

REACHING EARS

EQUIPPING VOICES

MEET AMA

Ama is from the Fon tribe in Benin. He is an unmarried 23-year old in a small village near the southern coast of Benin. Ama attended school on-and-off for three years but is not literate. In addition to his mother-tongue of Fon, he speaks fluent French as his parents encouraged him to practice it whenever possible. Speaking French can open doors for work and a son with a job can support his family during tough times when the crops don't yield enough to feed the whole family.

Ama has a few friends and family members who go to churches and others who attend mosques, but he believes it is more important in life to honor one's elders and ancestors.

One day, while in town, Ama tells a story he learned as a young boy from an uncle, about a Fon man and



TWR could explain the outreaches we desire for West Africa using a doctoral dissertation with bullet points and diagrams. Instead we're presenting our plan as a story about a person we call Ama. Receiving information in a drama, story or song is more memorable and persuasive than highly literate methods so we've chosen to use oral communication on you too.

woman who floated on a raft when the world flooded.

While there, a visiting friend offers to help Ama get a job unloading ships at a port. Ama agrees and moves 40 kilometers away to Benin's largest city, Cotonou. Here, he works the midnight to morning shift in darkness doing difficult work.

During his free time, Ama listens to music on local FM stations with a small radio he bought second-hand at a market. On some Tuesday and Wednesday evenings before going to work, he tunes into a medium wave (AM) station to hear a Fon preacher he heard growing up when his mom took him to church. He doesn't always understand the teachings but enjoys this familiar voice from home in his mother tongue.

One Saturday, Ama turns on his radio and hears an interesting story from the Bible about a giant boat that carried one family to safety when the rest of the world died in a flood. It's different from his uncle's story but very interesting. Instead of a sermon after the story, there is a discussion. Ama thinks about the story and discussion questions all week.

The following Saturday, Ama tunes in again to hear about a man who lived after the flood named Abraham. This program is different from the way pastors teach in church and for the first time Ama can understand God's Word. The next week he tells a friend about this man Abraham who left the land where he grew up when God called him to a new place.

For almost a year, Ama listens to the weekly radio stories until he's heard them all, including stories about the beginning of the world. He has several friends who like to hear him tell the stories and discuss them. Ama doesn't tell them in French, only in Fon.

One day, Ama loses his job and he is very upset. He sends a text message to the phone number given at the end of each storytelling episode and a man named Dayo gets in touch. Dayo then meets with Ama in Cotonou to encourage him, and to talk about this Jesus that the Bible stories introduced. Ama tells Dayo that he is now a follower of Christ, but is concerned about his life because without a job he cannot see his family.

...(See continued story on page 10)

HEART LANGUAGE

Trade languages are not normally how life transforming information reaches the heart of an African. Because the medium is part of the message we must honor the audience by speaking the language they use when they are at home, the language in which they dream. Speaking on radio in French has its place but if the Gospel is only communicated in a language of wider communication, the hidden message is that only European languages have value to God.

Memorized scripture duplicates itself as stories pass from one to another. As a non-print medium, radio plays a vital role in empowering Africa to give glory to God in the ways He made them.



UNREACHED: FON OF BENIN

Fon is the main language spoken in Southern Benin.

The Fon people are famous for founding the Kingdom of Dahomey around 1600. The Fon kings famously had “Amazonian” women warriors as bodyguards and war chieftains. In the early 17th century, their king conquered most of southern Benin to establish direct contact with European traders.

The trade of the Fon was chiefly based on the slave trade. This slave-based economy facilitated the establishment of trade posts controlled by the English, Danish, Portuguese and French. The coast of Benin became known as the “slave coast”. After slavery was abolished in 1807, the Fon economy was based on the palm tree trade.

More than half the Fon identify themselves as Christians (of which 72% are Catholic), but the majority actually practice Benin’s national religion, Vodun. “Vodun” is derived from the Fon name for a god or spirit, which is “Vodu”. The Voodoo practiced in other countries such as Haiti comes from Benin. Fon religion is polytheistic and while they believe in a

supreme deity, this creator god is not omnipotent. Most of the nearly three million Fon practice “marginal Christianity”, a form of religion with roots in Christianity but not theologically Christian. This people group is less than 2% evangelical.



PRAY FOR THE FON:

- Pray that those who merely attend church will discover a passion to make Jesus truly the Lord of their entire lives.
- Pray that love for God casts out traditional fears and service to evil and “ancestral” spirits.
- Pray that the Fon will gain a passion for spreading the Good News of Jesus throughout their tribe.
- Pray that God raises up Fon who respond to Christ’s promise in Acts 1:8. Being empowered by the Holy Spirit, they will be witnesses beyond their own culture to other tribes in Benin, Togo and Nigeria.

