



## Quick Facts

**Population:** 2,500,000

Tanzania: 1,200,000

Congo: 500,000

Saudi Arabia: 300,000

Kenya: 100,000

**Religion:** Sunni Islam

**Believers:** 0.002%

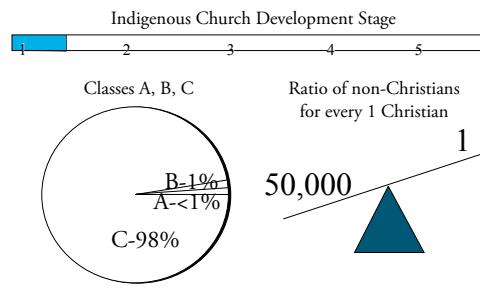
**Scriptures:** NT, OT

**Ministry Tools:** JGRT

**Church Status:** 1

**Mission Status:** 1

**MS Subgroups:** 30+



Class A- Are members of a Culturally Relevant Church  
 Class B- Have close access to a CRC, but have not yet joined  
 Class C- Have no reasonable or close access to a CRC

**Identity:** The Swahili are a heterogeneous group of Bantu peoples which speak Kiswahili as their mother-tongue and practice common elements of Waswahili culture. The original Swahili group is believed to have migrated from the coasts of Somalia, from which their dominance of trade led to the widespread use of their language and the absorption of many Bantu groups.

**Lifestyle:** The Swahili economy was once dependent on the exportation of slaves and goods from Africa to the Middle East and Asia. They ran vast plantations with slave-labor, a practice which continued even into the 20th century. Today, they rely on cheap labor from "squatter" camps to harvest their orchards of coconuts, bananas, tamarinds, and mangos. Fishing is another important industry, in which both males and females participate.

**Customs:** The most important artform to the Swahili is their tradition of po-

etry. Poems are composed for every great occasion, including weddings and annual celebrations. Even their historical chronicals are written as poems. Every new year there is a poetry competition which is open for all to participate in, male and female, and in the past, both freemen and slaves.

**Religion:** The Swahili are high identity, high practice Sunni Muslims. The mosque is a central feature in every Swahili community and all children are sent to the *madrassas* to learn the Quran, even though many now also attend secular public schools. However, Swahili women continue to practice and join spirit possession groups (which are century-old associations with exclusive membership), while all along maintaining their orthodoxy. A clan of Muhammad's descendants (Sharifu) are looked to as faith-healers and intercessors.

**Christian Outreach:** Missionary work among the various Swahili Muslim

groups has been sporadic and inconsistent, resulting in little progress among them. Though there are scattered and isolated Christ-followers, there is still no Swahili church and very limited discipleship of existing believers.

## How to Pray:

☞ The Swahili have never been properly researched, or fully engaged by missionaries. There may in fact be many more Swahili than are presently known. Pray for a team of strategy coordinators who will thoroughly assess the need and map out a plan for reaching them.

☞ The Swahili are despised by surrounding peoples for their role in the slave trade. Pray for forgiveness and grace to fill the hearts of those affected peoples, many of which have been Christianized. Ask God to give a burden to true believers for cross-cultural outreach to their Swahili neighbors.

☞ Though there are radio programs in Swahili (a trade-language used by 50 million people), they are not culturally relevant to the Swahili themselves. Pray for the creative use of poetry to present the gospel, and for a Muslim-friendly edition of the Swahili Bible.

**Every year 22,000  
 Swahili die  
 without Christ.**