

# Northern Islands Mission

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## BRUSSY SORITON

Brussy Soriton started his pastoral ministry in Jakarta in 2003 after he graduated from Universitas Klabat (UNKLAB). He is an ordained pastor. He earned his Master's degree from Universitas Advent Indonesia (UNAI) in 2017. His wife Annie Bulangbae works as a nurse in Public Hospital on Siau island. They have two children. At the time of writing, he was the district pastor of Siau island, North Celebes.

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## Territory and Statistics

Northern Island Mission (formerly Sangihe Talaud Mission) comprises islands scattered between the northern tip of Celebes in Indonesia and the southern tip of Mindanao in the Philippines with a total land of area 763.5 square miles. The service area of the mission includes three regencies: Sitaro, Sangihe, and Talaud. According to the official census held in 2018, the population in this territory is 370,158. In May 2019, there were 61 organized churches and 1 company in this mission with a total membership of 3,347.

## Origin of Adventist Work in the Territory of Northern Island Mission

At first, the Northern Island Mission region, along with the rest of the country of Indonesia, was under the Dutch colony. In 1920-1964, the Adventist work in the region was under the supervision of the Far Eastern Division (now Southern Asia-Pacific Division).<sup>1</sup> The work of literature evangelists and Bible teachers played a very significant role for the Adventist message in the region. Many residents in Sangihe and Tagulandang islands learned about the Sabbath truth from them through house to house visits, Bible studies, and Adventist literature.<sup>2</sup>

On March 27, 1926, Pastor Albert Munson baptized Alex Lengkoan and his wife, Marie Lumabaeng at Kakas, as the first fruits from Sangihe Islands.<sup>3</sup> After they were baptized Lengkoan and his wife returned to their village, Salurang, on Sangihe Island and worked as literature evangelists. In 1927, they started a small group whose members came from the Lumabaengs family.<sup>4</sup> In 1932, Pastor L. Sondakh organized the Salurang small group as the first church in Sangihe Island with 16 members, with Alex Lengkoan as their leader.<sup>5</sup>

In 1935, Pastor Samuel Rantung organized the first church on Tagulandang Island, Kiama, which had 20 members led by Matias Jacob. The second church was Minanga, organized in the same year by Pastor A. Londa with 15 members led by Enos Lohonauman. And, in 1941, Pastor F. A. Hamel organized the first church on Talaud Island, Musi, with H. T. Mantiri as their leader.<sup>6</sup>

From 1943-1945, the Adventist work during World War II was slowed down due to the Japanese invasion. Gospel workers, both local and foreign missionaries, suffered persecution. After Indonesia gained independence in

1945 the work of the gospel could continue again.<sup>7</sup>

In 1946, H. Zakharias, Jahja Manembu, E. B. Matahari, F. A. Hamel and J. Pasirumang began their ministry in Sangihe Islands. They organized several churches: Ambia (1947); Tahuna 1 (1948); Buhias (1949); Ulu (1950); Bambang, Tamako, and Lamanggo (1952); Bawoleu (1954); Batumbalango (1955); Bulude (1955); Bindang and Paseng (1961); Beo (1960); and Menggawa, Aha, and Mahena (1964).<sup>8</sup>

## Organizational History of Mission

In 1964, Sangihe Talaud Mission was organized by the Executive Committee of the Far Eastern Division under the care of the East Indonesian Union Mission (now East Indonesian Union Conference), which was organized in the same year.<sup>9</sup> Pastor Jahja Manembu was elected as the first president, when the mission had 20 churches and 544 baptized members.<sup>10</sup> The mission office was located at Ratulangji Road, Tahuna, Sangihe, Indonesia.

