

# Serere Muslims



## Quick Facts

**Population:** 1,000,000

Senegal: 950,000

Gambia: 35,000

Ivory Coast: 5,000

Mauritania: 5,000

**Religion:** Islam–Sunni

**Believers:** 0.025% (MBB)

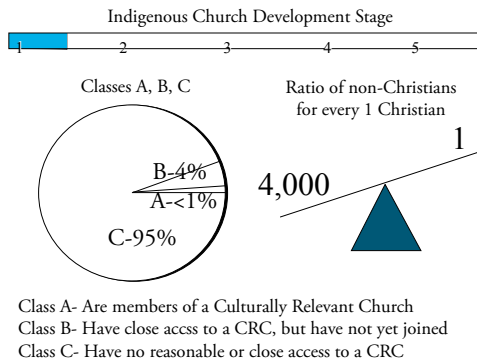
**Scriptures:** NT

**Ministry Tools:** JGRT

**Church Status:** 1

**Mission Status:** 1

**MS Subgroups:** 15+



**Identity:** The Serere are a West Atlantic people related to the Fulani and the Wolof. They migrated to Senegal from the Mauritania region in the 11th century as part of a resistance to Islam. There are six Serere subgroups with corresponding dialects which are different enough to be considered separate languages.

**Lifestyle:** Most Serere are subsistence farmers whose main crops are peanuts and millet. After the harvest, men from rural areas often go to the cities looking for work. They rely on a network of urban-based families related to their lineage to help them. The women left behind will cultivate small gardens of peas, tomatoes and okra. This requires a great deal of work, and may involve digging irrigation ditches connected to water supplies, or carrying the water themselves on a daily basis.

**Customs:** The Serere practice a mixture of matrilineal descent and

patrilineal residency. Although property is inherited through the matrilineal line, women join their husband's community upon marriage. Serere society also has a complex hierarchy with four status groups. The third group consists of endogamous artisan castes, such as leatherworkers and smiths, and the fourth group consists of former slaves.

**Religion:** The Serere were resistant to Islam until a century ago. After the French conquest of their land, the Serere chiefs blamed this defeat on the presence of Catholic missions. As the country began to modernize, social order among the Serere began to break down as more families moved to the cities. It was here, where Islam was predominate, that the Serere began to be assimilated into the Islamic faith. However, for most, Islam remains only a thin veneer over their traditional ethnic religion.

**Christian Outreach:** Today, the Serere are about 75% Muslim, and the re-

maining either follow their traditional religion (10%) or have become Christians (15%). In the race to convert non-Muslim Serere (among which there has been great receptivity in the last two decades), Christian missions largely neglected ministry among Islamic communities. Unfortunately, these are becoming increasingly resistant to Christianity through the gradual process of Islamization.

## How to Pray:

☞ There are four mission agencies now focusing specifically on reaching the Muslim Serere. Pray for God's blessing on their efforts to partner with one another, and with indigenous believers, churches, and ministries to build on what God has already done among the Serere.

☞ Pray for spiritual breakthrough among each of the segments of Serere society, and for group-responses to Christ among entire clans, castes, and matrilineages.

☞ The Bible has been translated and published in the main Serere dialect (Serere-Sine). Pray for its adaptation into the related Serere dialects (Safen and Non) which also require a translation of

**Every year 9,000 Serere Muslims die without Christ.**