

Location: Western Africa, southwest of Algeria

Population: 12,666,987

Language: French (official), Bamanan 80%, numerous African languages

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

total population: 46.4%

male: 53.5%

female: 39.6%

FACTS AND FIGURES FROM THE WORLD FACTBOOK, CIA



Literacy Classes in Mali

"Illiteracy is not fatal, we have to fight against and overcome it"

Ousmane Issoufi Maiga, ex-prime minister of Mali, 2008

The landlocked West African country of Mali is one of the world's poorest nations. Since independence from France in 1960 it has suffered droughts, rebellions, a coup and 23 years of military dictatorship.

Although large areas of Mali are barren, the country is self-sufficient in food thanks to the fertile Niger River in the south and east of the country. Mali is also one of the continent's biggest cotton producers. Although, saddled with a chronic foreign trade deficit, it is heavily dependent on foreign aid and the money sent home from emigrants working abroad.

There are 56 spoken languages in Mali. Speakers of Bobo and Dogon occupy the Central East and West of Mali, totalling 866,000 people. Bamanan speakers (2,700,000) are the largest language group and can be found across the country.



Encouraged by the government's determined attitude, the Bible Society of Mali has decided to intensify its efforts in the area of literacy. Illiteracy is much higher in the rural areas and among the female population.

The Bible Society in Mali's goal is to train people to master the writing and reading of three local languages in Mali: Bamanan, Bobo and Dogon. The Bible Society in Mali is setting up Literacy Classes in four target areas of the Ségou Region, Mopti Region, Koulikoro Region, and the Bamako District.



"I can't begin to tell you how useful my new skills are. I followed the whole course: three days a week, three months a year, after harvest time, for three years. Now I can understand everything I read. I can read the Bible texts which have already been published in Boomu, and when the entire Bible is made available, I'll be able to read it myself! I've been going to church since I was very young, and being able to read the Bible means a lot to me. I used to have to rely on what I heard at church on a Sunday, but **now, if my heart is troubled, I can read the Word of God by myself whenever I want to, and be comforted by it.** Being able to read and write has allowed me to set up a small business, selling rice at the market. Now I know how to manage the supplies and read the weighing scales, as well as being able to calculate things. It has really changed my life!"

Tene Kamaté Dembélé, who is 54 years old, lives in the village of Sanékuy. She has recently learnt to read and write.

"In fact, the literacy lessons are changing the day-to-day lives of these women. For example, until now, whenever they needed medication, the pharmacist would indicate by notches on a piece of paper how many times a day they needed to take the medicine. Now, the doctor explains when and how the medicine should be taken and they make a note of it themselves. These may be simple things, but the overall impact is great: **people's daily lives are being changed completely!** Their self-esteem also improves very much. They take more responsibility and are better equipped to work things out for themselves rather than accepting blindly what others tell them as they had to previously."

Mr Kienta, a Pastor in Mali

Literacy Classes in Mali

This project aims to train people in the three main languages of Mali, through Bible-based literacy classes.

The Bible Society of Mali hopes to,

- Train 800 new literates per year: Malian people of all age groups, irrespective of religious confession.
- Create a sustainable literacy program in the three main languages of Mali.
- Develop intellectual aptitudes of Christians of all age groups.
- Help literacy to become one of the core activities of the Church.
- Increase the literacy rate across all age groups, enabling people to access Scripture.



Pray . . .

For the churches that have committed to the Literacy programme, and that more will engage in the process.
That the Bible Society of Mali will recognise and meet the needs of the communities and the individuals.
That attendance at the classes will produce real impact in people's lives.