

Lomwe

The Lomwe people originate in northern Mozambique, tracing their origins from Mount Namuli, near Gurue. About 1.3 millions still live in Mozambique and 700,000 in Malawi, in a belt from the Indian Ocean into Malawi.

Location

The majority of the Lomwe live in the northern half of Zambezia province in Mozambique in a belt stretching from the Indian Ocean on the east into Malawi on the west. The Lomwe are closely related linguistically and culturally to the Makuwa peoples to the north.

Topography and Climate

Most Lomwe people are peasant farmers in a tropical area with good rainfall, producing crops with a hand hoe including beans, rice, corn, and peanuts. Malaria, cholera and AIDS are common hazards of life.

The climate is tropical, with temperatures highest in November-December and lowest in June-July. Rain falls from October to March. Harvests are from March to June.

Culture

Traditionally, Lomwe people build their own houses out of mud bricks and grass and cook on an open fire. Most do not have sanitation or secure water supplies. Urbanization and Western influences are bringing changes for many.

Food: The staple food is corn, dried and pounded into powder, then cooked into mush (no salt). It is served in "cakes," something like scoops of mashed potatoes. The important accompaniment is a flavorful sauce: greens and peanuts, beans, or (rarely) chicken.

Language: The primary language is Lomwe, with Portuguese used for teaching in the schools. Just this year, primary schools began instruction in Lomwe.

Matrilinial Society: Traditionally, the Lomwe count family through the mother's line. A child belongs to his uncle and his mother's uncle, not to his father or his father's family.

Crafts: Men make straw mats for sitting or sleeping on dirt floors. Women make clay pots for cooking. They play a game similar to *mancala* (the game played in other countries on a wooden board with colorful marbles) with pebbles in scooped out holes in the dirt. Grain alcohol is made out of sugar cane. Music in the churches is sung acappella. Although no instruments are used, the voices are very strong and fill any space well.

Religion

Traditional religion acknowledges the Creator God, but is focused on spirits, who must be pacified or manipulated as people seek to maintain precarious human life amid hardship. The first converts to Christianity were baptized in 1922, but the Lomwe are still waiting for the whole Bible to be translated into their language.

SIM Involvement

SIM's history with the Lomwe goes back to 1939 when its member mission, Africa Evangelical Fellowship, sent its first missionaries. Persecution led to the expelling of all missionaries in 1959. It was over 25 years later, during Mozambique's civil war, that missionaries were allowed to return.

The missionaries discovered that churches had grown 25 times in number since they left. They helped with refugees, feeding and clothing destitute people and providing grassroots Bible teaching. Now, for the very first time, Bible training above 8th grade level is being introduced in a cooperative effort known as PROFORTE, and the Old Testament is being translated into Lomwe.

Scripture Availability

A New Testament was published in 1931, but it needs revision. An Old Testament translation is now two-thirds finished.

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.

