

The Kara of Tanzania



The people who speak Kara as their first language comprise **115,000** people of whom 15,000 live outside the traditional homeland area in Tanzania. The number who identify as Kara ethnically may be much larger. They are located in the northwest part of Tanzania, mainly on Ukara, a small island north of Ukerewe, which is the largest island in Lake Victoria, the second largest lake in the world and the source of the fabled Nile River. The island is accessible by ferry about an hour's distance from Ukerewe, and has only eight villages.

Ukara is a somewhat rocky and very hilly island with some variation in terrain.

Most of the Kara people are fishermen or subsistence farmers, with cassava being a major crop. The 500 species of fish that used to populate the lake are mostly gone after the introduction of Nile perch that were supposed to eat the plague of water hyacinth but instead displaced the native fish. Although the Kara people do not travel much, many Kara people go over to Ukerewe frequently to buy and sell in the market there.

The dominant religion of the Kara people is reported to be Christianity, although a few still practice Islam or traditional religions. Although the Kara would profit from scripture in their own language, they do understand scripture that is available in the neighboring Jita language quite well. Teaching in school is in Swahili so those of the younger generation also speak Swahili.

Primary Religion:

Christian

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

Yes

Churches:

Yes

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

None

Population (date):

115,000 (2009)



The Kara of Tanzania

Have They Heard The Gospel?

Response to the Gospel	The church among the Kara people is stable but largely nominal, with some exceptions. There are a variety of different denominations present on the island.
Estimated Number of Christian Congregations	Unknown
Number that Use Primarily the Local Language in Their Services	All churches use mainly Swahili in their services, sometimes including songs in the Kara language.
Is the Word of God Translated?	No. The Kara do not yet have the Bible in their mother tongue as of 2015, but it is possible that they could use a translation in the similar Jita language, which is currently in progress. There are no written materials available in Kara.
Other Forms of Gospel Presentation	Recordings: none in Kara Literature:
Language of Wider Communication or Trade Language	Swahili [swa]
Bilingualism	Most Kara people learn to speak Swahili as they grow up, as it is the language of wider communication and the medium for primary education in Tanzania. They may also be bilingual in some of the surrounding languages such as Jita, Zinza, or Kerewe, due mainly to contact with people from those groups.
Cross-Cultural Missionary Need	Some pastoral training may be needed. The Kara do not yet have the Bible in their mother tongue as of July 2015, but it is possible that they could use a translation in the similar Jita language, which is currently in Progress.

The Kara of Tanzania

Group Description

Population all countries

World Population	115,000 (Language Atlas of Tanzania)
World Population (Date)	2009

Geography & Environment

Location	Northwest part of Tanzania, mainly on Ukara, a small island north of Ukerewe, which is the largest island in Lake Victoria.
----------	---

Alternate Language Names

	Kikara, Kilegi, Regi
Other Mother Tongues	Swahili

Linguistically Related Languages

Jita 81%; Kwaya 80%

Neighboring Languages

	Kerewe, Jita, Sukuma
Comment	Many church congregations among the Kara include speakers of neighboring languages such as Jita or Sukuma. The Kara language is very similar to Jita, which is spoken on the mainland directly east of Ukara Island, so even children can understand Jita quite easily.

Economics

Subsistence Type	Fisherman or farmers
Comment	Primary crops are cassava, millet, potatoes, rice and corn. Although they don't travel much, many Kara people go over to Ukerewe frequently to buy and sell in the market there.

The Kara of Tanzania

Education--Group Description

Language Of Instruction

Swahili.

Education

Every village seems to have at least one primary school (the highest number being three in Nyang'ombe) and each ward has at least one secondary school. According to most village leaders, only a low percentage of school-aged children leave school or stop studying. The government official the team spoke with on Ukara Island estimated the number at about 10% for Bwisya Ward.

The Kara of Tanzania

Status of Christianity

Church Growth

Pastors:

Some pastoral training may be needed.

Comment

The church among the Kara people is stable but largely nominal, with some exceptions. There are a variety of denominations present on the island: Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal.

Religion and Response

Translation status

None in progress but the Kara people may be able to use the neighboring Jita New Testament which is being done.

Attitude toward Christianity

The dominant religion of the Kara people is reported to be Christianity, although a few still practice Islam or traditional religions.

References

SIL survey report 2015.

Ethnologue, 19th edition.

Joshua Project

Global Recordings

Language Atlas of Tanzania (Mradi wa Lugha za Tanzania 2009)