

Desert People – the San Bushmen of the Namib and Kalihari Desert

The San people (sometimes referred to as San Bushmen) are traditionally small mobile **hunter-gatherer** groups.

In San society children have no social duties besides playing, and leisure is very important to San of all ages. Large amounts of time are spent talking, joking, making music, and sacred dances.

Women and men alike have equal status in San society. Women may be leaders of their own family groups. They make important family and group decisions and claim ownership of important things like areas with water and food sources. Women are mainly involved in the gathering of food, but may also take part in hunting.

Traditionally, the San were an **egalitarian** society which means decisions are shared by everyone. Women are treated as relative equals in decision making. San economy was a gift giving based on giving each other gifts regularly rather than on trading or purchasing goods and services. Most San have only one partner, but if a hunter is skilled enough to get a lot of food, he/she can afford to have a second wife/husband as well.

Keywords

- **Hunter Gatherer** – people who collect food in the wild and do not farm it.
- **Egalitarian** – decisions are shared amongst everyone rather than being made by a chief.

Tasks:

1. Find five key facts about the San Bushmen
2. Colour in the five countries they are found in on your map from lesson 1.

San Bushmen



Jul'hoan children in Namibia.

Total population

~105,000

Regions with significant populations

 Botswana	63,500
 Namibia	27,000
 South Africa	10,000
 Angola	<5,000
 Zimbabwe	1,200

Languages

All languages of the Khoe, Kx'a, and Tuu language families, English, Portuguese

Religion

San religion, Christianity

Related ethnic groups

Khoekhoe, Basters, Griqua