



The Wolof of West Africa

Wolofs are concentrated throughout the western half of Senegal and also into the edges of neighboring Mauritania and Gambia.

Among the Wolofs of Senegal and Gambia social cohesion and religious/Islamic cohesion are perhaps inseparable. During the French colonial period, the traditional social structure collapsed and Islam actually replaced the old system. There is great social strength in this overlay. The people have a positive self image, are peaceful, not liking tension. Some things that do disrupt the social balance are the persistent drought conditions and increasing pressure on land, which moves people back and forth between urban and rural centers. Where normally they would be leading agricultural lives, they are more and more exposed to the unemployment, drugs, prostitution and materialism of urban living. Islam is an important underlying factor, something that remains relatively constant in both rural and urban settings. This socio-religious cohesion provides authority structures and guidelines for conduct. Their felt needs tend to center around economic problems caused by such things as lack of water, seed, farm implements, good prices, fertile soil and unemployment.

Primary Religion:

Islam

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

< 1%

Churches:

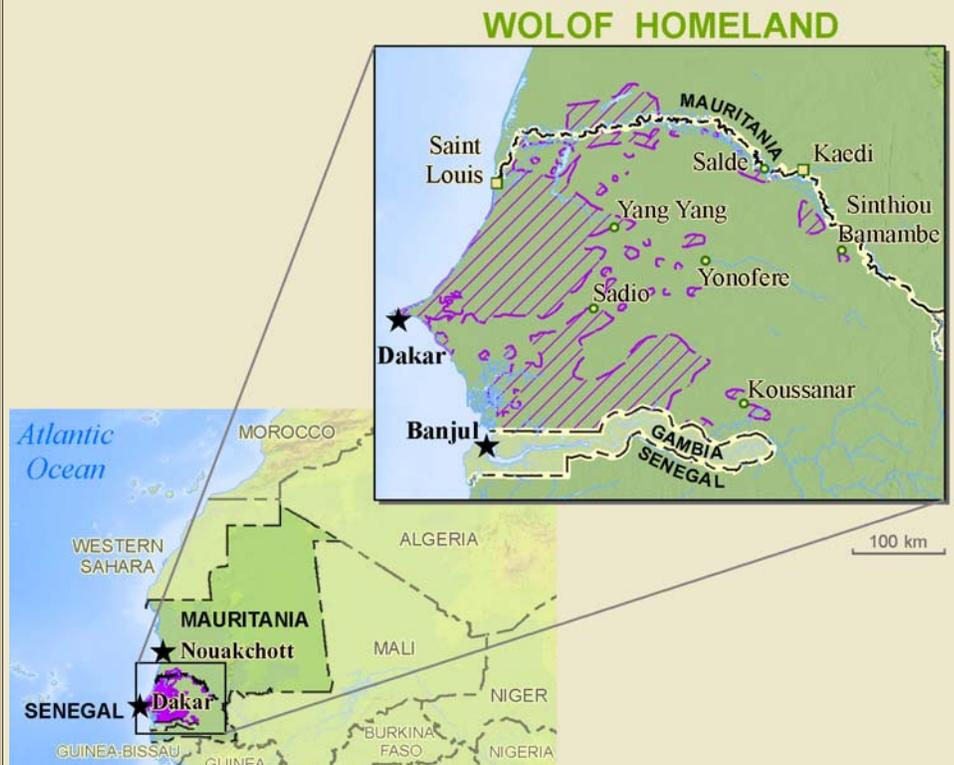
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Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

NT available, OT portions

Population (date):

3,300,000 (1988)



The Wolof of West Africa

Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Call Themselves Christian (%)	<1%	
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	< 1%	
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	99%	
Believe In The Local Traditional Religion (%)	99%	
Number Of Pastors	50	
Number Of Missionaries Working	50	
Number Of Churches	0	
Comment (Churches)	None in Wolof	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	They have the New Testament published in Wolof, and the Old Testament is in progress.	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	High rate of illiteracy and no interest in learning to read.	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	Christian radio allowed; Gospel recordings available	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	There is need for continued literacy work. Authority structures are important to the Wolof people; therefore, it would be wise to work with the Marabouts and village chiefs. Start with their basic beliefs and relate Scripture passages to them that touch these specific issues. Witness when a person has a need so that the problem is transformed into good news. There are many misconceptions and distortions about Christianity. The Bible translation team needs to complete their work on The Old Testament, too, which will help them to understand what Christianity really is.	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	3,300,000	
World Population (Date)	1988	
World Population (Urban Percent)	50	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Gambia	
Country Name	Senegal	
Country Name	Mauritania	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	Western Senegal and just over the borders into The Gambia and Mauritania.	
Country	Senegal	
Climate	Short rainy season between July and October.	
Language & Linguistics		Group Description
Primary Language	WOLOF	
Alternate Language Names	Ouolof (French spelling)	
Second Languages	39%	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	FRENCH	
Comments (Related Languages)	Most speak a little.	
Literacy		Group Description
Adult Literacy Percentage	10%	
Active Literacy Program	No	
Economics		Group Description
Occupation	Agriculturalists, merchants	
Income Sources	Peanuts are a cash crop, generating annual income of about \$400. This is a cash based society with a high interest in materialism.	
Products / Crafts	Peanuts, fish, millet, tailoring of elegant embroidered clothing.	

The Wolof of West Africa

Item Name

Item Note

Trade Partners

International, and other Senegalese

Modernization / Utilities

Electricity is common, except in rural areas. Telephones are available at city post offices.

Comment (Economy)

Forms of wealth include jewelry, clothes, farm implements, and real estate. The Wolofs must yield to the demand for credit by relatives. Terrific population pressure is placed on land. They live under threat of drought.

