

## The SW Gbaya of Central African Republic



representative photo by Brice Blondel cropped CC

The Southwest Gbaya live in relative peace with their neighbors in a forested area of Central African Republic. Most of the people grow crops such as cassava, peanuts and corn to meet their own needs. Any small surplus is sold to purchase other goods. Diamond mining offers another source of employment, but it comes at a price. The people earn little for their efforts and the profits are used in cultural rituals, which they believe bring success.

Christianity was first introduced to the Gbaya in the 1930s. Many practice a mixed religion. Although approximately 70 percent claim Christianity, the hold of superstitious beliefs and ritualistic practices associated with animism is strong.

Some Christians do practice a living faith and stand firm against the influences of the traditional religions. For example, these believers do not put up idols to protect their fields. Because fear of these idols — or fetishes — can scare away potential thieves, the Christian Gbayan takes this stand despite the potential for higher theft from his fields.

Although the New Testament has been translated, it is not widely used because of its association with one particular denomination. However, the churches of the area are coming together to bring the Old Testament to their communities.

**Primary Religion:**

Christian

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

Unknown

**Churches:**

Yes

**Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):**

New Testament

**Population (date):**

220,000 (2007)



### SOUTHWEST GBAYA HOMELAND



## The Gbaya, Southwest of Central African Republic

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### Have They Heard The Gospel?

Response to the Gospel	About 70% of SW Gbayans claim to be Christians
Estimated Number of Christian Congregations	Unknown
Number that Use Primarily the Local Language in Their Services	Unknown
Is the Word of God Translated?	New Testament
Other Forms of Gospel Presentations	
Recordings:	New Testament
Films/videos:	JESUS film
Hindrances to Scripture Use	NT lacks widespread use because it is associated with a certain denomination.
Language of Wider Communication or Trade Language	Sango [sag]

## **The Gbaya, Southwest of Central African Republic**

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### **Group Description**

#### **Population all countries**

World Population	220,000
World Population (Date)	(2007)

#### **Geography & Environment**

Location	Forested lands of western Central African Republic.
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#### **Language**

Alternate Names	Gbaya Sud-Ouest
Dialects	Biyanda (Bianda), Buli (Boli), Mbondomo (Mbodomo), Bokare (Bokari), Mboundja (Mbunza), Bosoko (Bossouka, Mbusuku), Toongo, Yangele, Mbakolo (Yasua), Budamono, Mbombeleng.
Other Mother Tongues	Sango [sag]
Linguistically Related	Bangandu [bgf] (A language of Cameroon) Gbaya-Mbodomo [gmm] (A language of Cameroon) Ngombe [nmj] (A language of Central African Republic)
Neighboring Languages	Gbaya, Northwest; Gundi; Pande; Bandu-Yangere; Bokoto

#### **Economics**

Subsistence Type	Farmers; miners
Products/Crafts	Kassava, peanuts and corn.
Income Sources	Diamond mining; agricultural produce

#### **Society & Culture**

Neighbor Relations	Gbayans live mostly at peace with their neighbors, except for occasional conflicts over land use or the theft or killing of cattle.
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## **The Gbaya, Southwest of Central African Republic**

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### **Religion**

Religion and percent of population

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|--------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Christianity          | 70%         |
| 2. Traditional/Animism   | 30%         |
| 3, A combination of both | Perhaps 50% |

Religious Practices/Ceremonies      Although 70% claim to be Christians, many are believers in name only. They practice traditional rites of animism mixed with Christianity, facing strong pressure to follow ritualistic ceremonies as protection against illness and putting up idols to protect their fields.

## The Gbaya, Southwest of Central African Republic

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### Status of Christianity

#### History of Christianity

Year Began

1930

#### Religion and Response

Translation status

The New Testament has already been translated but is not widely used due to its association with a certain denomination. Now churches in the area have come together to ask for the Old Testament.

In addition to translating the Old Testament, the team will produce audio recordings of Scripture portions from both testaments for those who are unable to read.

Spiritual Climate and Openness:

Representatives from these churches will guide the translation team in determining which Old Testament books are the most vital to the Gbaya culture and should be translated early in the process.

Attitude toward Christianity

About 70% identify themselves as Christians