In 1966, Pastor John D. A. Mausea, Secretary of Laymen's Activities Department of the East Indonesia Union Mission, reported about a Sabbath School branch in Sawang village which was led by brother Herman Garing, and the first evangelistic meeting of the Mission where eight souls were baptized by Elder A. M. Bartlett.<sup>11</sup>

In 1971, Pastor A. Waworoendeng, president of East Indonesia Union Mission, made a report that the mission workers in the Sangihe Talaud Mission were working without adequate traveling facilities and were in danger from crocodiles and deadly snakes. Despite that, they were active in searching out souls for Christ. At the time there were 28 organized churches with a membership of almost 900 on the islands of this mission.<sup>12</sup>

In 1972, Bawoleo church built a clinic. The village government was very pleased with the project and donated building materials and sent volunteers to help the construction. In two years, they completed a permanent building for a clinic. Brother and Sister Manoppo from the Bandung Adventist Hospital were both graduate nurses and they became the medical officers for the clinic.<sup>13</sup>

In 1973 Pastor F. A. Massie, president of Sangihe Talaud Mission, made a report about the first evangelistic meeting on Kalama island which lasted for three evenings. The residents were focused and when the meeting series was over, the villagers and their chief asked that a one-month public effort be conducted at that place.

In 1975 W. L. Wilcox, circulation manager of the Indonesia Publishing House, reported on his trip to Sangihe Talaud Mission. He traveled by boat and hiked on foot, sold books until late at night, and visited the villages of Buha, Minaga, Burias, Paseng, Tahuna, Bitunuris, Musi, Lirung, Beo, and Ambia. The Lord blessed in the sale of over 400 Spirit of Prophecy books and the 23 Spirit of Prophecy promotion meetings he was able to hold.

In 1978, the *Adventist Review* reported that Haasi and Mulengen churches on Tagulandang Island were organized. Churches were also organized on Siau Islands.<sup>14</sup>

In 1980, according to the *Annual Statistical Report*, there were 32 churches and 1,736 members,<sup>15</sup> and after 20 years, in 2000 there were 47 churches and 4,274 members.<sup>16</sup>

## Evolution of Sangihe Talaud Mission

In 1964 the mission office was established at Ratulangi Road, Tahuna, Sangihe. It remained in that location until 1972, when it moved to Bungalawang Road, Tahuna, Sangihe. In 2009, the mission committee made a decision to change the mission name from Sangihe Talaud Mission to Northern Island Mission.

## Challenges and Outlook for the Future

The Northern Island Mission area comprises small islands. The islands are separated by a choppy sea. This natural condition is one obstacle to the progress of the work of the church from one island to another. Economic challenges, population fanaticism, and tradition are other factors that influence the development of the church.

However, workers and members of the mission do not surrender to the challenges of nature, unsupportive economic situations, and tradition. God answers their prayers. Obstacles do not always hinder His works; often those obstacles become God's way of opening the hearts of many people to receive His blessings and compassion.

Despite all the challenges, God is leading the work in this mission. The believers are given assurance to have nothing to fear for the future except as they shall forget the way the Lord has led them in the past.<sup>17</sup> The history of the growth of this mission provides valuable lessons. (1) Use literature to reach every family. (2) Encourage total member involvement in the ministry, particularly in their respective working places. (3) Medical ministry to let the communities know that the church cares for them. (4) Using media to replace the Bible Correspondence School. (5) To rekindle the missionary spirit using the youth programs.

## List of Presidents

*Sangihe Talaud Mission*: Jahja Manembu, 1963–1965; Hendrik Mandey, 1966–1968; F. A. Massie, 1969–1971; J. S. Maramis, 1972–1975; J. Manoppo, 1975–1976; E. L. Manueke, 1977–1979; Engelhart Koapaha, 1980–1983; Piet Hein Roleh 1984–1986; W. F. Rumambi, 1987–1989; W. F. Rumambi, 1987–1989; Ch. Manoppo, 1990–1996; M. L. Saluy, 1997–1998; P. Lampeang, 1999–2005; Nofry Kaumpungan, 2006–2007; Edison Takasanakeng, 2008–2010.

*Northern Island Mission*: Edison Takasanakeng, 2010–2015; Warno Suleh, 2015–.

*118<sup>th</sup> Annual Statistical Report*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1980.

*138<sup>th</sup> Annual Statistical Report*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000.

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