

Yawo

Unreached People Group in Malawi

Malawi

An African country landlocked by Zambia, Mozambique, and Tanzania. Malawi has an area of 45,747 square miles (118,500 km²). The major topographic feature is Lake Malawi, a freshwater lake that is home to hundreds of fish species found nowhere else in the world. Twenty percent of Malawi's landmass consists of fresh water.



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Population



Malawi	1.7 million
Mozambique	>450,000
Tanzania	>500,000
World	>2.7 million

A Name Changer

Originally called Yao, their name was changed to Yawo so they would not be confused with the Yao of south Asia.

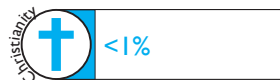
Language

- ciYawo**
Primary language
1,938,000 speakers
Written language
- ciChewa**
(national language of Malawi)
- Portuguese**
(national language of Mozambique)
- Swahili**
(national language of Tanzania)

Religion



Many Yawo practice a mix of Islam, their pre-Islamic animist beliefs, witchcraft and ancestral cults.

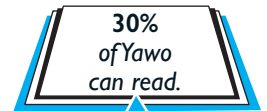


In recent years, there has been a move toward Islamic orthodoxy. At the same time, there is an increased openness to the message of Jesus.

Literacy

85% of Yawo can speak ciChewa which is the national language of Malawi.

Those who attend school learn from teachers who speak ciChewa, so they are unable to read in their heart language.



Livelihood

Yawo are generally subsistence farmers and in recent years, fishermen.

There has been a significant migration into urban areas as Yawo seek temporary employment opportunities.

Traveling Salesmen

In Mozambique, Yawo are known as "negociantes" (traveling salesmen). In the 1800's, Yawo travelled to and from the coast trading with Swahili-Arab merchants. They would capture neighboring tribal people and exchange them with slave traders for ivory, tobacco, gunpowder and cloth. This is how Yawo were introduced to the Islamic faith.

Family Life

Yawo are a matrilineal society. A group of sisters and their families live with an elder brother or uncle and consider him their leader. Husbands live in their wife's village, and are often considered strangers in the village for many years. Because Yawo are Muslim, the men often have more than one wife. Divorce is common.



A Yawo Proverb – Mbusi jikulya pajitaŵilile. (The goat eats where it is tied.)

Quoted from the book: Wisdom of the Yawo People. Yawo Proverbs and Stories: Yitagu Ni Adisi Sya Ciyawo by Ian D. Dicks



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Sources: joshuaproject.net and everyculture.com