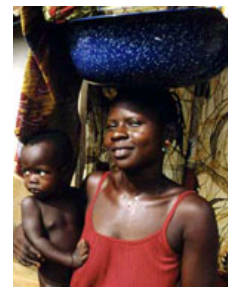


Fon

The Fon are the largest ethnic group in Benin with over 1.25 million people living mainly in southern and central Benin. There has been a rapid growth in evangelical churches among the traditionally animist (voodoo) Fon in the last two decades, outstripping the availability of trained mature leaders to guide congregations of young believers.



Location

Most Fon live in the southern and central regions of Benin.

History

The Fon are descendants of the Dahomey people who were very powerful rulers of West Africa in the early seventeenth century. The Fon kingdom was one of West Africa's strongest and most organized states. From this kingdom, 12 cruel kings ruled until 1894 when the French defeated King Behanzin and sent him into exile. The Fon are culturally related to the Adja people.

The former practices of the Fon kingdom earned the name "Darkest Africa" for the region. They were known for their cruelty and human sacrifice to royal ancestors. The Fon were also renowned for their prowess in warfare—not unusual until one realizes that many of the Fon warriors were women.

SIM Involvement

Currently 13 evangelical missions work with the Fon people in Benin. SIM is involved in encouraging believers to form churches throughout Benin. Fon believers have responded to this encouragement by reaching out to a number of villages along the coast and in the interior. SIM is seeking people to work with these new believers in discipling and Bible training. Several churches were recently planted as a result of SIM broadcasts on government radio stations which said that Christ, the Son of God, paid the price for our sins on the cross.

The Fon have been resistant to the message of Jesus' forgiveness and love due to a fear of voodoo spirits and the apparent power of their gods. Many of the younger Fon living outside traditional Fon territories are more curious and responsive to the message of Christ. The *JESUS* film in Fon has been an effective means of evangelism, and many Fon are coming to Christ in their own villages as a direct result of seeing it. People are also responding to 15-minute daily broadcasts aired on the Parakou radio station.

Less than 30% Fon are literate in the official language French, or in their own language. UEEB/SIM has emphasized literacy and the development of Christian literature in Fon as a way to help believers learn by themselves and grow in their faith.

Leadership training and Bible teaching in their own language is the other main priority by UEEB Fon church leadership. It will aid in the task of developing mature believers and assist in the task of reaching traditional animists and others in a climate increasingly at risk from sects and syncretistic beliefs. A Bible school was opened in 2002 with six student pastors, but the need is larger and more urgent than the school can meet.

Scripture Availability

Portions of the Bible have been translated into the Fon language since 1967. A New Testament translation was completed in 1993. The Gospel of John is available in the form of a gospel recording, and four Bible booklets are written in the Fon 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.