

# WHY WE GO



## People Groups: The Toposa

### Ask God To

- Send missionaries with agricultural, medical and veterinary skills to reach out to the Toposa people.
- Provide translators, so that the people will have the full Bible in their mother tongue.
- Provide gospel workers who are skilled in oral Scripture sharing.
- Help the Toposa maintain good relationships among themselves and neighbouring peoples.

The Toposa are a large agro-pastoralist people group with an estimated population of 500,000. They live in three counties in the East Equatorial State (EES) of South Sudan – Kapoeta North, East, and South – and also in neighbouring Ethiopia.

### Culture and daily life

The people rely on cattle, sheep and goats. Boys are given care of goats and sheep, and graduate to looking after cattle when they come of age. During the wet season the animals graze near the villages. When the rains end, the men take the herds to dry season pasturage, then lead them back when the next rainy season starts.

Sorghum is the main crop. The Toposa also pan for gold and other precious minerals in the stream beds.

Every major social event involves cows being given as a payment or promise. This can place pressure on relationships between neighbours, when there are not enough cows for

the dowry (bride price) of the first wife. Hence the tribal reputation is one of fierce cattle rustling among most neighbouring tribes. As warriors, the Toposa's allegiance has been open to the highest bidder, especially during the 50 years of civil wars.

Political organisation is not apparent, although respect is paid to elders, chiefs and wise men. Most decisions about the clan or community are made in meetings attended by the men. Women remain at home farming, cooking and raising children.

The Toposa culture is orally transmitted through songs, dance, music, poems and folklore. Recently, improvements have been made in health care, water supply and veterinary services. Many Toposa children now attend school, but the literacy rate remains low. Women are starting to take a more prominent role in resolving disputes.

### How can they be reached?

The people believe in a supreme being and in ancestral spirits, who may assist in

overcoming problems such as drought or epidemics of disease among their herds. These beliefs are patched together with Catholic catechism, with charms and animism completing their spiritual awareness.

The number of professing Christians is less than one per cent. Missionaries have used a discipleship model of oral Bible "storying" that has been taught to key leaders. The movement started by these pioneers is now beginning to multiply. Servant-hearted people with professional skills in areas such as medicine, veterinary medicine, agriculture and water development will find avenues for effective outreach among the Toposa.

Some portions of the Bible have been translated into their language.

*Photo by Trent Cox*

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