

INDONESIA



THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA IS A YOUNG COUNTRY OF GREAT CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND NATURAL WEALTH. INDONESIA IS HOME TO BOTH THE LARGEST MUSLIM POPULATION OF ANY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD AND THE LARGEST CHURCH IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

population

- Population: 245.5 million
 - Density: 134 square km
 - Density of Java: 951 per sq km
- Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous nation. Three-fifths of Indonesia's people live on the main island, Java, making it the world's most populous island.

religions

- Muslim 80.3%
- Christian 16%
- Hindu 1.9%
- Animist 1%
- Chinese religions 0.5%
- Buddhist 0.3%

Most areas are predominantly Muslim a few areas are predominantly Christian and the island of Bali is predominantly Hindu. Although there are many strict Muslims in the country, for the average Indonesian, religion is built on top of a deeper spirituality involving ethnic tradition, animism, cultural taboos and ancient legend. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution.

language

The national language is Indonesian [Bahasa Indonesia], which developed from the Malay trade language. However, there are 726 different local languages and most Indonesians are bilingual or trilingual. English is taught in all schools.

geography

Indonesia is known for its natural history and topography. It contains more volcanoes than any other country and

most of these are still active. The island chain created by these volcanoes connects Asia and Australasia and is the world's largest archipelago: over 17,000 islands stretching 3,200 miles along the equator. Nutrient-rich volcanic soils make them the world's most fertile islands. Six thousand are inhabited.

Indonesia is the most bio-diverse nation on earth. Flora and fauna at its western end reflect Asian types (monkeys, tigers, elephants and giant hardwoods) while that at its eastern end reflects Australasian types (flightless birds, tree kangaroos and eucalyptus trees). In addition, the peoples of the western end reflect Asian-Malay characteristics while those at the eastern (Pacific) end reflect Aboriginal characteristics. Indonesia separates the Pacific and Indian Oceans and the Indonesian shelf is rich in coral and marine life.

climate

Indonesia's climate is tropical, with a wet season and a dry season. Average temperatures are 23-30°C [74-86°F], varying little from month to month. Humidity averages 80 percent.

history

In the 7th and 8th centuries Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms ruled in Java, Bali and Sumatra and had a profound influence on Indonesian life and values. From the 13th century Islamic influence in Indonesia blossomed as many of Indonesia's ports became trading centers for Muslim traders.

In the 16th century Portuguese

traders, along with English and Dutch adventurers, arrived seeking spices. In the 17th century the Dutch became dominant and began to expand their control over the islands. Eventually the Dutch government took over from the Dutch East India Company and made the islands a Dutch colonial territory. Western liberal values entered Indonesian culture through this experience.

During these years the influence of Islam grew as a rallying ideology against Dutch exploitation. The Chinese trading community prospered as the middlemen between the Western rulers and the indigenous peoples.

In 1942 the Japanese "liberated" Indonesia Two days after the Japanese surrender at the end of the Second World War Soekarno and Hatta declared the independence of the Republic of Indonesia. Soekarno became the first president. The Indonesian "1945 Constitution" is based on a set of five principles five principles called *Pancasila*. It is taught in all schools and universities as the foundation for national, religious and social life. The national motto is "Unity in Diversity."

By the 1960s inflation had spiralled out of control and there were food shortages. After a failed communist coup in 1965 Soekarno was displaced. General Suharto became the second president. Under him, Indonesia prospered and developed, but there was also corruption and oppression.

Following the East Asian economic turndown of the late 1990s and under intense popular pressure, Suharto



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resigned. His vice-president, Habibie, became Indonesia's third president in 1998 and sought to move the country towards democracy. In 1999 Habibie authorized a referendum in East Timor. It overwhelming vote for independence was reluctantly accepted by Indonesia. The army destroyed much of the infrastructure before leaving.

Indonesia's first genuine democratic elections were held in 1999. Over the next two years the presidency moved from Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) to Megawati Soekarnoputri. In 2005 Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was elected president in Indonesia's first direct presidential elections.

These have also been years of social upheaval. Over 500 churches have been burned down and many more have been closed. There has been inter-communal fighting between Muslim and christian groups in Maluku and Central Sulawesi. Frequently conflicts have been initiated by outside "jihad" warriors demanding that the local Muslim communities take control of mixed of Christian land areas. The Bali bombings have led to a government clampdown on the activities of these jihad groups, to the relief of the local minority peoples.

The provinces of Papua and Naggroe

Aceh Darussalam have battled for independence. The earthquake and tsunami on December 26, 2004 checked the long-running war in Aceh, where over 230,000 people died. Relief agencies (foreign, national, Christian and non-Christian) are now active in the community.

christianity

The Portuguese brought Roman Catholicism to Indonesia in the 16th century. There was some missionary effort and the Dutch Bible Society translated the Bible into Malay. However, the Dutch were primarily interested in the economic exploitation of Indonesia and forbade all missionary work among Muslim peoples until 1855.

In the 19th century the evangelical movement in Europe mobilized new missionaries to Indonesia. Whole ethnic groups turned to Christ from their traditional religions. Nowhere else in the world has so large a Christian community been established in the midst of Islam. So far, however, the church has had little impact on the many Islamic ethnic groups.

In the mid-20th century, Japanese "liberation" led the churches to independence and thus a recognized place

in the nation's affairs. Revival came to some places in the 1960s and 1970s, when tens of thousands of people joined the churches, including many from Muslim backgrounds.

In the early 1950s members of the china Inland Mission (now OMF) who had to leave China made contact with

Chinese-speaking churches in Kalimantan. Links were then made with established Indonesian churches. they invited OMF to help encourage and teach their members and to mobilize them for evangelism.

Today there remain over 100 distinct ethnic groups without the gospel in Indonesia.

OMF strategic priorities

- Breaking down cultural barriers to the gospel among the Muslim unreached people groups through cultural immersion and genuine love.
- Evangelizing, discipling and passing on a mission vision to the nominal Christian population, particularly among university and theological students.
- Equipping future church leaders with a mission-centered theology and a heart for Indonesia's unreached peoples.
- Demonstrating God's love to the disadvantaged through crisis relief, children's ministries and enterprise development.

opportunities available

- University lecturing
- Teaching English
- Theological lecturing
- Education in health services
- Secular business openings
- Social work
- Literature and media

how to pray

- Indonesia is home to over 100 unreached people groups including the world's largest, the Sundanese (32 million). Pray for these groups:
 - The Madurese - historically very resistant to the gospel (20 million)
 - The Malay - easy-going with strong cultural Islamic roots (12 million)
 - The Minangkabau - creative, flexible and proudly Muslim (8 million)
 - The Bugis - independent, fierce, but friendly (7 million)
 - The Acehnese - devastated from the earthquake and tsunami disaster (4 million)
- Pray about religious issues:
 - Endemic corruption affects every level of society, including the church.
 - Fanatical Islam breeding ethnic and religious hatred.
 - The president and his government as they seek to tackle these issues.
- Pray for Indonesian Christians:
 - For victims of violence, church burnings and persecution, particularly those in the Maluku islands and Central Sulawesi.
 - For a vision and a willingness among Indonesian Christians to go to others in their country who have not heard the gospel.
 - For Muslim-background believers who need great wisdom to know how to express their faith in Christ and great strength to persevere.