

Reaching the Nations International Church Growth Almanac

Country reports on the LDS Church around the world from a landmark almanac. Includes detailedanalysis of history, context, culture, needs, challenges and opportunities for church growth.



Indonesia

Population: 253.61 millions (#5 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 1,904,569 square km. Located in Southeast Asia between the Philippines and Australia, Indonesia consists of several archipelagos and over 17,500 large islands, a third of which are inhabited. Kalimantan (Borneo), Sumatra, Java, Sulawesi, and Irian Jaya (western New Guinea) are the largest islands and account for the majority of the population. Java is the world's most populous island with approximately 140 million inhabitants. Lowlands occupy coastal areas and experience hot, tropical climate, whereas larger islands with interior highlands and tall mountains are subject to cooler climatic conditions. Floods, droughts, tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanoes, and forest fires are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation, pollution, and poor air quality from forest fires. Indonesia is administratively divided into thirty-one provinces, one autonomous province, one special region, and one national capital district.

Peoples

Javanese: 40.1%

Sundanese: 15.5%

Malay: 3.7%

Batak: 3.6%

Madurese: 3.0%

Betawi: 2.9%

Minangkabau: 2.7%

Buginese: 2.7%

Bantenese: 2.0%

Banjarese: 1.7%

Balinese: 1.7%

Acehnese: 1.4%

Dayak: 1.4%

Sasak: 1.3%

Chinese: 1.2%

Other: 15.1%

Javanese traditionally reside in central and eastern Java, whereas the Sundanese traditionally live in western Java. Malays live in coastal areas of Kalimantan and northern Sumatra, as well as Riau. Bataks reside in northern interior Sumatra. Madurese traditionally inhabit Madura Island. The Betawi are the original inhabitants of the Greater Jakarta area. Minangkabau reside in west central Sumatra, whereas the Buginese live in southern Sulawesi. The Bantenese inhabit Banten Province in extreme northwestern Java. Banjarese reside in coastal areas of southern Kalimantan. Balinese inhabit Bali and neighboring islands. The Acehnese reside on the extreme northwestern tip of Sumatra. Dayak peoples live in interior Kalimantan near the Malaysian border. The Sasak primarily inhabit Lombok Island. Chinese generally live in urban areas, particularly in Sumatra and Java. Approximately fifteen percent (15%) of the population is comprised of approximately 300 other ethnic groups, some of the largest of which include Papuans, Makassarese, Moluccans, Cirebonese, Gorontaloan, Minahasan, and Nias.

Population: 262,787,403 (July 2018)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.83% (2018)

Fertility Rate: 2.08 children born per woman (2018)

Life Expectancy: 70.6 male, 76.0 female (2018)

Languages: 707 indigenous languages are spoken. Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesian) is the official language, which is spoken by approximately 200 million as a first or second language and typically uses the Latin script. Languages with over one million native speakers include Javanese (68.2 million), Indonesian (42.8 million), Sunda (32.4 million), Madura (7.8 million), Batak dialects (7.0 million), Betawi (6.8 million), Malay dialects (5.3 million), Minangkabau (4.2 million), Bali (4.0 million), Banjar (3.7 million), Aceh (3.5 million), Bugis (3.5 million), Sasak (3.2 million), Musi (3.1 million), Makasar (2.1 million), and Gorontalo (1.0 million).

Literacy: 95.4% (2016)

History

The archipelagos of Indonesia were settled by Austronesians several millennia prior to the birth of Christ. Between the seventh and fourteenth centuries AD, the Buddhist Srivjaya Empire flourished on Sumatra, and the Hindu Kingdom of Majapahit governed eastern Java. Much of present-day Indonesia was unified under alliances in the fourteenth century. Islam was introduced in the twelfth century and became the dominant religion on Java and Sumatra by the sixteenth century. Christianity and Islam were introduced to eastern islands in Indonesia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The archipelago was colonized in the early seventeenth century by the Dutch and quickly became one of the wealthiest European colonies worldwide. Japan occupied Indonesia for much of World War II, after which Indonesia declared independence. Independence was internationally recognized by 1950 after negotiations with the Netherlands and the United Nations. Within the first decade of independence, several islands, such as Sumatra and Sulawesi, attempted to secede, resulting in internal instability. President Soekarno enacted presidential powers to preserve the unity of the country, which over time experienced increasing communist ideologies until a massive rebellion in 1965 in which General Suharto emerged as president. The Communist Party was subsequently banned and dismantled. President Suharto initiated economic development reforms and applied Western economic theory. A military-backed government ruled until the 1990s. The first free parliamentary election occurred in 1999. The province of East Timor declared independence in 1975 but was invaded and occupied by Indonesia. Conflict continued until 1999, when East Timor was released from Indonesia with support of the United Nations. The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami devastated coastal areas of Sumatra, killing over 130,000 and leaving half a million homeless. Separatists in Aceh reached a peace deal with the government in 2005.[1] Insurgency and political instability in Papua remains ongoing due to the Free Papua Movement and government efforts to quell the independence movement.

