

## The Matengo of Tanzania



A long time ago, David Livingstone and other missionaries from Europe visited the area where the Matendo live. Today, professing Christians number about 80 percent of the people. However, nominalism and ritualism are common. About 10 percent practice the old ethnic religion. Their strong traditions negatively affect them because they're foundational to the people's culture and identity. Even church members rarely experience permanent positive changes due to fear of witchcraft. When something bad happens in the community, such as natural events and illnesses, people generally blame a human source for using sorcery. These long-held beliefs make people resistant to change.

The Matengo struggle with illiteracy, poverty, poor health and shallowness of Bible teaching. But God has the power to alleviate these problems as His Word in the mother tongue, along with Christian tracts, health booklets, and discipleship and literacy materials become available. Development of the language to include these in the Matengo language is underway.

Dialect differences that affect pronunciation exist in each of these three language groups. Thankfully, the variations are minor, and people from all dialects understand each other.

The Matengo live in the Ruvuma Region of Tanzania which is named for the Ruvuma River that is at the southern border of Matengo territory and which also forms the border between Tanzania and Mozambique.

**Primary Religion:**

Christian

**Disciples (Matt 28:19):**

Unknown

**Churches:**

Yes

**Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):**

None

**Population (date):**

150,000 (1987)



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### Have They Heard The Gospel?

Response to the Gospel	An estimated 90% of Matengo are Christians. They have been Christians for many generations.
Is the Word of God Translated?	No. A project has begun with goals to produce printed booklets of Jonah, Mark and Luke; audio recordings of Jonah and Luke portions; the "JESUS" film.
Other Forms of Gospel Presentations	
Recordings:	No but audio recordings of Jonah and portions of Luke are planned
Literature:	No
Films/videos:	No; The Jesus Film is on the list of priorities.
Radio:	No
Bible Stories:	No but Bible Stories are planned.
Estimated Number of Christian Congregations	unknown
Number that Use Primarily the Local Language in Their Services	unknown

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### Group Description

#### Population all countries

World Population	150,000
World Population (Date)	1987

#### Geography & Environment

Location	Ruvuma Region in the southwest of Tanzania, east of Lake Malawi.
Climate	Mild temperature averaging 23° C. depending on altitude and season. The months of June, July and August are chilly with the temperatures dropping to 13° C particularly, within the areas surrounding Matengo Highlands in Mbinga district. October and November are the hottest months with an average temperature of 30° C. Rainfall is adequate.

#### Alternate Language Names

Chimatengo, Kimatengo

#### Linguistically Related Languages

It is related to many other Central Bantu languages in the surrounding region including each of its neighbors below.

#### Neighboring Languages

Ngoni [ngo], Manda [mgs], Mpoto [mpa], Mwera [mjh], Nindi [nxi] and Nyanja [nya] (in Mozambique, also known as Chichewa)

#### Literacy

Adult Literacy Percentage	97%
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## **The Matengo of Tanzania**

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### **Economics**

Subsistence Type	Food crops are maize, paddy, cassava, beans, sweet potatoes, millet and sorghum. Cattle and goats are also grown.
Income Sources	Principally farming. Major cash crops are coffee, tobacco and cashew nuts. Also trades such as carpentry, masonry, black smithery, bicycle repair, shoe making and others. There are huge mineral deposit potentials in Mbinga districts. Mineral deposits include various gemstones, coal, gold, diamond and building minerals. However, further exploration work is needed to realize this potential.

### **Community Development**

Health Care (Quality)	Poor
Diet (Quality)	Adequate
Water	Poor access to clean water in the mountains where the Matengo live.
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	Most use firewood. Electricity is scarce.

### **References**

*Ruvuma Region Socio-Economic Profile*. 1997. <http://www.tzonline.org/pdf/Ruvuma.pdf>