

The Setaman of Papua New Guinea



The Setaman people live in an extremely isolated area of the rugged Star Mountains of western Papua New Guinea. In three villages high in the mountains, they live much as their ancestors did in generations past. They live in houses built from traditional materials, cook food harvested in their gardens over wood fires, and carry their water from nearby streams. They have had some contact with outsiders and now wear western-style clothing and occasionally make the four-day hike to the nearest town to buy rice, salt or soap.

The Setaman people's first contact with Christianity came in the mid 1960s, and now each of the three Setaman villages has a Catholic Church. However, the absence of Scripture in the Setaman language and lack of trained church leaders makes it difficult for the believers to grow and easy for them to fall back on their traditional beliefs. There are no health facilities or schools in the Setaman area. As a result, overall health is poor, life expectancy is low, and education levels are very low.

Missionaries, both Papua New Guineans and expatriates, could make a big difference in the lives of the Setaman people by translating the Bible, teaching in the church, training local church leaders, and helping establish schools, community literacy programs, and health facilities.

Primary Religion:
Christianity

Disciples (Matt 28:19):
95%

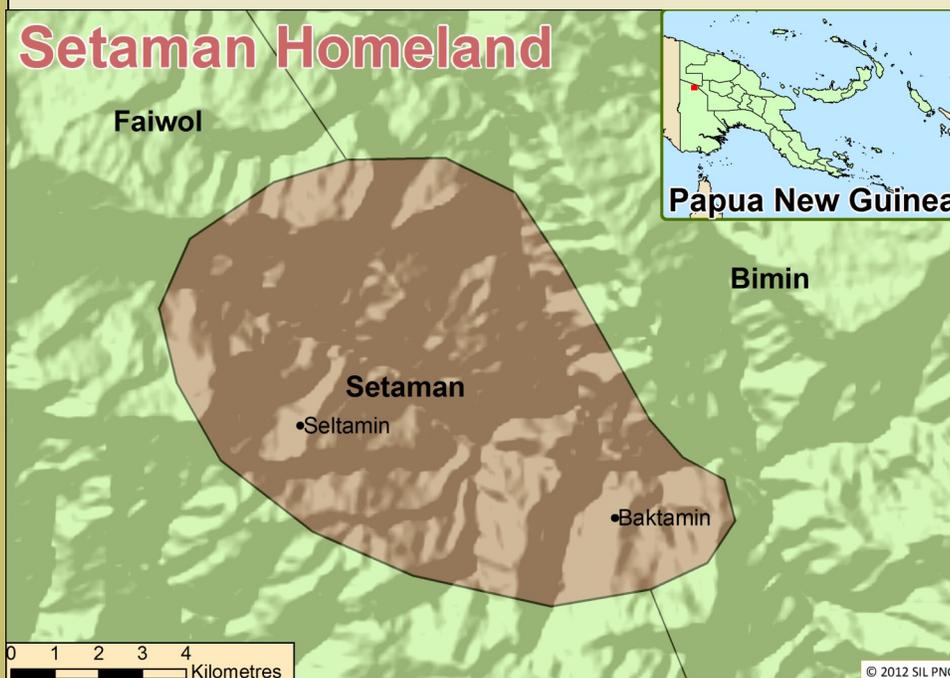
Churches:
3

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):
None

Population (date):
380 (2000)



Setaman Homeland



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Call Themselves Christian Comment	95% Almost everyone in the Setaman area says they are Christians.
Believe In Jesus As God And Only Savior	Less than 5%
Have Not Heard Who Jesus is Comment	0% While church leaders in the area reported that everyone has heard who Jesus is, it is likely that everyone has heard the name of Jesus, but have not heard the Gospel.
Believe In Their Local Traditional Religion	Although there is a church in each village, it seems that most people still also adhere to their traditional beliefs.
How Have They Responded To The Gospel?	Since the introduction of Christianity in the Setaman area, people have accepted Christianity, at least outwardly, and many attend church.
Number Of Pastors Comment	1 Four lay workers also work in the Setaman area churches.
Number Of Churches	3
Number Of Communities	3
History of Christianity Year Began By Whom Significant Events	1960s Roman Catholic Church The first contact with Christianity was around the mid 1960s when missionaries established a Catholic church in Baktamin village. Churches in the other two villages were not started until the mid 1980s.
Is The Word Of God Translated?	No. God's word has not been translated into the Setaman language. The Setaman language is closely related to both the Bimin and Faiwol languages which have translated New Testaments. However Setaman people cannot understand Scriptures in either of these languages. The Setaman people need God's word in their own language for them to be able to understand the Gospel.

