

## Borana

The Borana tribe is one of over 200 people groups belonging to the largest tribe in Ethiopia called the Oromo. Classified as Eastern Cushmites, it is believed that they were gradually pushed westward from the Horn of Africa by the Somali around the tenth century until they entered Ethiopia in the sixteenth century. Today they inhabit the territory between central Ethiopia and the Sabaki River in Kenya. The Oromo are of Hamitic origin and number about 23 million. They are related to the Somali and to the Afars in the Denakil region of northeastern Ethiopia.



### Location

The Borana live in southern Ethiopia.

### Topography

Ethiopia—once known as Abyssinia—is a rugged country located on the Eastern Horn of Africa, bordered by Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya and Sudan. Its dominant feature is a high, mountainous, central plateau which is split diagonally in the south by the Rift Valley. This region is crossed by a number of rivers, the most notable being the Blue Nile which begins in Lake Tana, and joins the White Nile at Khartoum, Sudan.

### Climate

The Borana live mainly in desert conditions with little rainfall, poor vegetation, and few permanent water sources. The weather is dry and hot with sporadic torrential rains.

### Culture

The Borana practice polygamy. Most men have at least two wives; some have more. Family units are close knit; fathers are gentle and caring toward small children. Divorce and separation is fairly common. Cattle and camels are the main source of wealth, and are used to pay the bride price, for religious sacrifices, and legal fines.



*Government:* The local authority of the Borana tribe, the *Gadaa* system, is very strong but has been prohibited under various ruling governments. The Borana have kept their system more intact than other Oromo because of their relative isolation and semi-nomadic nature. The system organizes the Borana society into groups that assume different responsibilities in the society every eight years. It has guided the religious, social, political and economic life of the Borana for many years. Under the *Gadaa* system, the power to administer the affairs of the tribe and the power to make laws belong to the people. Many representatives come together to make decisions and to create a "checking and balancing" system.

*Clothing:* The Borana use a shawl or light blanket type overwrap. All women wear scarf head coverings. Men often wear a "prayer beanie" cap or a turban.

### SIM Involvement

Mission work was begun among the Borana in 1931 by the Anglican Church. Today, there are about 200 Borana Christians spread over a wide area. The Kale Heywet Church (KHC) has sent three evangelists to the Borana. SIM works closely with the KHC, an association with over 7,000 congregations.

Due to cultural influences, the Borana are cautious to respond to the message of Jesus. Pray for the Holy Spirit to soften hearts and give boldness to those who are ready to believe.

### Scripture Availability

Bible portions have been translated into the Borana language since 1870. The New Testament was published in 1979. The complete Bible was published in Oromifa in 1995, but uses a different alphabet than the one currently being taught. Translations are needed in the Latin alphabet. Because the literacy rate of the Borana is below five percent, audio recordings are more effective in communicating the Bible. A few Bible charts and gospel recordings with flip charts are available in their language.

## Urgent Prayer Need

Bingham Academy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, urgently needs a [French teacher](#) to join their staff team in August. Pray that God will provide the right person to meet this need.