

Mission Beyond our Borders (MBoB) Country Profile – May 2024

In our country profiles this year we are looking at where the church is **growing**. Our focus this month is on the nation with the largest Muslim population in the world.



Background. Indonesia is a collection of 18,000 islands with a population of nearly 300 million people. It has the world's largest Muslim population and is Southeast Asia's biggest economy. Since independence from the Dutch in 1949 it has become a democracy.

Ethnically it is highly diverse, with more than 300 local languages. The people range from rural hunter-gatherers to a modern urban elite. Indonesia has become one of the world's major emerging economies, but faces demands for independence in several provinces and increasing attacks by militant Islamist armed groups.

Indonesia came to worldwide attention in 2004 with the earthquake and tsunami in Banda Aceh in Sumatra which left more than 220,000 people dead or missing.

Christians in Indonesia. About 16% of Indonesians are Christian compared to 80% Muslim. With the rise of Islamist groups persecution of Christians has grown. However, at the same time the Church is growing.



For example, more than 500,000 Christians from Maluku and central Sulawesi have suffered personal loss, bitter trauma, and loss of their ancestral homelands to Muslim groups, but the Church continues to grow amidst the opposition and persecution.

Persecution now comes in the form of laws that prevent Christians from building, which sometimes results in the destruction of churches and Christian property. Christians of many traditions now draw together for prayer, worship, and mutual support. And the love among them attracts many Muslims to Christ, despite the persecution. Christian love for the needy and most vulnerable people in society also has a powerful effect. Workers also have located and contacted 100 less-reached smaller ethnic groups. Many need evangelism and church planting. Christian aviation is necessary in some islands like West Papua with few roads. Bible translation for the many small language groups remains an immense task.

Please pray for:

- Revival. Some areas have been Christian for centuries (in North Sulawesi, North Sumatra, West Timor, Maluku) but many denominations there lack spiritual life. They struggle with immorality, divisions, and even indigenous occult practices.
- More mature, spiritual leaders. The rapid growth of newer Pentecostal and charismatic churches created a need for discipleship and training for both lay leaders and pastors.
- New believers from a Muslim background, who often face rejection and persecution from their communities. They can also find it difficult to fit into Christian culture and churches. Pray for whole households to come to Christ, and to follow Christ within their own culture.
- Evangelism, church planting and Bible translation in remote areas.