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Any Hindrance To Scripture
Distribution?

If Scripture was available in the Setaman language, distribution would be difficult because the area is only accessible by a four-day hike from the nearest town or via a mountain airstrip which is not used in rainy weather. There are no roads or vehicles in the area, so all Scripture would have to be carried by hand over the steep, muddy trails.

Are Cross-Cultural Missionaries
Needed?

Cross-cultural missionaries are needed to translate the Bible into the Setaman language and to help people understand the Gospel and Christian living.

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Group Description

Geography & Environment

The Setaman people live in the rugged Star Mountains of Western Province. Because of the high elevation, temperatures get quite cold at night and remain mild during the day.

Literacy

Adult Literacy Percentage 4%

Percent Literate for Men 5%

Percent Literate for Women 2%

Active Literacy Program No

Comment

Many children are monolingual. Some adults can understand and speak Tok Pisin, and some older adults have learned the neighboring Faiwol and Bimin languages. However, most people who are at least bilingual are not fluent in their second language; many Setaman people are functionally monolingual.

Economics

Subsistence Type Swidden agriculturalists

Occupation All people in the Setaman area work to provide food for their families.

Income Sources The only source of monetary income for the Setaman people is asking relatives working in towns for money. .

Products / Crafts Women make traditional bark-string bags and grass skirts and men make traditional wooden drums, mouth harps, and bows and arrows for personal use.

Community Development

Health Care Poor

Comment

Health care is not available in the Setaman area. Setaman people must hike about a day's walk to a neighboring language to visit an aidpost. If they need more serious medical care, they can hike even farther to a health center.

Diet Fair

Comment

People have very little variety in their diet. Their diet consists mainly of tubers (sweet potatoes and taro) and wild greens. On special occasions, people eat domestic or wild pig meat, or other game meat.

Water Fair

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Shelter Description	Setaman people live in traditional bush material houses, which are built on the ground and have no windows, to keep the house warmer at night. .
Electricity	People in the Setaman area do not have access to electricity, nor do they currently have any use for it.
Energy/Fuel Comment	Fair The Setaman people do all of their cooking and heat their homes with firewood that they gather from the bush. Firewood seems to be readily available.
Clothing	Setaman people wear western-style clothing, purchased at second-hand stores in towns.
Transportation	People in the Setaman area hike everywhere they go. Hiking time between the Setaman villages is only a few hours. If people want to travel to a town, they can hike for four days or try to charter a plane to pick them up from the local airstrip.
Infant Mortality Rate	5%
Comment Community Development	<p>Comment on infant mortality: This is the average rate for Papua New Guinea as a whole. Because of the lack of health care in the Setaman area, it is likely that the rate is higher there.</p> <p>Comment on life expectancy: As of the 2000 census, there were only 9 people (of 285; 3% of the population) in the Setaman area age 50 or older. This shows that the average life expectancy is significantly lower than the average life expectancy for Papua New Guinea which is 66 years.</p>
<u>Education</u>	
Primary Schools Comment	0 There are no primary schools in the Setaman area. Children must live outside of the area to attend school.
Primary School Enrollment Comment	45 Forty-five Setaman children under the age of 15 are reported to be attending school.
Secondary Schools	0
Secondary Schools Enrollment	Seventeen children from the Setaman area are reported to be attending secondary school.
Percent of Eligible Students Enrolled	25%
Total Number of Teachers Comment	0 There are no teachers (or schools) in the Setaman area.
Language of Instruction Early Years	Tok Pisin [tpi] and English [eng]
Language of Instruction Later Years	English [eng]

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Status of Christianity

Church Growth

Lay Leaders 4

Missions and Churches

Organization 1 Roman Catholic Church

Main Ministry Other/Church

Number of Congregations 3

Comment There is a congregation in each village.

Number of Expatriates 0

Comment There are no expatriate workers in the Setaman area. There is a Filipino priest who oversees work in the area, from the neighboring Faiwol language area.

Number of National Workers 1

Number of Local Workers 4