

The Deaf of Indonesia

The Indonesian Sign Language Community



The Deaf are found fairly evenly distributed throughout the country, except that there is a small village on Bali with about 25 Deaf in a population of 300-400 people. The country of Indonesia is an island nation about the same size from east to west as the United States.

There are only 79 Deaf schools for a potential population of 100,000 to 300,000 students. The largest school has less than 1000 students. Rich people's Deaf children can go to hearing schools, but without interpretation. Only 2/3 of the provinces have schools for the Deaf, meaning that 1/3 of the Deaf children have no access to schooling. Schooling is paid for by the parents. There are no special subsidies for the Deaf. Until recently sign language was banned in schools, and the children were required to learn to speak. The system used exaggerates the movements of the lips and tongue, so that some hearing people are repulsed by the strange faces the Deaf make in order to produce sounds correctly.

There are a few churches with ministry to the Deaf, at least four in the capital, Jakarta, where most of the adult Deaf reside, and one in Bandung. (about 60 miles away.) There is one Deaf pastor in the country. Apart from him, the Deaf rely on an interpreter to understand the message. None of the interpreters use Indonesian Sign Language, as they were taught to use American Sign Language which seems to be becoming a "holy language". Almost all, if not all, the Christian Deaf is Chinese or mixed with Chinese.

Primary Religion:

Islam

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

< 1%

Churches:

5

Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

None

Population (date):

218 - 654,000 (2003)



The Deaf of Indonesia

Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Call Themselves Christian (%)	9%	
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	< 1%	
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	80-90%	
Believe In The Local Traditional Religion (%)	1%	
Have Not Heard Who Jesus is (%)	80-90%	
Number Of Pastors	1	
Comment (Pastors)	Since he is Deaf the lone pastor had to study on his own. After ten years of study he felt confident of taking the final theological examinations along with 6 hearing pastors from a Bible School. He passed and was ordained by his church.	
Number Of Missionaries Working	0	
Response To The Gospel	Rapid church growth in some places, but this has largely by-passed the Deaf because of lack of interpreters.	
Number Of Communities	Not Applicable	
Number Of Churches	5	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	No	
Any Hindrance To Scripture Distribution?	Unknown/Not Applicable	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	None	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	Bible translation and anything else that can get a person a visa!	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	218,000-654,000	
World Population (Date)	2003	
World Population (Urban Percent)	Maybe 90%	
Comment (World Population)	As with most Deaf, the Deaf of Indonesia migrate to the big cities to find work and socialize with other Deaf.	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Indonesia	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	The Deaf are mostly evenly distributed throughout Indonesia.	
Country	Indonesia	
Ecosystem Type	Tropical Forest	
Climate	Some parts are tropical, others mountainous.	
Comments (Geography & Environment)	Most geographical and environmental information is available on the internet.	
Language & Linguistics		Group Description
Primary Language	INDONESIAN SIGN LANGUAGE	
Comment (Language)	Until recently oralism has been the focus of attention in schools, and sign language has been discouraged as being inferior. Some of the Deaf actually have Indonesian as their first language, as they have not had access to other Deaf who can sign. Many of the Deaf learn sign language after leaving school, and will not sign in public as they think it is shameful.	
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Somewhat resistant	
Comment (Second Language)	Indonesian: all educated Deaf learn to read Indonesian, but I do not know what percentage can speak it.	
Linguistically Related Languages	DUTCH SIGN LANGUAGE	

The Deaf of Indonesia

Item Name

Comments (Related Languages)

Item Note

Dutch Sign Language was first introduced to the Deaf in Indonesia in the early 1930s when the first school for the Deaf was built in the capital, Bandung. Apart from that, it was difficult to obtain information about the history of the Deaf in Indonesia. None of the Deaf knew anything of their history, probably because their language has been suppressed for so many years. There are now 2 or 3 schools in Jakarta who permit signing, and are actually beginning to use signing to teach the students. I have not had the time to transcribe the word lists yet, but observed that there was certain "sameness" when filming the word lists. The Indonesian Deaf have their own unique alphabet which differs from other countries so far surveyed in Asia, and from both the Dutch and American Sign Language alphabets.

Literacy

Adult Literacy Percentage

Maybe 5% Percent

Literate For Men

5% of all men

Percent Literate For Women

5% of all women

Literacy Attitude

Somewhat receptive

Publications In Vernacular

None

Comment (Literacy)

: Up to now the emphasis for education is on the national language only.

Group Description

Economics

Subsistence Type

Agriculturalists

Comment (Subsistence Type)

In the provinces, they are mainly agriculturalists.

Trade Partners

None

Modernization / Utilities

For those in the city, they will have lights, possible TV and running water. Those in the provinces probably do not have any of those amenities, or at best have uncertain electricity, and sometimes have water.