The vodun (low gods) play a central role in their religious life. Most Fon also emphasize ancestral worship and believe that the spirits of the dead live alongside the living, with each family of spirits having its own female priesthood.

Christian missionary efforts in the past have had limited success in offering a complete, systematic alternative to Voodoo. Most Fon who claim to be Christians do not make Jesus the supreme Lord of their lives. What little Christianity they do understand normally doesn’t replace their old worldview, so they’ve adopted familiar things such as the intercession of saints and angels and have added these ideas to their existing beliefs.

There has been initial, concentrated church planting among the Fon within the past two years. Oral communication of God’s Word is now being used among the Fon by Campus Crusade for Christ.

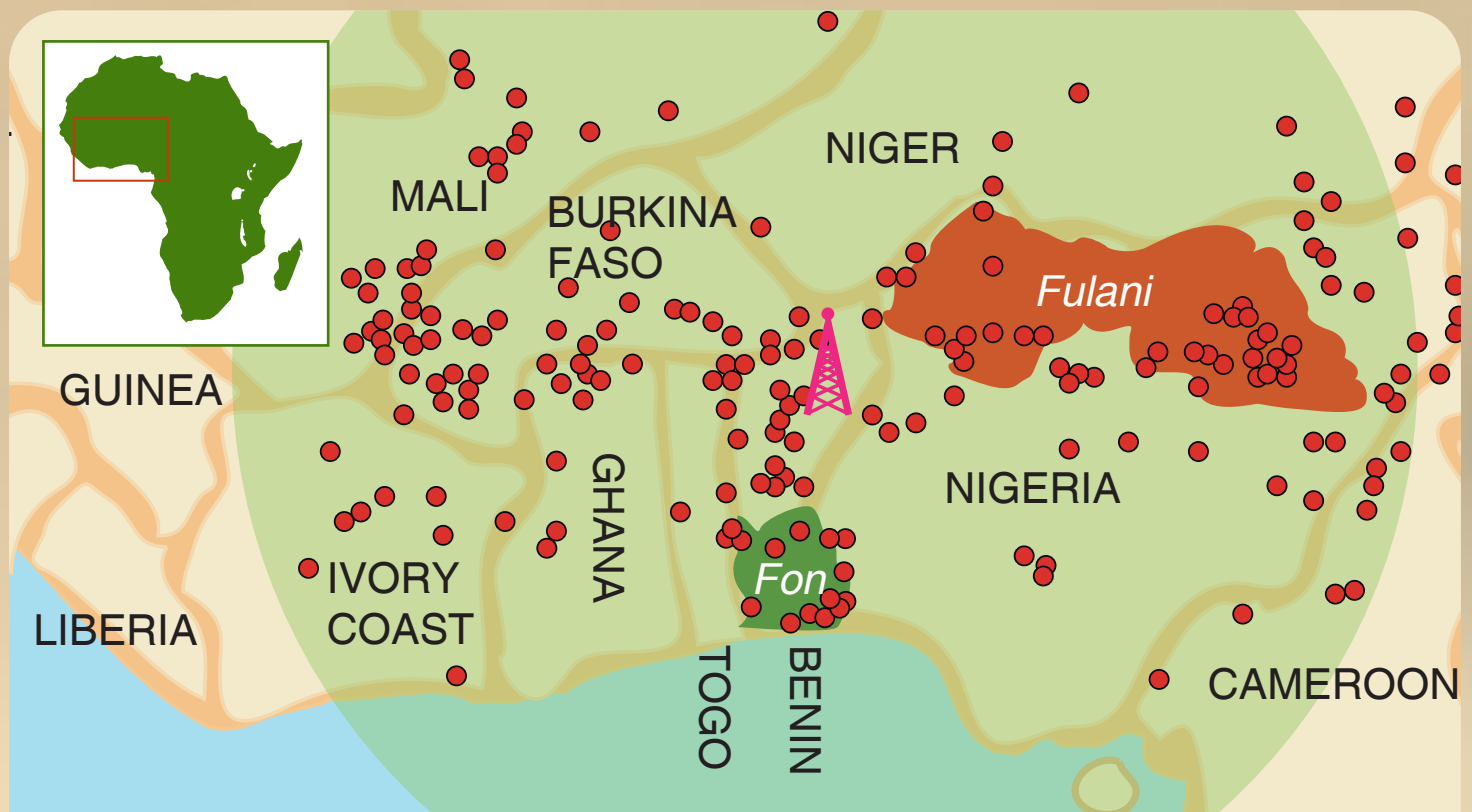
BENIN TRANSMITTER

Teaching and preaching in the past has proven insufficient to transform the Fon worldview. As concrete relational thinkers they have difficulty relating to abstract communication forms such as lectures. Storytelling is a natural way to present a complete understanding of the Gospel to the Fon. They can understand, remember and repeat the concrete events of chronological Bible story-telling much better than sermons. Giving Bible scriptures to the Fon in oral forms that they can meditate on and share is an important key to helping transform the people group from outwardly “Christian” to living truly transformed lives. 📖