Culture

Indonesia represents an agglomeration of various religions, civilizations, and countries fusing with local culture. Today Islam is one of the strongest cultural forces, as Indonesia is the country with the most Muslims in the world, although Indonesian Islam is very different from the strict Wahabbi Islam of Saudi Arabia and some other Middle Eastern nations. India, the Dutch, and China each have heavily influenced art, cuisine, religion, and local customs. Individual ethnic groups possess many indigenous cultural characteristics such as dress, dance, music, and religion. Ethnic groups residing in remote areas retain many of the traditional cultural practices and beliefs. Silat is an Indonesian martial art that continues to be widely practiced today. Traditional and Western sports are widely practiced. Common foods and cuisine share many similarities with other Southeastern countries, China, and India. Rice, cassava, sea food, and vegetables are widely consumed. Polygamy and pornography are illegal.[2] Cigarette consumption rates are high, whereas alcohol consumption rates are low.

Economy

GDP per capita: $12,400 (2017) [20.7% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.694 (2017)

Corruption Index: 38 (2018)

The Indonesian economy has experienced moderate growth in the past decade due to strong domestic production, exports, and economic reforms. Indonesia possesses vast natural resources, including oil, rare minerals, timber, coal, fertile soils, and the twelfth largest natural gas reserves worldwide. Metals and minerals mined include tin, nickel, bauxite, copper, gold, and silver. Challenges that impede greater economic growth and development include corruption, widespread poverty, unemployment, unequal distribution of natural resources throughout the country, and inadequate infrastructure. Agriculture employs 32% of the workforce and generates 14% of the GDP. Primary agricultural products or crops include rice, cassava, peanuts, rubber, cocoa, coffee, palm oil, meat, and animal byproducts. Industry accounts for 21% of the workforce and generates 41% of the GDP. Petroleum, natural gas, textiles, clothing, automotive, mining, chemical fertilizers, wood, rubber, and tourism are primary industries. Services employ 47% of the workforce and generate 45% of the GDP. Primary trade partners include China, Japan, Singapore, and the United States.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and harmful to economic development. There has been modest improvement in the reduction of perceived corruption in Indonesia during the past decade. Personal associations often heavily influence business deals and transactions. Customs is regarded as one of the most corrupt areas of government. Bribery is common. Investment laws reduce competition and economic growth. The government lacks transparency in many areas.[3]

Faiths

Muslim: 87.2%

Christian: 9.9%

Hindu: 1.7%

Other: 0.9%

Unspecified: 0.3%

Christians

Denominations – Members – Congregations

Evangelicals – 13,010,751

Roman Catholic – 7,230,000

Seventh Day Adventists – 231,472 – 2,361

Jehovah’s Witnesses – 28,283 – 492

Latter-day Saints – 7,477 – 24

Religion

Indonesia represents a patchwork of religious traditions, although most Indonesians are Sunni Muslim. Shi'a and Ahmadiyya Qadiyani Muslims are common Muslim minority groups. The government estimates Protestants number eighteen million and Roman Catholics total over seven million. Consisting of the Indonesian-controlled western half of New Guinea, Papua Province has the highest percentage of Protestants (58%), whereas the eastern Lesser Sunda Islands and West Timor, which together constitute East Nasu Tenggara Province, have the highest percentage of Catholics (55%). Christians constitute sizeable minorities in many areas, such as the Maluku Islands and North Sulawesi. Hindus constitute 90% of the population on the island of Bali and populate scattered areas of Kalimantan, Sumatra, Sulawesi, and Tenggara. Hindus may number as many as ten million, although discrepancies exist between government figures and those published by Hindu groups. The Chinese Indonesian population is approximately 60% Buddhist. Syncretism between government-recognized religious groups and indigenous beliefs occur in many areas, with as many as twenty million practicing indigenous beliefs.[4]

