

Mrs. Anna's right foot had swollen to twice its normal size and oozed a greenish-white secretion. Like many of Jakarta's poor, she had no money to pay for a doctor. Then she heard of one who would treat her for free.

The doctor dressed the wound and gave her medication. "But," she added, "the medicine you really need is expensive – and we have none." They prayed.

Now Mrs. Anna tells her neighbours how Jesus healed her – and about the deep joy she felt when she was able to join a group of new friends who sang and prayed and worshiped in his name.

Welcome to Jakarta.

Jakarta is home to some 10 million people, packed in to a teeming 12,500 people per square kilometer. As many as 25 million live in the larger metropolitan area of "Jabotabek."

City of Contrasts

In the center of Jakarta stands *Istiqlal*, the largest mosque in Southeast Asia. With space for 100,000 worshippers, *Istiqlal* is the pride of Indonesia's Muslims, who comprise 85 percent of Indonesia's citizens.

The grand scale of *Istiqlal* is mirrored in Jakarta's colossal shopping centres, its elevated six-lane toll road, and the glittering fountains, bank towers and festive light sculptures of the Sudirman business district.

Yet an estimated one million Jakartans live in poverty. (Government figures cut this number by more than half, but are based on a low-bar poverty line of little more than a dollar a day.) Some people squat illegally on riverbanks, empty lots and floodplains, where they support themselves by day labour, scavenging or begging. On the northern shore, many make their living from the sea.

The heaviness of the "Mother City" presses down on both rich and poor: the 35°C mid-day swelter; the ubiquitous, nostril-stinging grey haze; the restless drone and irritable braying of motorcycles, cars, busses and *bajaj*; and the human crush of its malls and markets.

The Human Tapestry

Jakarta traces its birth to 1527, when a Muslim general called Gunungjati overthrew the port settlement of Sunda Kelapa and renamed it Jayakarta. Javanese people, who enjoy Indonesian political hegemony, and Sundanese people from neighbouring West Java together form a majority of Jakarta's population, with significant Chinese, Batak and Madura minorities. Native to the region are the Betawi people. Smaller numbers from Indonesia's 700+ other ethnicities complete the mosaic.



Beliefs

A Muslim in Jakarta may be liberal or conservative, moderate or fundamentalist, Quranically well educated or ignorant of Islam's basic tenets. He may be fervently devout or spiritually indifferent. Traditional beliefs and spirits still animate the imaginations of most believers – even political leaders consult paranormals.

Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, *Nahdlatul Ulama*, is headquartered in Jakarta, as are Islamic political parties. Yet Jakarta's religious and ethnic plurality and the openness of urban life give Muslims here a better chance of hearing the Good News and a safer environment for asking questions than in their native areas.

Traditional and newer churches are plentiful in Jakarta, with several congregations numbering in the thousands. While many have shown little concern for their Muslim neighbors, others are hearing God's call and reaching out in love. Small groups of believers from traditionally Muslim backgrounds quietly gather in homes and are growing in their knowledge of God.

Yet spiritual, social and environmental challenges remain as colossal as the city itself. Pray for Jakarta, a city, like ancient Nineveh (only 80 times larger), loved by God.

To learn more about Jakarta's Muslims, visit: www.apeopleloved.com/jakartas-muslims



Population: 8.5 million
Location: Jakarta, Indonesia
Languages: Bahasa Indonesia, Various

Prayer Points

Pray for good governance. Corruption is rampant, inflation and unemployment are high and Indonesia's social balance remains fragile. A string of natural disasters has battered the country and strained the government's ability to respond. **Pray** for God-fearing leaders and effective government.

Pray that the love, grace and power of God be manifest in the lives of his people. Pray that the Lord's followers would exemplify his holiness and justice in workplaces, schools and communities throughout Jakarta. Pray that followers of Jesus would catch a larger vision of God's kingdom.

Praise God that Jakarta has small communities of Jesus-followers from Muslim backgrounds. Pray that the Spirit would bring dreams and visions, conviction of sin, faith and new life to many more. Pray for movements of many to *Isa al Masih* (Jesus Christ).

Pray for transformation and abundant life for Jakarta's poor.