In 2000, an African pastor began visiting the home of the president of Benin twice a week to pray for two hours. After two years, the guards realized he wasn't going to give up and finally arranged an audience with the president. At this first meeting he was able to lead both the president and his wife to Christ and continued to visit for Bible study and prayer. The pastor mentioned the possibility of a Christian broadcasting station in November of 2002. The president pursued his request and personally invited TWR to submit an application for a license to broadcast. TWR accepted the offer and actively pursued this God-given opportunity to establish a radio station outlet. After six years of hard work and two years of construction, TWR-Benin first broadcast on February 1, 2008. The medium wave transmitter in Benin has a potential to reach up to 200 million people in West Africa. Broadcasting at 1566kHz on the AM band, the 100,000 Watt signal is powerful enough to cover all of Nigeria and TWR even receives some listener contacts from Cameroon further east. To the west, 1566 covers Ghana and Burkina Faso as well as parts of Ivory Coast and Mali.

UNREACHED AREAS:

Each red dot represents a people group with virtually no Gospel access. These are just some of the over 300 Unreached People Groups (UPGs) in range of our Benin transmitter. The signal range of TWR-Benin is represented by the green circle. The dark areas are the homelands of the two UPGs focused on in this publication.



PARTNERSHIPS_ESTABLISHED

ECWA

The Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), is the largest denomination in Nigeria. ECWA was founded in 1954 when the SIM-related churches came together to form an indigenous body. Since that time, mission stations, Bible schools, academic schools, and medical programs have been transferred to ECWA leadership.



ECWA has started two theological seminaries, eight Bible colleges and 15 theological training institutes. ECWA's Medical Department coordinates a wide network which includes four hospitals and a community health program with over 110 health clinics, a central pharmacy and a school of nursing and midwifery. It is also involved in radio, publications for outreach and discipleship, rural development, urban ministries, and cross-cultural missions. There are more than 1,600 missionaries from ECWA churches who serve in Nigeria and other countries with the Evangelical Missionary Society (EMS), the missionary arm of ECWA.



Radio ELWA

Radio ELWA (Eternal Love Winning All) is the radio mission of ECWA. In 1954 Radio ELWA began operating a shortwave ministry from Liberia. This voice to West Africa was silenced in 1996 when their transmitter site was destroyed in the civil war. TWR began airing Radio ELWA programs from South Africa via shortwave to West Africa at that time. When TWR's station in northern Benin came on the air in 2008, Radio ELWA supplied programs from Nigeria. Because Nigerian law forbids any religious or political group to own a radio station, sending radio programs to TWR in Benin allows listeners in nations like Nigeria to tune into Gospel programs.



SIM

Founded in 1893, Serving In Mission (SIM) is an international, inter-denominational Christian mission. In 2008, SIM had about 1,800 active missionaries, from 37 countries serving in over 43 countries (principally South America, Africa and Asia). The SIM office and studios in Parakou, Benin produce radio series in multiple languages. These series air on local FM stations and every day, a 15-minute SIM series airs from TWR's medium wave (AM) transmitter 25 kilometers away.



PARTNERSHIPS DEVELOPING

T4 Global

T4 Global is one of a handful of ministries focused exclusively on oral audiences.

Founded in 2005, T4 Global seeks to share the Gospel, business practices, health training and life skills through stories. They use these cultural stories to share information on health, agriculture and biblical principles.

In order to work in a new area, T4 Global must first be invited by an already established mission group. Then, they work with trusted leaders in the area to assess the spiritual and physical needs of the people. In addressing sanitation and health, T4 Global also focuses on underlying worldview issues like corruption, fatalism, and injustice while advocating servant leadership.

A current project addresses the problem of unsanitary water conditions. Rather than drilling wells, T4 Global works with native language speakers and already established organizations to develop stories, songs and dramas about how to purify water and keep it clean.

Campus Crusade for Christ-Benin (Cru)

Founded in 1951, Campus Crusade for Christ is an inter-denominational Christian organization that promotes evangelism and discipleship in more than 190 countries around the world. In the USA, the name recently shortened to Cru, but Benin and many other national ministries still use the original name.