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 30th (2019)

The constitution protects religious freedom, but the government only upholds this right for some religious groups. The government only recognizes six religions: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. Followers of traditional religious beliefs also receive government recognition due to a 2017 Constitutional Court ruling. Religious groups are not permitted to hold worship services in private homes. There must be at least ninety members of a religious group, and at least sixty people from other religious groups, who must submit their signatures to permit the construction of a new house of worship in a given area. Local laws in some areas restrict the religious freedom of religious minorities, and the government has not used its power to revoke such laws. The government has done little to prosecute those alleged of abusing the religious freedom rights of others. The degree of religious freedom granted to religious minorities widely varies by location and is largely controlled by local or regional government. Foreign missionaries may operate in the country and must obtain religious worker visas. In recent years, these visas appear to have been easily obtained by religious groups. Shari'a law is implemented only in Aceh and is not totally enforced throughout the province. Minority Muslim groups and Christians appear the most persecuted by the Sunni Muslim majority, although most religious minorities experience some persecution throughout the country. Terrorist attacks have targeted Christians. Most religious freedom violations occur in Java.[5]

Largest Cities

Urban: 52%

Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, Bekasi, Medan, Tangerang, **Depok,** Semarang, **Palembang, Makassar, Tangerang Selatan,** Bogor, **Batam, Pekanbaru, Bandar Lampung,** Malang, **Padang,** Denpasar, **Samarinda, Banjarmasin, Tasikmalaya, Pontianak, Cimahi, Balikpapan, Jambi,** Surakarta, **Serang, Mataram,** Manado, Yogyakarta, **Cilegon, Kupang, Palu, Ambon, Sukabumi, Cirebon, Bengkulu, Pekalongan, Kediri, Kendari, Tegal, Binjai, Pematangsiantar, Jayapura, Banda Aceh, Palangka Raya, Probolinggo, Banjarbaru, Pasuruan, Tarakan, Tanjung Pinang, Gorontalo, Dumai, Madiun, Batu, Salatiga, Pangkal Pinang, Lubuklinggau, Ternate, Bitung, Tanjungbalai, Tebing Tinggi, Metro, Bontang, Blitar, Lhokseumawe, Singkawang, Parepare, Langsa, Banjar, Prabumulih, Mojokerto, Padang Sidempuan,** Magelang, **Sorong, Palopo, Bima, Bukittinggi, Bau-Bau.**

Cities listed in **bold** have no congregations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Fourteen of the seventy-nine cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have a Church congregation. Twenty-one percent (21%) of the national population resides in the seventy-nine most populous cities.

Church History

Elder Ezra Taft Benson dedicated Indonesia for missionary work in 1969.[6] Under the Southeast Asia Mission, later renamed the Singapore Mission, the Church assigned the first six full-time missionaries to Indonesia in 1970. Missionaries initially worked in Jakarta, Bogor, and Bandung.[7] The Church organized its first branch in Jakarta in February 1970 and received official recognition in August.[8] Missionary work expanded into additional cities shortly thereafter, which included Yogyakarta, Surakarta, Semarang, Surabaya, and Malang by 1977. In 1974, missionaries began learning Indonesian prior to entering the mission field. Elder Gordon B. Hinckley became the first Apostle to visit Indonesia in 1975. The Indonesian translation of the Book of Mormon was published in 1977.[9] Indonesia Jakarta Mission was discontinued in 1981 as a result of government restrictions and other difficulties but was reopened in 1985. Seminary and institute were both operating by 1981. Only native members served in Indonesia after November 1988, and the mission closed again in 1989.[10] The Indonesia Jakarta Mission

reopened in 1995. President Hinckley met with the Indonesian president and with local members in 2000.[11] In 2010, Elder Russell M. Nelson visited with high ranking government and Muslim officials in Jakarta.[12] In 2011, Elder David A. Bednar created the first stake in Jakarta. The Indonesia Jakarta Mission serviced Indonesia and Timor-Leste as of 2019.

Membership Growth

Church Membership: 7,477 (2018)

There were 1,200 LDS members in 1975.[13] Church membership reached 4,000 in 1992.[14] By year-end 2000, there were 5,374 members. Slow membership growth occurred through the 2000s and 2010s as Latter-day Saints numbered 5,720 in 2003, 6,144 in 2006, 6,683 in 2010, 7,016 in 2014, and 7,477 in 2018. Total church membership tends to increase by one hundred a year, or at a rate between 1.0% and 2.5%. Slow membership has consistently occurred in the remote branches of Manado and Medan.