Comment (Economy)

Indonesia is a third world country, lacking what we take for granted. The big cities are quite modern, so the Deaf who have a chance to move to the cities would do so. Since 1/3 of the provinces do not yet have schools for the deaf children, one can assume that none of those children have a chance to go to a large city, and live out their lives in their villages never learning a language, and unable to be evangelized. Most of the Deaf in Indonesia are not gainfully employed.

Group Description

Community Development

Health Care (Quality)

Poor

Comment (Health Care)

available in the cities, but probably not in the rural areas.

Diet (Quality)

Fair

Comment (Diet)

The diet is probably not balanced.

Water (Quality)

Poor

Comment (Water)

Based on observations made in Jakarta, the water is very likely polluted in areas where the deaf live. There are many rivers, but they are used for latrines, as well as sources of water.

Shelter Description

Not observed, except in the cities. The city houses are usually of cement, but in the poorer areas are mainly wooden shacks.

Electricity

Most homes in the city have electricity. Not known about the provinces.

Energy/Fuel (Quality)

Fair

Clothing

: Men usually dress in Western clothes. The women usually dress in a sarong with a blouse. For Muslims the wearing of a head covering is not as important as elsewhere. Men often wear a songkok (whether Muslim or Christian) which is a black folding hat with no brim.

Transportation

Bus, Beca (like big two-seater tricycle with a roof for the passengers), car (for the middle and upper classes).

Infant Mortality Rate

57%

Life Expectancy

63 years old

Leading Cause Of Death

Infectious and parasitic diseases

Group Description

Society & Culture

Group Description

The Deaf of Indonesia

Item Name	Item Note
Family Structures	It depends on the culture in which the deaf was raised
Social Habits/Groupings	The Deaf like to have clubs for socializing, usually for drinking or sports clubs.
Cultural Change Pace	Medium
Comment (Identification with National Culture)	The Deaf try to blend in to the national culture as much as possible, and for that reason many try to communicate by speech only when they are out in public.
Self Image	Threatened
Comment (Self Image)	: feel threatened, especially the Chinese, because of the ethnic cleansing that they experience from time to time
Recreations	group drinking and sports for non-Christians, Bible studies and sports for Christians
Media	Sometimes the news used to be translated into a sign language (probably Signing Exact Indonesian). It has now been discontinued.
Attitude To Outsiders	Somewhat resistant
Comment (Attitude To Outsiders)	They tend to be very cautious
Attitude To Change	Somewhat receptive
Comment (Attitude To Change)	This is simply an observation.

Education

Primary Schools	79
Comment (Primary Schools)	4,000 +/-
Secondary Schools	0
Teacher To Pupil Ratio	1:22
Language Of Instruction Early Years	Indonesian
Language Of Textbooks Early Years	Indonesian
Comment (Language Of Instruction)	For high school and beyond the students is mainstreamed (put into hearing classes) without any interpretation. If they have helpful classmates they can sometimes cope, but most drop out.

Group Description

Church Growth

Lay Leaders	Several in different churches.
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Status of Christianity

Religion & Response

Attitude To Christianity	Somewhat receptive
Comment (Attitude Religious Change)	Muslims – somewhat resistant, others usually receptive

Status of Christianity

Recommended Approaches	As with all Deaf worldwide, it is necessary to find someone acceptable to the Deaf community to introduce the outsider to the Deaf. As everywhere else, the Deaf feel oppressed by the hearing, so naturally are suspicious of their motives.
Current Needs	Someone to come with the expertise to train the Deaf in translation principles and to supervise a translation program. Possibly other skills that would make it easier to get a visa.
Items For Prayer	Wisdom for the GBI church in expanding their outreach to the Deaf. One big problem is that the Deaf are treating ASL almost like a “holy” language, so it is used in church instead of their own language, and most people do not understand ASL. Prayer for God to raise up more indigenous people who have a burden to reach the Deaf and are willing to go to the trouble to learn the local sign language instead of ASL.

History Of Christianity In Group

Year Began	1930's
By Whom	Reformed
Comments (History of Christianity)	Probably with the introduction of the Deaf School in the early 1930s under the Dutch.

Status of Christianity

Scripture

Translation Status	Definite
Available Scripture	None
Form Of Scripture Available	None

Status of Christianity

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Item Name

Comment (Form of Scripture Available)

Item Note

The Deaf want a translation.

Missions and Churches

Status of Christianity

Organization Name

Roman Catholic Church

Organization Name

> UNLISTED Organization

UNLISTED Organization Name

Gereja Bethel Indonesia (GBI)

Main Ministry

Evangelism

Comment (Main Ministry)

The ministry does not use Indonesian Sign Language. The interpreters use American Sign Language (ASL) which few people can understand.

Year Started

Within the last 20 years or so

Denominational Type Of Organization?

Yes

Number Of Adherents

100+

Number Of Congregations

2+

Number Of Expatriate Workers

0

Number Of National Workers

1 pastor

Number Of Local Workers

Several