StoryRunners

The Unreached People Group mission of Cru, StoryRunners is

a ministry based in the USA. They aim to produce sets of oral Bibles in 500 unreached languages over the next 10 years. Called "Vision 500", the effort is designed to help those with no Scripture to hear the Gospel in a way they can understand, using 41 Bible stories from Creation to the return of Christ.

The backbone of this vision is the "School of Storying" (SOS) that equips local believers to craft Bible stories in their first, "heart language". In this modeling process, with trainers "showing not telling", listeners are equipped for easy duplication of the process in neighboring languages, including those of the Unengaged Unreached People Groups (UUPGs).

In six weeks local Christ-followers learn the stories in a national or minority language, practice sharing them in a small group setting, and assist in the recording of the 41 stories. They are then immediately ready to use the stories and to reproduce the SOS into unreached language groups in their country.

One storyteller in Benin shared, "If I go up to someone and try to tell them about Jesus, they will turn me away. But if I ask if they want to hear a story, they respond that they'd love to!" 📖



UNREACHED: FULANI OF NIGERIA

Scattered mostly in Nigeria and Cameroon, the 7 million semi-nomadic Fulani people fiercely reject anything that they perceive to be contrary to their lifestyle of freely roaming with their cattle herds. This includes rejecting education, permanent homes and outside cultural influences. They are widely regarded as troublesome impediments to the region's large cattle ranchers.

One businessman and politician has established two large cattle ranches, forcing the tribal people from their historic grazing land. They were given no compensation for this. Their illiteracy and intense independence have placed them at a disadvantage in dealing with greedy people like these who seek to take advantage of them.

The Fulani of north-central Nigeria are primarily cattle herders in the Savannah regions. They generally migrate between two locations, one for the dry seasons and one for rainy seasons. They highly esteem their cattle and migrate to find grass and avoid insects that are harmful to their cattle. They live in small family units called wuro's (compounds) away from other families.

Their language, known as Fulfulde, is spoken by 12 million people in West Africa. Primarily oral learners, illiteracy is an obstacle to learning about Christ when the Gospel is shared because too often it has come in abstract forms such as printed tracts and sermons.

Fulani tribes practise a mixture of traditional religion and Islam. A type of Islam that is destructive to their culture is rapidly spreading among them. They have very limited access to much needed medical and veterinary treatment, putting their tribe further at risk. They have very little access to schools or

STORYTELLING

Jesus used stories when he spoke to the people. In fact, he did not tell them anything without using stories. So God's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "I will use stories to speak my message and to explain things that have been hidden since the creation of the world." - Matthew 13:34-35 (Contemporary English Version)

Jesus used many other stories when he spoke to the people, and he taught them as much as they could understand. He did not tell them anything without using stories. But when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them. - Mark 4:33-34 (Contemporary English Version)



churches and the Gospel has had no significant impact on the people. Their fierce independence, suspicion of outsiders as well as their nomadic lifestyle, has made them one of the most challenging African tribes to reach.

The Fulani respond well to concrete relational communication forms such as songs, stories, proverbs and chants. They therefore need missionaries who are willing to live among them, learn the language well, and present the Gospel to them in oral forms, while also meeting some of their basic veterinary, farming and medical needs. 🏠

WHY RADIO?

Radio ministry takes cultural nuances and differences into consideration when creating content. For instance, the Islamic world is full of cultural diversity, stretching from Africa to Asia. A Sudanese lives in an entirely different setting from a Syrian or someone in Indonesia. Culture-specific programming allows people to find biblical truth in their heart language and distinctive setting.

PRAY FOR THE FULANI:

- Pray that the few Christian believers in the tribe will be sent teachers to help them become well established in the faith.
- Pray that they will find each other in order to fellowship together.
- Pray that they will learn to live in the power of Christ's Spirit, experiencing the fruit of the Spirit consistently.
- Pray that the Fulani will be able to care adequately for their families, and become better prepared for the rapidly changing conditions of the 21st Century.
- Pray that they will see the need to make schooling a priority for their children.
- Pray for radio programs to be effective in reaching the Fulani both in evangelism and discipleship.



AMA'S STORY CONTINUES

(Continued from page 2)

Dayo and Ama pray together about his situation. Dayo asks Ama to trust that God will take care of him and invites Ama to attend a storyteller training in a small town several hours to the north.

Ama makes it back home to his family and helps with fishing and farming. On Sundays, he goes to church with some of his family members. One Sunday, after a guest pastor named Uzoma preaches on The Last Supper, Ama approaches him to tell the same story the way he heard it from one of the radio programs. The pastor is impressed with the clarity of the story, which touches on many things that were not shared in the service. Ama asks Pastor Uzoma to join him at the upcoming storyteller training.

