

Location: Western Africa, bordering the Gulf of Guinea, between Côte d'Ivoire and Togo

Population: 23,832,495

Language: Asante 14.8%, Ewe 12.7%, Fante 9.9%, Boron (Brong) 4.6%, Dagomba 4.3%, Dangme 4.3%, Dagarte (Dagaba) 3.7%, Akyem 3.4%, Ga 3.4%, Akuapem 2.9%, other 36.1% (includes English (official))

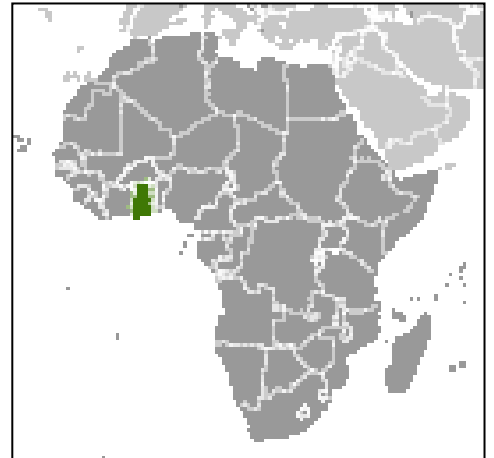
Literacy: (*definition: age 15 and over, and can read and write*)

total population: 57.9%

male: 66.4%

female: 49.8%

FACTS AND FIGURES FROM THE WORLD FACTBOOK, CIA



New Reader Portions in Ghana

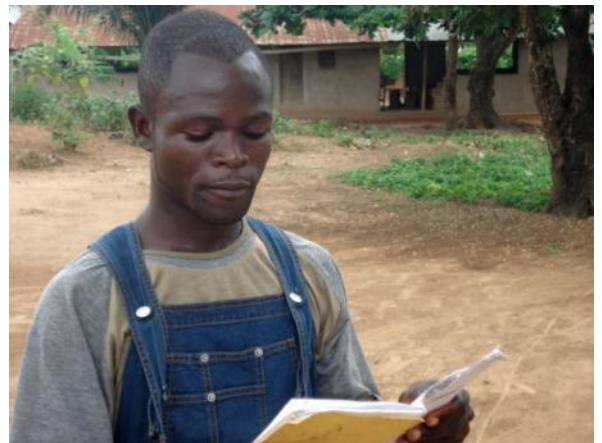
Ghana's 500,000 Sehwi people inhabit an area in the west of the country which is rich in natural resources. Located within the tropical rainforest belt, the land is very fertile, producing large quantities of cash and food crops. One of the main crops is cocoa, and the rhythm of village life is still determined by the demands of cocoa planting and harvesting. Reflecting Ghana's former name – the Gold Coast – the region also has significant gold reserves.

For the vast majority of ordinary Sehwi people, however, the richness of these natural resources has not brought material wealth. Most are poor subsistence farmers living in villages located some distance from the main towns along dirt roads. In addition to material poverty, the Sehwi have also traditionally been poor in terms of literacy.

In both schools and churches, the absence of printed material in Esahie has for many years forced people to use Asante (a language commonly spoken in Côte d'Ivoire) books and Scriptures.

It was not until the mid-1990s that the Bible Society of Ghana and the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translations developed a full orthography (writing system using symbols to represent the language) for Esahie. Once the orthography existed, rapid progress was made with translating the Scriptures into Esahie. The first fruit of this work – and the first text in Esahie to be recorded by the Ghana Bureau of Languages – was the Gospel of Mark, launched to the accompaniment of joyful singing and dancing in April 1998. The full Esahie New Testament was completed and launched in 2006.

Eager to ensure that the Sehwi people are able to experience the richness of reading God's Word in their own language, the Bible Society developed an Esahie literacy program, with classes launched in a number of Sehwi villages.



Stories

Yaa Atea, a woman in her mid-20s, had never attended school. With no experience of formal learning, she feared that she would not be able to cope with the literacy class set up in her village, Amafie, and was initially very reluctant to join. However, she was finally persuaded by some friends to join when the class resumed in January after the cocoa harvest. Using the special Esahie Primer, she found learning to read and write easier than she had thought it would be.

“I never thought that I would be able to read and write...I was wrong. At the end of my first day in class I was able to read my first sentence.”



Mr Gyamera teaching Ms Yaa Atea and her friends at an Esahie literacy class at the village of Amafie

At another village, Ampekrom, there were a similar number of people attending a literacy class in 2003. One of the oldest members of this class was Elizabeth Atobrah who, in her mid-60s, was having her first contact with education. Welcoming the opportunity to learn to read and write in Esahie, she said that her ultimate aim was to be able to read the Esahie New Testament when it became available. As well as giving her access to God’s Word in her own language, literacy skills also allowed Mrs Atobrah to write letters to relatives and friends who no longer lived in her village.

The Esahie New Testament is now available...

This project is designed to teach non-literate Esahie speakers to read and write, and to provide them with scripture so that through reading they would come to know God fully.

The Bible Society hopes to make available
3,600 copies of Esahie Primers,
2,400 copies of Esahie New Reader Portions, and
300 copies of Esahie New Testaments.

With your help these will be given free to members of Bible-based Literacy classes.



Yaw Otchere, a participant in the Bible Society of Ghana's Esahie literacy project, proudly displays his graduation certificate

Pray for...

Pray for a good farming season for the Sehwi area so that the people will have the peace of mind to attend the literacy classes.

Pray that committed people will be nominated by their churches and communities to be trained as teachers.

Pray that as people learn to read and write they will engage with God’s Word.