In 2018, one in 35,146 was nominally a Latter-day Saint.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 15 Branches: 9 Groups: 2? (August 2019)

The first branches were created in the early 1970s. By 1975, branches had been organized in Bandung, Jakarta, Malang, Semarang, Surabaya, Surakarta, and Yogyakarta. The Jakarta English Branch was created in 1978.[15] Three member districts functioned on Java by the late 1970s. Additional cities where the Church organized its first branches included Bogor (1979), Manado (1984), Bekasi (1994), Medan (1995), Magelang (1997), and Tangerang (2000). Two branches were functioning in Malang in 1988.[16] By 1992, there were seventeen branches organized in three districts.[17] There were twenty congregations by 1993.[18]

The Church reported twenty branches in 2000. In 2001, the Jakarta Indonesia District had six branches (Bandung, Bekasi, Bogor, Jakarta, Jakarta English, Jakarta South), the Surabaya Indonesia District had four branches (Malang, Malang Selatan, Surabaya Barat, Surabaya Timur), and the Surakarta Indonesia District had seven branches (Banjarsari, Jebres, Magelang, Semarang, Solo Barat, Surakarta, Yogyakarta). The number of branches increased to twenty-one in 2001, twenty-two in 2002, and twenty-four in 2005 and then decreased to twenty-three in 2008 and to twenty-two in 2009. In mid-2010, the Jakarta Indonesia District had grown to ten branches with the creation of the Bekasi 2nd, Cigudeg, Tangerang 1st, and Tangerang 2nd Branches over the past decade. The number of branches in the Surabaya Indonesia District declined by one, as both branches in Malang were consolidated. A branch that once operated in Tembagapura, Papua Province, was discontinued in the late 2000s. The Cigudeg Branch was discontinued in late 2010, and members now meet as group. In 2011, the Church created the Bali Branch.

In 2011, the Church created its first stake in Jakarta with eight wards (Bekasi 1st, Bekasi 2nd, Bogor, Jakarta 1st, Jakarta 2nd, Jakarta 3rd [English], Tangerang 1st, and Tangerang) and one branch (Bandung). In 2012, the Church organized a second stake in Surakarta with six wards and one branch, and created the Indonesia Jakarta Mission Branch for members residing in areas without wards or branches. In the early 2010s, a group began functioning in Batam. A second ward in Bogor was organized in 2015. In 2018, there were twenty-four congregations nationwide (fifteen wards, nine branches). Several member groups operated, at least intermittently, during the 2010s in cities on Java such as Blitar, Klaten, and Sidoarjo.

Activity and Retention

Indonesia experiences mediocre levels of member activity and convert retention. In 1992, local church leaders reported that there was a need for improved convert retention and that long distance from church meetinghouses for some may reduce member activity rates.[19] 420 were enrolled in seminary or institute during the 2008–2009 school year.

Most branches had over one hundred active members in the late 2000s. Fifty percent (50%) of church members attended church in Semarang in early 2010. There were over one hundred members attending church in Malang in early 2010. Branches with few active members include the Manado (40 active members in late 2009), Bandung, and Medan Branches. In January 2010, Area Seventy Elder Subandriyo reported that the average sacrament attendance in Indonesia was 40% of total membership. The average number of members per ward or branch increased from 269 in 2000 to 312 in 2018.

The number of convert baptisms in the Indonesia Jakarta Mission increased from seventy in 2013 to 144 in 2014 and over 200 in 2015. Church attendance by congregation during the mid- to late 2010s was as follows per reports from returned missionaries: Bogor 2nd Ward (120), Solo 2nd Ward (more than 110), Bogor 1st Ward (95), Surabaya Timur Branch (85), Malang Branch (80), Banjarsari Ward (80), Yogyakarta Ward (80), Jebres Ward (70), Medan Branch (60-70), Jakarta 1st Ward (55), Tangerang 2nd Ward (50-70), and Magelang Branch (35). At the time, approximately half of new converts regularly attended church one year after baptism.

Current active membership is estimated at 2,500, or 33% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with Latter-day Saint Scripture: Bahasa Indonesian, Standard Malay, Dutch, English.

All Church scriptures and many church materials are available in Bahasa Indonesian, Standard Malay, and Dutch. In 2010, the Church posted Latter-day Saint scriptures in Indonesian online at http://www.scriptures.lds.org/ind/. The Church also maintains an Indonesian version of its website for online proselytism, ComeuntoChrist.org, at https://www.comeuntochrist.org/ind?lang=ind .