Community Development

Group Description

Health Care (Quality)

Good

Comment (Health Care)

Clinics are available, wherever there are government centers. There is not always medication available nor money to buy when available. Marabouts and different kinds of healers are much consulted.

Diet (Quality)

Good

Comment (Diet)

Drought conditions affect food supplies - normally they have an adequate food standard.

Water (Quality)

Good

Comment (Water)

Drought and salinization are serious problems.

Shelter Description

Normally shelters are adequate, although vast slums are growing in cities.

Energy/Fuel (Quality)

Good

Comment (Energy)

Charcoal is the cooking fuel of choice, but forests are largely depleted.

Clothing

The Wolof place a high emphasis on clothing for both men and women, especially in feast days. If they have the money, they will buy new clothes. Used clothing is cheap, imported by the bale.

Transportation

All-weather roads are laid out in most places where there is a government administration.

Comment (Community Development)

Telephones are available at city post offices.

Society & Culture

Group Description

Family Structures

Extended families are the norm.

Neighbor Relations

Peaceable. Prefer not to work individually.

Authority / Rule

Islam is a male religion, primarily. Women express little interest in religion. Government appointees in each region have authority in places where they are functioning - elsewhere it would either be the Marabout (Muslim authority) or community elders. Peanut marketing boards exert influence.

Social Habits/Groupings

Wolofs do not operate as individuals, but under the authority of family, extended family, and community elders. Strong caste background still influences strongly, though it is not too apparent and is decreasing - nobility, various labor castes and slaves. Marriage is usually within castes.

Cultural Change Pace

Slow

Self Image

Prestigious

Judicial / Punishment System

Petty personal and family matters are handled by traditional, informal courts. Serious matters are handled by a government court system.

Celebrations

Islamic pilgrimages and holidays are very important. Frequent visits to relatives and friends are essential to life.

Art Forms

Elegant clothes, gold jewelry and generous gift-giving are ideals.

Media

Both radio and television are regular in the Wolof language. Wolof newspapers have not been very successful, but several French language newspapers are published. Many Islamic books and periodicals are produced, mostly in French.

Local Language Broadcasting

> 1 hour daily

Comment (Culture)

Government takes the initiative on projects where government offices exist. French colonization caused collapse of Wolof society. The need at the time was filled by Islam.

Youth

Group Description

Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)

Girls help with all the household chores, gardening, caring for younger siblings, fetching water. Boys work in the fields.

The Wolof of West Africa

Item Name

Youth Problems (Teens)

Item Note

There is competition between wives in the home, causing much tension. The Wolof are peace-loving and try to avoid conflict, but this polygamy leads to deception.

Youth Greatest Needs (teens)

Water is their greatest need, as the drought situation and sinking water table is worsening.

Comment (Youth)

Primary schools in the French system are widely scattered. To attend secondary school, most have to leave home, and go to boarding school.

Education

Group Description

Comment (Education)

Education is offered in French, not Wolof. The dropout rate is high; they are unprepared for either farm work or other employment. Teachers are often outsiders to the community and have low status. No local input is received on decisions concerning school policies.

Church Growth

Status of Christianity

Comment (Reached Status)

Correspondence courses in Bible may be useful.

Lay Leaders

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Religion & Response

Status of Christianity

Religious Practices & Ceremonies

Islamic - Chanting is common. It frequently lasts all night. No children are allowed. Syncretism with African traditional religion is considered natural. There are many pilgrimages, the largest draw hundreds of thousands of annual pilgrims.

Attitude To Christianity

Somewhat receptive

Attitude To Religious Change

Somewhat resistant

Resistance / Receptivity

Although the Roman Catholic Church has been around for centuries, Christianity is still a foreign religion in the eyes of the people. Some young people responded through a Christian run coffee shop.

Religious Analogies & Bridges

Everything that Islam offers (Old Testament, Prophets, etc)

Spiritual Climate And Openness

Open to conversation, but no converts. Social rejection though government is tolerant. Muslim leaders are extremely powerful and are feared.

Items For Prayer

Pray that the newly published New Testament will be used and that the Old Testament translation team will work victoriously against all opposition from the Enemy. Pray for literacy efforts among the Wolof.

History Of Christianity In Group

Status of Christianity

Year Began

1816

By Whom

Roman Catholic Church

Significant Events

Roman Catholics started a school. Protestant activity began in the 1940's. Very few Christian missions exist in rural areas. Their earliest contact with Christianity was in 1700's from Portuguese.

Scripture

Status of Christianity

Translation Status

In Progress

Available Scripture

New Testament

Form Of Scripture Available

Printed, Audio and Visual

Comment (Scripture)

New Testament published, Old Testament planned. There are some correspondence Bible courses. They have some Gospel recordings and easy reading Bible stories.

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Literature

Yes

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Recordings

Yes

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Film/Videos

Jesus film

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Radio

Some

Missions and Churches

Status of Christianity

Organization Name

Christian Missions in Many Lands (see PB)

Organization Name

WEC International

Organization Name

Southern Baptist Convention (USA)

The Wolof of West Africa

Item Name

Organization Name

Main Ministry

Organization Name

Organization Name

Organization Name

Item Note

CBFMS

Community Development

Indus Christian Fellowship

Baptist International Mission

United World Mission

Christian Literature And Media Status

Literature Available

Audio Recordings Available

Films Available

Radio Programs Available

New Testament and portions available

Gospel recordings are available, and most families own a cassette player.

The Jesus film is being dubbed in Wolof

Government allows short Christian programs. Most families own a radio.

Status of Christianity