%)	>90%	
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	5%	
Comment (Jesus As God & Only Savior)	Most consider themselves to be Christian, but it is reported the majority still believe in some elements of the traditional religion. >70 people of this people group.	
Believe In The Local Traditional Religion (%)	>75%	
Have Not Heard Who Jesus is (%)	0%	
Response To The Gospel	While the majority call themselves Christian, strong belief in the traditional religion is widely held. The Lala people who attend church read the Bible in English but do not fully understand it. These two elements hinder sincere response to the Gospel.	
Number Of Communities	There are 12 communities and are as follows: Oloabu: Catholic; Veisia: Catholic; Vanuamai: Catholic; Tubu: Catholic; Boio: Catholic; Ala'ala: Catholic; Kaiau (Old and New): United; Oroi: United; Moika'ala: United; Diumana: United; and Ikikina: United.	
Number Of Churches	6	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	No the Word of God is not yet translated. However, Pastor Mairi, a Lala man has begun translating the Gospel of Luke, but it is only in draft form.	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	There is no Lala Scripture available, and the literacy rate 43.2% according to the 2000 Census.	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	There are some Christian radio programs broadcast in English, Tok Pisin, and Motu, but many people are not proficient enough in those languages to understand them well.	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	The Lala people need someone to help them translate the Word of God into their own language.	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	1,540	
World Population (Date)	2003	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Papua New Guinea	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	Villages are located along the Hiritano Highway and the coast, NW of Port Moresby, the nation's capital.	
Ecosystem Type	Semi-tropical	
Geological Type	Coastal	
Longitude	146.6 and 146.8 degrees East.	
Latitude	Between 8.7 and 9.1 degrees South.	
Climate	Hot and humid; very dry during dry season.	
Map Features	·Oroi - S8 58 17.3 E146 36 13.5 ·Kaiau - S8 56 40.3 E146 45 40.8 ·Hiritano Highway – highway that runs past Kaiau and Vanuamai ·Tubu - S8 56 16.7 E146 43 47.7 ·Vanuamai - S8 51 47.3 E146 39 53.4 ·Ala'ala - S9 01 51.8 E146 39 39.9 ·Moika'ala - S9 02 03.6 E146 41 50.2 ·Coastal Highway – highway that runs through Oroi and Ala'ala along coast	
Language & Linguistics		Group Description
Comment (Language)	There are no other people groups speaking this language as their mother tongue. It is reported some old women speak only Lala but the majority of the younger generation speak at least some Tok Pisin, Motu or English in addition to Lala. During the first three to four years of the children's elementary education, they are taught Lala, and it is the primary language that children use to communicate with each other.	
Comments (Dialect)	It is reported there are no significant dialect differences.	

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Item Name	Item Note	
Comment (On Other Mother Tongues)	There is a lot of intermarriage between Lala speakers and Waima speakers in Ala'ala. It is not uncommon there for a child to grow up speaking both languages. However, Lala is the primary language that children use to communicate with each other.	
Literacy		Group Description
Adult Literacy Percentage	43.2%	
Comment (Attitude to literacy)	Unknown	
Active Literacy Program	Yes	
Comment (Active Literacy Program)	Elementary schools in the area teach children in Lala during the first 3-4 years of their education.	
Publications In Vernacular	Lala people said the John Collier Dictionary was published in their language, and that in the past there was a liturgy book in their language, but they do not have copies of it now. They also said that Father Kunucho wrote an English/Lala vocabulary in the 1960s.	
Economics		Group Description
Subsistence Type	Hunter-gatherers	
Comment (Subsistence Type)	This people group is also reported to be swidden agriculturalists.	
Average Annual Income	They are mainly self-sustaining. May sell Wallaby meat locally for \$2-3 per Wallaby.	
Occupation	They are hunters and gardeners.	
Income Sources	Wallaby and Bandicoot meat, seafood, pigs, and cassowaries are sources of income.	
Products / Crafts	Woven hunting nets, and string bags.	
Trade Partners	Mekeo and Abadi (nearby language groups).	
Modernization / Utilities	Roofing iron, generators, bicycles, gas pressure lamps, metal pots, pans, plates, kettles and cups, plastic containers, water drums, nylon fishing nets, toys, plastic sheeting, rakes, a loud speaker, hair combs, plastic jewelry and wristwatches.	
Community Development		Group Description
Health Care (Quality)	Good	
Comment (Health Care)	For medical needs Lala people can go to Agevairu Health Centre, Oloabu Aid Post, or the Catholic Mission on Yule Island. These clinics are all located within a half-day's travel of the Lala area. There is also a hospital in Port Moresby, which is approximately 2 hours away by road.	
Diet (Quality)	Good	
Comment (Diet)	Their diet consists mainly of Wallaby, Bandicoot, starchy 'cooking' bananas, tapioca, and pumpkin.	
Water (Quality)	Fair	
Comment (Water)	There are several smaller rivers in the area. Water is collected in plastic containers from the nearest river or well. In the dry season the rivers may run low or dry up, so the people are then dependent on the wells.	
Shelter Description	Homes in the Lala area are constructed 8-10 feet off the ground, on large wooden posts with detachable wooden ladders. Most homes have a veranda outside the front of the house, with sago palm roofing and no walls. Most homes have a couple of rooms leading off the veranda. The roofing over this area is sago palm for the most part, or occasionally corrugated iron. Many homes also have a bamboo platform underneath the house, extending across all or part of the underside of the house, where people can sit in the shade. Cooking is done over a fire on the veranda or in a separate section to the side of the veranda.	
Electricity	There are only a few generators in the Lala area.	
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	Fair	
Clothing	Western style second hand clothing.	
Transportation	Walking or public transportation (usually in the back of a truck).	
Leading Cause Of Death	Malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia, and snakebite are leading causes of death.	
Society & Culture		Group Description
Family Structures	Patrilineal. Extended families live together in one house.	

