

The Aeka of Papua New Guinea



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The Aeka people live in 28 villages and hamlets in the low-lying land around the Kumusi and Ope Rivers. Most of the area is covered with rainforest and sago swamp, though some land by the road is cultivated for growing oil palm. Some families own oil palm blocks and earn money by selling the fruit to an oil palm processing company.

People mostly eat taro, bananas and sago, which they grow and harvest themselves. They also keep pigs, which may grow to be very large.

The Anglican Church was the first mission to evangelize the Aeka area, in the late 1930s. All Aeka people would say that they are Christians, although most do not regularly attend church. A cargo cult is active in Oro Province, and some Aeka people are members of the cult. The cargo cult involves ancestor worship for material benefit, which people often mix with traditional and Christian beliefs.

The small nation of Papua New Guinea has more languages being used than any other country in the world—more than 800. It is one of the most rural nations with only 18 percent of the people living in cities. It is one of the world’s least explored so that here are many plants and animals waiting to be discovered.

Primary Religion:
 Christian

Disciples (Matt 28:19):
 20%

Churches:
 Yes

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):
 None

Population (date):
 34,000 (2007)



AEKA HOMELAND



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

History of Christianity Anglican in 1958; Christian Revival Center in the 1980s
Comment There are 9 Anglican churches and 8 CRC

Is the Word of God Translated? No
Comment A retired Anglican priest is trying to translate church materials into Aeka, his mother tongue.
Most people do not speak a language other than Aeka well so cannot understand the Bible well in another language.

Other Forms of Gospel Presentations

Recordings: Yes
Literature: No
Films/videos: Yes
Radio: No
Bible Stories: Yes

Language of Wider Communication Tok Pisin

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Group Description

Population all countries

World Population For This People	3,400
World Population (Date)	2007

Geography & Environment

To the east of the Kumusi river; much of the ground is used for cultivating oil palm.

The ground is low lying, with some dry ground, mud and swamp. The area is covered with rainforest and sago swamp.

Coordinates:	E 147.96832 — S8.61618
Climate	Tropical forest, swampy

Alternate Language Names

Ajeka, Aiga

Other Mother Tongues

Tok Pisin, English

Comment

Most people do not speak a language other than Aeka well, so cannot understand the Bible well in another language.

Linguistically Related Languages

Binandere: Dawari; Upper Musa

Neighboring Languages

Orokaiva; Binandere

Literacy

Adult Literacy Percentage	49%
Comment	56% men; 42% women
Active Literacy Program	Yes

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Economics

Subsistence Type	Agriculturalists
Comment	Most people are subsistence farmers and sago gatherers
Income Sources	Oil palm, garden produce

Community Development

Health Care (Quality)	Fair
Comment	Infant mortality rate: 5%; life expectancy 66
Diet (Quality)	Good
Comment	People keep gardens, growing taro, bananas and other vegetables; also gather sago and keep pigs.
Water	Poor
Shelter Description	Homes are typically constructed on wooden posts 1m or more above the ground. Sago leaves are used for the roof, the stems of sago leaves for the walls, and black palm for floor boards.
Comment	Some families also have a wind house for shade during the day. This is constructed in the same manner but instead of walls, it has a low railing around the edge.
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	No electricity except for a few families who own generators.
Comment	People mostly cook on wood fires
Clothing	Western, second hand

Society & Culture

Neighbor Relations	People live in villages and hamlets of 40-300 people.
Recreations	Telling stories, chewing betel nut

Children and Youth:

Labor and tasks (6-12 yr olds)	Children help their parents in the garden, climb trees to gather coconuts; they may also fetch water and firewood
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Education--Group Description

Teacher To Pupil Ratio

Comment

Most children do not attend school.

Elementary teachers make their own books in Aeka;

Community and Primary schools use books in English.

Language Of Instruction

Early Years

Later years

Aeka, Tok Pisin or English

English

Education

Comment

15 elementary schools

11 elementary schools (grades prep-2); 2 community schools
(grades 3-6); 2 primary (grades 3-8)

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Status of Christianity

Church Growth

Pastors:	41
Comment	11 Anglican priests and evangelists and an estimated 30 Christian Revival Center pastors
Missionaries	2
Comment	Anglican priests from neighboring language groups
Christian Clinics/Hospitals:	There are 3 aid posts and a health center in the Aeka area.

Religion and Response

Translation status	In progress on an informal basis
Attitude toward Christianity	Much nominalism. Now many people are being drawn away from the church by cargo cult.

References

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