Meetinghouses

In 1988, the Church dedicated a church-built meetinghouse in Malang[20] and a four-story meetinghouse for two branches and the mission home in Jakarta.[21] In 2010, congregations met in at least eighteen locations, many of which were meetinghouses built by the Church. In 2019, there were seventeen meetinghouses nationwide for wards and branches.

Humanitarian and Development Work

As of 2018, the Church had conducted at least 392 humanitarian and development projects in Indonesia, including clean water projects, community projects, emergency response, maternal and newborn care, refugee response, vision care, and wheelchair donations.[22] Latter-day Saints have undertaken extensive humanitarian assistance and development work in the past decade following natural disasters. At least thirty humanitarian projects have been completed since 1985, many of which included emergency aid, clean water projects, and wheelchair donations.[23] In 2000, the LDS Church purchased rice and hygiene supplies, which were assembled into kits by members in Jakarta for refugees on Timor. The government thanked the Church for its efforts.[24] Local church members in Jakarta prepared over 10,000 meals for some of the 30,000 homeless flood victims in 2002.[25] The Church helped finance a road construction project in Solo in 2003.[26] Following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, Latter-day Saints assisted nearly 300,000 and donated over 6,000 hours of service. Long-term development projects ensued in the following months, such as providing medical equipment and building restoration work on a hospital in Banda Aceh. Elder Subandriyo was intimately involved in many of the projects.[27] Immediately following the disaster, the Church donated over 50,000 body bags at the government's request.[28] In 2005, the Church donated medical equipment needed after a devastating earthquake in Sumatra.[29] The Church provided mental health assistance in Banda Aceh in 2005 to tsunami victims.[30] Local LDS youth in Jakarta took part in an anti-drug campaign in 2006.[31] In 2006, Latter-day Saint charities and the Church helped construct a new medical rehabilitation center in Aceh Province.[32] Additional projects undertaken in 2006 with other aid agencies in tsunami-stricken areas included building sixteen schools, three health clinics, 1,000 permanent houses, many boats for villagers, and water and sanitation systems for twenty villages.[33] Emergency aid was donated to victims of the 2006 Java Tsunami.[34] Almost eight tons of food and water were provided for flood victims in Jakarta in 2007.[35] In 2007, the Church provided humanitarian aid and food to earthquake victims in Bengkulu.[36] More than a dozen large-scale development projects in areas affected by the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami were completed in early 2008.[37] In 2008, the Church completed a clean water project in Kaliwungu with assistance from full-time missionaries.[38] The Church participated in a government effort for citizens to hold a weekly family night in 2008.[39] The Church has conducted neonatal resuscitation trainings in West Java.[40]

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church has a positive relationship with the government due to past humanitarian assistance. Missionaries report that the government severely restricts the number of visas granted for foreign full-time missionaries, resulting in high reliance on the local full-time missionary force to staff the Indonesia Jakarta Mission. Latter-day Saints have no presence in most areas, which have local laws that restrict the religious freedom of minorities. Full-time missionaries do not engage in open proselytism and work primarily through casual conversations with strangers, service activities, English classes, and member referrals. Latter-day Saint Indonesians report few instances of societal abuse or prejudice. However, misconceptions about Church teachings and beliefs are widespread, especially among Christians. Government requirements for houses of worship pose significant obstacles for the Church to expand outreach. For example, the Church required significant intervention and community building over many months in the late 2010s with Protestant churches and leaders to obtain approval to construct a meetinghouse for the Manado Branch given the requirement of sixty neighbors who are not Latter-day Saints to consent for the approval of the new meetinghouse.[41]

Cultural Issues

Active religious engagement in many areas is a sensitive matter due to governmental and social pressures to limit potential

conflict between various ethnic groups. Conversion and Christian missionary activity in many areas is frowned upon. Some areas of Indonesia have experienced significant hostilities between Christians and Muslims, such as Ambon in the Maluku Islands. Latter-day Saints have never had a presence in areas with significant conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims. Although most the population is nominally Muslim, only a minority participates in active, regular worship. Basic religious principles must be stressed to achieve proper understanding and application of principles taught by full-time missionaries, including prayer, church attendance, and personal scripture reading. Animism and indigenous beliefs prevail in many areas, which require proper missionary teaching approaches to overcome. Anti-polygamy laws and greater tolerance of non-Muslims by government and society compared to other Muslim nations provide opportunities for Latter-day Saints to operate with fewer cultural obstacles.