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Item Name	Item Note	
Neighbor Relations	Amiable	
Authority / Rule	Each clan has a chief, and each village has an overall chief. When a chief dies, his eldest son becomes the new chief. The chief owns all of his clan's land and distributes it for use by individual families. Chiefs are responsible for maintaining order in the group. While currently chiefs still hold a fair amount of influence, their power over the people is not as strong as it once was.	
Cultural Change Pace	Medium	
Identification With National Culture	Similar	
Self Image	Neutral	
Judicial / Punishment System	If there is a disagreement, people gather together to sort it out, convening the local village court.	
Celebrations	There are feasts for funerals and to celebrate the initiation of a new chief. At the time of a funeral feast, people may also perform a singsing (traditional dance). Both traditional and modern dancing are popular ways to celebrate Christmas.	
Recreations	Sports	
Art Forms	String bags woven from natural fibers.	
Media	Radio broadcasts in English, Tok Pisin, and Waima.	
Attitude To Outsiders	Somewhat receptive	
Attitude To Change	Somewhat receptive	
Youth		Group Description
Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)	Domestic chores, helping in the gardens, and collecting water.	
Youth Problems (Teens)	Lack of access to education (in some areas).	
Education		Group Description
Primary Schools	4	
Comment (Primary Schools)	(1 elementary and 3 community)	
Primary School Enrollment	150	
Comment (Primary School Enrollment)	150 is 80% of those eligible to enroll in primary school.	
Secondary Schools	0	
Language Of Textbooks Early Years	English	
Comment (Language Of Instruction)	Lala is the language of instruction in the first 2 grades of Elementary. Thereafter, the languages of instruction are English and Tok Pisin.	
Comment (Education)	For every 30 primary school students there is one teacher. 100% of schools are unmixd. There are no secondary schools in the Lala area. Students may attend secondary school in Port Moresby.	
Church Growth		Status of Christianity
Reached Classification	Evangelized	
Total Baptized	>600	
Lay Leaders	>45	
Bible Schools	0	
Comment (Christian Clinics/Hospitals)	There is a clinic at the Catholic Mission on Yule Island.	
Religion & Response		Status of Christianity
Religious Practices & Ceremonies	Feasts and singsings (traditional dance) for funerals and a feast to celebrate the initiation of a new chief. Both traditional and modern dancing are also popular ways to celebrate Christmas.	
Attitude To Christianity	Somewhat receptive	
Spiritual Climate And Openness	While almost everyone calls themselves Christians, belief in some elements of the traditional religion remains strong.	
Recommended Approaches	Work alongside existing churches.	

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Item Name

Items For Prayer

Item Note

·That the Bible would be translated into Lala.
·That the work that Pastor Mairi has started would be fruitful and others would join him in his endeavor.
·That God will provide a way for them to hear His message in their own language and that they will embrace the abundant life He offers.

History Of Christianity In Group

Status of Christianity

Year Began

Late 1800's

By Whom

United Church

By Whom

Roman Catholic Church

Significant Events

United Church

The London Missionary Society (LMS) began work in Manu Manu in 1872, probably reaching the Lala people shortly thereafter. The first LMS missionaries to the area came from the South Pacific, including Samoa and Fiji. Through a series of church merges, the LMS congregations became the Melanesian Church, then Papua Ekalesia, and finally the United Church in the 1960s. The United Church was "indigenized" in 1968. Since that time, the United Church leadership has been entirely Papua New Guinean.

Catholic Church

The Catholic Church missionaries from France began their ministry at Yule Island in the 1880s. Catholics reached the Lala area in 1908, beginning with Vanuamai village, and later established congregations in Tubu and Ala'ala. Oloabu and Veisia are also Catholic, and attend mass at the church in Vanuamai. Catholics from Boio worship at Kubuna, in the Kuni language area.

Fr. Max Gramo of Switzerland lived in Vanuamai village for approximately 20 years. The Lala people spoke well of him, reporting that he was fluent in Lala, lived as the village people did, made consistent journeys on foot to minister in Tubu village, and translated the church prayers from Latin to Lala. He returned to Switzerland due to illness in the 1980s, and died in his homeland. Lala church leaders also said that there was once a translation of the New Testament church readings into Lala, but the copies have been lost.

Scripture

Status of Christianity

Translation Status

Definite

Available Scripture

None

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Literature

Yes ((Catholic Liturgy)

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Recordings

No

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Film/Videos

No

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Radio

No

Missions and Churches

Status of Christianity

Organization Name

Roman Catholic Church

Main Ministry

Church Planting

Year Started

1908

Number Of Congregations

3

Number Of Expatriate Workers

0

Number Of National Workers

2

Organization Name

United Church

Main Ministry

Church Planting

Year Started

Late 1800's

Number Of Congregations

3

Number Of Expatriate Workers

0

Christian Literature And Media Status

Status of Christianity

Radio Programs Available

There are some Christian radio programs broadcast in English, Tok Pisin, and Motu, but many people are not proficient enough in those languages to understand them well.