A month later, Ama and Pastor Uzoma attend a week of storyteller training. Pastor Uzoma learns the stories quickly. Ama already knows over 40 of them by heart but learns about the first Christians in Acts and how the Bible defines “church” as a group of people gathering together rather than a building. Ama wants to join a local church and share these stories.

A few weeks later, Ama finds a job in a cellphone shop near his home village. He invites the people he meets in the village to his group that meets twice a week to share food, stories and songs from the Bible. Many in the group retell the stories to their families. They also tell others about the weekly radio broadcasts. In another year, the baptized believers include some who used to practice Voodoo and Islam.

Those who move to other parts of Benin start their own groups. Some belong to established churches, while the rest belong to informal groups that meet wherever is convenient. They meet almost daily to share food and pray for each other before or after the storytelling. Ama's life, and the lives of many others, have been transformed by the local AM radio broadcasts sharing Bible stories that he heard in his native Fon. 🇳🇬



LOOKING FORWARD

In West Africa, TWR is reinventing itself. Instead of packaging God's Word into sermons and teachings, we are "becoming all things to all men."¹ We are learning about the communication preferences of the audience groups we want to reach before designing content for them.

Jesus is a good case in point. Being born a Jew and living his life among them meant that Jesus had the background and cultural understanding needed to communicate to the children of Abraham. He didn't just know about his audience, he experienced their lifestyle first-hand.

TWR currently has few offices and workers in West Africa but no lack of trusted partners. In places like Benin, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Togo there are fellow organizations ripe for collaboration. To better understand each UPG, we must rely on this valuable pool of outside help. By working with those who have long-standing relationships with these people groups, we can be more effective communicators of the Gospel.

People do not always want or value printed Scriptures, even if they are translated into their own mother tongue. Using oral forms of the Bible on the radio, especially with Unreached People Groups, helps engage these people in a familiar way and creates a desire for Biblical literacy. This is good news for TWR as storytelling is perfect for radio broadcasting.

Some partners already air series on local FM stations. These could benefit from TWR's network distribution (including satellite, Internet and long range transmitter) to reach thousands more listeners. Other partners use audio on MP3 players (in the hands of trained facilitators) to do face-to-face ministry instead of radio. But radio is universally recognized as the dominant form of mass-media in Africa and is likely to remain unchallenged by TV or mobile Internet for at least another decade.

There are dozens of recorded sets of chronological Bible stories in various African languages. They were prepared for use in small group settings, but they

could be used via radio to reach millions of listeners. In the next few years, TWR can have the Bible storied, sung, chanted and dramatized via radio programs. Group discussions can allow non-literates to deeply study the Bible on their own for the first time.

ORALITY

All children start out life as oral learners but most literates learn to read so quickly that we forget what depending totally on memory is like.

As indigenous methods become prominent via radio, each UPG could cross the 5% tipping point to where native Evangelicals can take over sharing the Good News to the rest of their tribe in their lifetime. As the Great Commission is fulfilled in each group, more workers will be sent into the Lord's harvest field!

If we truly have assisted disciple-making among the Fon of Benin, then there should be people called by God to reach out to neighboring UPGs where they learn that tribe's oral communication styles to bring them to a similar tipping point. Just as someone brought the Good News to our culture and language, we should empower others to become salt and light beyond their immediate "Jerusalem", into their greater "Judea", neighboring "Samaria" and "to the ends of the earth."² 🏠

¹ 1 Corinthians 9:22 ² Acts 1:8

WEST AFRICA AT A GLANCE

There are over 300 Unreached People Groups (UPGs) in range of TWR's 100,000 Watt transmitter in Benin which blankets Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo (and most of the Ivory Coast, Mali, and Niger) with a clear medium wave (AM) signal.

Radio is a powerful medium in Africa. There are only a handful of high power broadcasters reaching the rural communities. Rural communities make up 61% of the population in Africa. When those in rural areas are able to hear the Gospel and oral Scripture, especially in their heart language, it can be very effective. Making disciples is even easier when UPGs are engaged with stories, songs, dramas and the other oral ways of sharing information that they have used for as long as their tribe has existed. Radio ministry overcomes literacy limitations and gives more people equal access to the Gospel.

Currently TWR is broadcasting in over a dozen languages from Benin and working to be more intentional in serving the least-reached UPGs in Sub-Saharan Africa. In this publication we focus on two of the first UPGs we are trusting God to engage in this part of His harvest field.



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