National Outreach

Eleven percent (11%) of the national population resides in cities with a ward or branch. All but three Latter-day Saint congregations are on the island of Java. Manado, Medan, and Denpasar (Bali) are the only mission outreach centers off of Java and reach no more than 1.4% of the population. Most of the 26 million Indonesians living in cities with full-time missionaries are unaware of a Latter-day Saint presence and church teachings. Proselytism bans reduce outreach potential in areas with congregations and assigned missionaries.

Distance from mission headquarters in Jakarta and the limited numbers of foreign full-time missionaries permitted to serve by the government challenge efforts to assign missionaries to additional cities off of Java. Efforts in the 2010s to organize member groups in several cities on Java have yet to produce long-term results in regards to the formation of branches or wards in these locations. The small number of convert baptisms over the past two decades has given the Church little impetus to expand national outreach. On Java, many Latter-day Saints travel long distances to attend church meetings. Members living far from church meetinghouses may help to establish additional mission outreach centers closer to their homes one day. There are likely many cities without congregations where there are at least one or two Latter-day Saints that would attend a member group. Prospects for the expansion of missionary activity outside Java appear unlikely for the foreseeable future due to the small Church populations in Manado, Medan, and Bali. Due to visa restrictions limiting the number of foreign full-time missionaries and no large increase in the number of native full-time missionaries, other methods must be utilized to revitalize mission outreach initiatives and expand national outreach to areas that may be more receptive to teachings, such as Kalimantan and Papua. Unexplored tactics that can help expand national outreach include calling a Latter-day Saint family to an unreached area to plant a congregation and establish Church-sponsored educational facilities in disadvantaged areas.

Strong Church growth in East Malaysia among indigenous peoples like the Iban during the 2000s may indicate that the native peoples in Indonesian-controlled Kalimantan will be more receptive to Latter-day Saint teachings than other ethnic groups in other areas of Indonesia. Many indigenous peoples in Kalimantan exhibit strong cultural ties and similarities with groups in Sarawak and Sabah in East Malaysia and have Christian communities. In 2019, there was no known Church presence in any of the four Kalimantan provinces, which are inhabited by twelve million people. With the exception of Manado, Latter-day Saints have never had a long-term presence in predominantly Christian areas. Unreached Christian areas that may have responsive populations to LDS mission outreach include East Nasu Tenggara, Papua, and a few areas in central Sulawesi and northern Sumatra. There are over four million inhabitants in Papua provinces who are predominantly Christian and unreached by Latter-day Saints. There is only one congregation on Sulawesi, populated by nearly twenty million Indonesians. Sumatra has just one branch in Medan, yet is inhabited by almost fifty-five million.

The Church maintains an Internet site for Indonesia at https://www.lds.or.id/ and a Newsroom site at https://www.mormonnewsroom.or.id/. The websites provide information in Indonesian about church beliefs, meetinghouse locations, and local news. Local Latter-day Saints referring friends and relatives to the websites are a passive proselytism approach that with the proper vision can lead to increased numbers of convert baptisms and expansion of national outreach.

There are meaningful opportunities for Latter-day Saints to proselyte Indonesians living abroad. Full-time missionaries report teaching Indonesians in Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, and Hong Kong. However, no missions outside Indonesia have specific programs for mission outreach directed toward Indonesians.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Indonesia overall demonstrates moderate levels of member activity for the region. Seminary and institute are well attended. Two stakes and one district operate notwithstanding less than 7,500 nominal members. Distance from members' homes to church meetinghouses has reduced member activity in many areas. Some long-term members become inactive due to problems with few single members in the Church to marry. Some smaller branches are tight-knit and pose challenges for integrating new converts as many have inactive members who stopped attending church regularly because of perceived offense by a fellow member. Moderate levels of convert retention and member activity have been achieved through the strong representative of local members in the full-time missionary force.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Full-time missionaries report few challenges integrating differing ethnic groups into the same congregations at present. Unlike many Protestant churches where congregations are often created along ethnic lines, congregations in The Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints have a high degree of ethnic diversity. The greatest challenges toward developing self-sustaining and long-term growth appear related to language issues and differing religious backgrounds among converts. Ethnic integration challenges may become more apparent if the size of the Latter-day Saint population increases among many varying ethnic groups in the same geographic area.

