



# Indonesia



The country of Indonesia, officially the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia is a country in southeast Asia the lies between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. With over 13,000 islands, it is the world's largest island country—922 of the islands are inhabited. If just the area of land is counted, it is the fourteenth largest country in the world; if Indonesia's land *and* water are



Forests, large plantations, mountains, and volcanos like this one make up the landscape of Indonesia

measured, it is the seventh largest. Indonesia is classified as an archipelago country, meaning it is an expanse of water covered by many scattered islands. With over 261 million people,

the island country is the fourth most populous country in the world. Java, the world's most populated island, is home to more than half of all Indonesians. The capital city of the country is Jakarta.

It is estimated that half of the land of Indonesia is covered by forests—just under 15% of the remaining land is arable, or able to grow food for all those people. Illegal deforestation to create more farm land is a major social problem. As many of the trees are burned, it creates a heavy smog which produces health (especially breathing) problems in the very young, the elderly, and those whose fitness is already compromised.

Indonesia straddles the equator and sits in an area of the world called The Ring of Fire—up to 90% of the world's earthquakes and 75% of its volcanos occur in this area. In 2018 alone, nine earthquakes hit Indonesia; six measured a magnitude of 6.0 or more. The official death toll stands at 1,946 but many more are still missing after the tsunami and landslide that accompanied the quakes in September and

## MCA in Indonesia

The **Missionary Childhood Association (MCA)** touches the lives of many children in Indonesia every day, deepening their faith in God and call to service of others.

Sister Elizabeth Lindawati, a Daughter of Charity of Saint Vincent De Paul, who runs the Santa Marta Kindergarten in Jawa Timur, Indonesia explains, “There are many poor children who learn and are healthy because of Santa Maria Kindergarten. The economic conditions of their families are so poor that many of them arrive suffering from malnutrition. They cannot learn if they are weak. Most of them cannot pay the school fee.”

Seeing this great need the missionary Sisters give the children milk and healthy food during the week to boost their nutrition which helps them to pay attention and be better students in school. Scholarships from the Sisters pay the school fees that families cannot afford.



Students of Santa Marta Kindergarten

The children are also members of **MCA** and participate with their prayers, sacrifices, and acts of service. Although they have very little money, the little ones donate what they can during Lent and Advent to programs for the poor. As **Missionary Childhood Association** members, the children visit the poor, sick, and elderly who live near the school. The students also give out care packages to the poor in the streets, no matter their faith.

The **Missionary Childhood Association**—known in the local language by its acronym **SEKAMI**—organized a pilgrimage of the Holy Cross through all of the parishes of the Diocese of Larantuka. The child members of the association were seeking to strengthen the visibility of their friendship with Jesus. They decided to do this by carrying the cross to distant parishes to visit other children. The local bishop was there at the start of the journey and celebrated Mass with the children.



MCA pilgrims carrying the cross

The cross remained in each parish for ten to fourteen days after which the children of the host parish would carry it to the next church. Sometimes, that meant the large crucifix had to be carried several miles by groups of children. The young missionaries didn't stop—even when it poured down rain!

Along the way, other children awaited the passage of the cross with prepared dances, songs, and poems. Many non-Catholic local people decorated the streets through which the cross passed and help the police to provide security for the pilgrimage. **MCA (SEKAMI)** succeeded in uniting people of all ages and faiths!

At the end of the journey, the Holy Cross was placed on the top of San Dominggo Hill, near the Cathedral, overlooking the sea. Participants hope to repeat the pilgrimage every five years.