Language Issues

Three-quarters of the national population speaks Bahasa Indonesian as a first or second language, allowing for modest outreach with current materials in Bahasa Indonesian. Widespread use of Bahasa Indonesian as well as the lack of church presence in areas where speakers of other languages predominate has reduced the Church's efforts to translate materials in additional Indonesian languages.

The Church has had abundant opportunities to translate church materials into Javanese over the past three decades, yet Javanese remains the language with the most speakers worldwide without any LDS materials translated. There appear to be many members who could participate in a translation team as well as large populations of unreached Indonesians who speak Javanese who are not adequately reached by existing Church materials. In 2000, a native senior missionary couple was fluent in Javanese, Indonesian, Dutch, English, and German.[42]

Sunda is the language with the sixth most speakers worldwide without any Latter-day Saint materials. Sunda and other Indonesian languages do not have Church materials translated at present due to the lack of Latter-day Saints who speak these languages and the lack of a Church presence in areas where these languages are spoken.

An investigative team from BYU in the 1990s concluded that translation of materials into other languages of Indonesia was unnecessary. The basis for this recommendation is unclear, as approximately sixty million Indonesians do not have church materials in a first or second language, and the lack of church materials in other languages severely limits potential for outreach into unreached regions of the country. The lack of any progress in expanding national outreach to new areas, the failure to develop a core Church membership among most of Indonesia's numerous ethnicities, and stagnant Church growth in Indonesia in recent years even while other churches have flourished, all suggest that the Church's one-language policy regarding Indonesia has not produced the desired results and may merit reconsideration.

Not translating materials into additional languages until a sufficient number of Latter-day Saints speak these languages propagates circular logic, as many speakers of these languages do not join the Church because they cannot learn about the Church in their native language. Waiting decades to translate even basic proselytism materials or select scripture passages can result in Latter-day Saints missing windows of opportunity to establish the Church when populations are the most receptive. Other Christian faiths diligently translate materials and perform outreach throughout the islands of Indonesia and may shepherd the majority of the population receptive to Christianity before Latter-day Saints extend outreach in these areas, likely with the absence of proselytism materials in local languages. Bans on distributing religious literature create challenges for the Church to utilize gospel study materials and mandate the use of passive member-missionary activity in sharing the gospel through brochures or other church literature. Indonesia experiences higher literacy rates than many developing Muslim nations, reducing challenges for the Church to develop local self-sustaining leadership.

Missionary Service

The first president of the Indonesia Jakarta Mission was a Dutch member who had Indonesian colonist ancestry. Fifty-two missionaries served on Java in early 1977. At this time, four local members were serving full-time missions.[43] There were forty-nine local missionaries serving in Indonesia in 1988.[44] In 1992, only local members served as full-time missionaries, which numbered sixty at the time.[45] A mixed German-Indonesian senior missionary couple began serving in 2000.[46] The number of local members serving members has declined from previous levels, as in March 2010, there were forty native missionaries serving in the Indonesia Jakarta Mission.[47] In 2017, there were seventy full-time missionaries assigned to the Indonesia Jakarta Mission (forty-two from Australia and the United States, twenty-eight from Indonesia).[48] A reduction in the full-time missionary force is attributed to fewer youth convert baptisms at present compared to the 1970s and 1980s. Many members who currently serve full-time missions appear to come from full-member families and were raised in the Church.

Leadership

All Indonesian-speaking congregations appear to have native branch presidents or bishoprics, including branches in Bali, Manado, and Medan. The creation of the first stake in 2011 demonstrates that the Church has developed a reasonably strong body of active priesthood holders capable of meeting the minimal administrative responsibilities for a stake to function. Indonesian Latter-day Saints have served in some national and international church leadership positions. In 1985, native Indonesian Effian Kadarusman began serving over the Indonesia Jakarta Mission.[49] President Subandriyo from Jakarta was called to serve as the Indonesia Jakarta Mission president in 1997.[50] In 2000, Juswan Tandiman from Bekasi was called as the Indonesia Jakarta Mission president.[51] In 2003, Elder Subandriyo was called as an Area Authority Seventy.[52] The lack of Church employees in the highest administrative and ecclesiastical positions of the Church in Indonesia also signals maturity and growth in leadership. There were no Church employees among stake presidency members when the Jakarta Indonesia Stake was organized in 2011,[53] when Surakarta Indonesia Stake was organized in 2012,[54] or when the Jakarta Indonesia Stake presidency was reorganized in 2018.[55] Nevertheless, inactivity sometimes results after local church leaders are

released from their callings due to the perception that the released church leader has lost face or such an action is a negative critique of his or her service.[56]

Temple

Indonesia is assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple district. Indonesia may be reassigned to the Bangkok Thailand Temple district upon completion of the temple. Temple trips occur regularly, and many have attended the temple despite long distances and the high cost for air travel. Prospects for the Church to build a temple in Jakarta appear favorable over the medium term due to a strong core of active membership that has been sustained for several decades and distance to the nearest temple.

Comparative Growth

In the 1970s, Indonesia experienced the most rapid membership and congregational growth in Southeast Asia in the Church, as other nations with a Latter-day Saint presence at the time, such as Thailand and Singapore, experienced slow to moderate growth. Since 1990, membership and congregational growth has been among the lowest in Asia or developing nations in the world. In 2019, Indonesia had the fourth largest population in the world, yet had the sixty-eighth most Latter-day Saints among countries with a publicly reported Church presence. Despite limited membership and congregational growth over the past two decades, Indonesia has maintained one of the highest member activity rates in Asia. The percentage of nominal Latter-day Saints in the Indonesia population is far less than most countries in Asia with a Church presence for two decades or longer, and is comparable to Vietnam and Pakistan.

Most missionary-oriented Christian denominations have experienced much stronger growth in Indonesia than The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians today number in the millions due to persistent and creative church planting efforts. Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists experience moderate rates of membership growth and have larger membership bases compared to Latter-day Saints. Both these denominations have a presence in the majority of the most populated areas and in most areas where Christians comprise the majority. Seventh-Day Adventists have historically added more members and congregations a year that the entire size of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Indonesia. Adventists organized thirty to forty new congregations and baptized 6,000 to 10,000 converts a year throughout the 2000s, albeit these numbers appeared to slightly decrease in the 2010s. Adventist national outreach occurs throughout the country, as missions, conferences, or attached mission fields operate on Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, Papua, and some smaller islands. Latter-day Saints operate one branch in all of the area covered by the SDA East Indonesia Union Conference, which boasts over 124,000 Adventists in over one thousand congregations. Jehovah's Witnesses experience more modest growth, but have over 28,000 members and over 1,000 converts a year. Adventists and Witnesses have been proactive in church planting initiatives, self-sufficient local member-missionary outreach, and translation of church materials into many native languages, which has contributed to their exponentially greater growth over the years than The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Future Prospects

Potential for church growth remains high, but Latter-day Saints continue to lack the needed nationwide infrastructure and increase in the number of local full-time missionaries to expand mission outreach and reverse the trend of stagnant growth over the past two decades. Decreases in the number of Indonesians who serve missions in the past three decades has been a major challenge not only for mission outreach expansion, but also with supplying leadership for the future as returned missionaries often provide a significant source for leadership positions. All but three congregations are on the island of Java, and there were only four more congregations in Indonesia in late 2019 than in 1995. Church administrative decisions not to translate any church materials into languages spoken by over sixty million Indonesians, low involvement member-missionary programs, the lack of coherent vision for expanding national outreach into unreached areas, and the failure to reach out to receptive ethnic groups and develop a core leadership among them, all bode poorly for the Church's prospects to achieve breakthroughs in growth in Indonesia in the medium term. Other denominations that have implemented broader visions for national outreach and have made better use of available opportunities have achieved far more rapid growth in Indonesia than The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Government restrictions on visas for foreign full-time missionaries has limited expansion of national outreach over the past two decades. Greater local member participation in missionary activity within the bounds of the law is needed to open additional areas to missionary work, although greater institutional vision could considerably facilitate this process. Other Christian groups have demonstrated that excellent church growth opportunities exist but must be properly approached due to restrictive cultural and governmental conditions. Latter-day Saints have developed a capable, sustained local leadership that can assist in opening new areas of the country to the church if desired by regional church leadership. Due to the creation two new stakes and reduced administrative burden on the Indonesia Jakarta Mission during the early 2010s, additional areas may open to proselytism. However, efforts will likely continue to focus on centers of strength for the Church in select cities on Java, and the establishment of centers of strength in Medan, Manado, and Bali, rather than expansion of the Church into totally unreached provinces inhabited by tens of millions of people. A small temple may be announced in Jakarta within the foreseeable future due to distance and self-sustaining membership and leadership.

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