

REPORT OF WCRC-INDONESIA

WCRC Indonesia Regional Council (WCRC-Indonesia) was founded in Jakarta on 9 May 2012 at the National Conference on Mission in Indonesia. The conference was sponsored by WCRC, Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI). The conference was attended by previous WCRC general secretary, Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi. He also motivated participants to support the formation of a regional WCRC council for Indonesia.

Some activities

1. WCRC-Indonesia was founded on 9 May 2012 in Jakarta.
2. Since 2012 a simple website of WCRC-Indonesia was provided to share information to member churches. I put them temporarily in my office website at <http://www.oaseintim.org/wcrc-indonesia>.
3. Our Bylaws were approved by members meeting in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, on 26 January 2013. The Bylaws were then sent to the general secretary in Geneva. On May 2013 we got information from Ms. Yael Eka Hadiputeri, Executive Committee member of WCRC from Indonesia, that Indonesia Regional Council of WCRC and its Bylaws were approved by Executive Committee meeting in Ghana, but ratification will be done by General Council in 2017. I learn from our general secretary in Leipzig that there was no ratification yet for Indonesia as a regional council.
4. On 20 May 2015, we met Rev. Chris Ferguson, the new general secretary of WCRC, at GKI Gunung Sahari, Jakarta Pusat. He came to Indonesia to attend the 14th General Assembly of CCA, on 27-29 May 2015. We shared information about WCRC-Indonesia and Rev. Ferguson shared about WCRC. The meeting was attended by some 20 participants representing 14 member churches.
5. After the CCA General Assembly Rev. Ferguson visited some WCRC congregations in Bandung. Pasundan Christian Church (GKP) was host for the visit.
6. On 22 July 2015 during the General Assembly of Indonesia Protestan Church (GPI) in Palu, Central Sulawesi, there was a meeting of WCRC member churches. The meeting shared information among member churches such as annual dues.
7. On 21 January 2016, during Communion of Churches in Indonesia's annual meeting in Parapat, North Sumatera, representatives of WCRC member churches had a short meeting. They agreed to spend a day meeting on 29 February 2016 in Jakarta, during a celebration of GPI member churches.
8. The meeting in Jakarta on 29 February 2016 dealt with three main agenda items, namely an introduction to the Accra Confession (WARC, 2004) from an Indonesian perspective; sharing bread among member churches; appointing a new moderator. The Accra Confession is not familiar to our member churches, although an Indonesian translation was available since 2008 and published in our website. Sharing bread is a program to share available programs among member churches to other members. Pasundan church, for example, offers interfaith program or shelter program for the victim of domestic violence. Other churches are invited to come and learn how Pasundan church runs the programs. I was reelected as moderator of our regional Communion, and Rev. Arliyanus Larosa as secretary. Rev. Paulus Wijono (general secretary of Pasundan Christian Church) as associate secretary and Rev. Marlene Joseph (general secretary of Protestant Church in Western Indonesia) as treasurer.
9. As preparation to attend the WCRC General Council in Leipzig, we had a consultation on the theme of the General Council—Living God Renew and Transform Us—and on the document “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ).” The consultation was hosted by presbytery of GPIB (the Protestant Church in Western Indonesia) in Makassar, South Sulawesi, on 21-22 October 2016, attended by 40 participants from 12 member churches.

10. On 23 – 25 November 2018 WCRC-Indonesia conducted a National Consultation on “Re-reading Accra Confession in the Context of the Latest Global Geo-Political Context and its Effects to the Church, Society, and Nature”. The consultation were funded by WCRC and co-hosted Indonesian church member, GPIB (the Western Indonesia Protestant Church). Participants were delegation of WCRC-Indonesia member churches. Some national experts on related issues were invited to share their insights. Also three officers of WCRC facilitate the consultation: Rev. Dr. Chris Ferguson, General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing, WCRC Executive Secretary for Communion and Theology, and Rev. Philip Vinod Peacock, Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness. A session was also provided for a meeting with the three WCC officers with leaders of WCRC-Indonesia member churches, and the main agenda are membership consolidation, fund raising for WCRC and possibility for Indonesian church(es) to be the host of coming WCRC General Council.
11. At 28 September 2018 an earthquake (of 7.4 RS) with tsunami and liquefaction devastated some part of Central Sulawesi (Palu, Donggala, Sigi). Government released data that 2,113 people died, hundred or even thousand missing. Three WCRC member churches were severely affected, Protestan Church of Indonesia in Donggala (GPID), Christian Church of Central Sulawesi (GKST) and Toraja Church.

GPID:

1. Affected family heads - 3,945 (= 11,835 people)
2. 173 injuries
3. Death toll: 43 people; lost 8 people
4. Living in tents of 1,534 people
5. Houses 795 were severely damaged, 1,225 were slightly damaged
6. The house was destroyed / lost - 165 houses
7. Church building 58 seriously damaged, 23 slightly damaged
8. The destroyed / lost church building - 11 buildings
9. Manses that were heavily damaged and destroyed / lost - 18 manses
10. A Training Center was lost into the mud of liquefaction.

GKST:

1. Church buildings: 6 heavily damaged, 2 lightly damaged, 2 moderately damaged.
2. Residential houses: 329 severely damaged, 71 lightly damaged, 128 moderately damaged, 36 missing.
3. Death toll: 16 dead, 32 missing; houses and people lost due to iquefaction.

Gereja Toraja:

1. Affected 34 congregations
2. Death toll: 24 people
3. Injuries 38 people
4. Houses of 230 residents were severely damaged; 483 slightly damaged
5. Church building 4 were badly damaged; 24 lightly damaged

Werner Joecker, Administrative Assistant Partnership Fund, offered an amount of grant to help the victims/survivors of the natural disaster through another WCRC member church, the Christian Church of South Sulawesi (GKSS).

Short information of member churches of WCRC in Indonesia

1. Indonesia ca. 18,000 tropical islands, 265 million people of about 600 ethnic groups. The country is the biggest (87%) Muslim population; 10% Christians (of both Roman Catholics and Protestantism). The government recognizes six major world religions, but there are many Indigenous religions.
2. Christianity arrived in the country since 7th century (of Nestorian Church). Our Indonesian modern Christians began in mid-16th century as Roman Catholic communities but converted to Dutch Calvinism in early 17th century.
3. Indonesian Protestantism came from three different backgrounds, namely (1) the Dutch Calvinist congregations under Dutch trade body then in 19th century reorganized under Dutch colonial rule as Protestant Church in Indonesia. This “colonial church” was reorganized into four (now 12) ethnic-regional churches, mostly in Eastern Indonesia. (2) Churches founded by mission boards from Europe (the Netherlands and Germany), eventually organized as “ethnic churches.” (3) Churches founded by “American missionaries” of Protestant denominations, such as Pentacost, Christian Alliance, Adventism, etc.
4. WCRC member churches came from the (1) and (2) background. Some confined to a certain region, some others became ethnic churches that they spread across the country following their members’ migration. While its history from 16th century, most of our member churches were organized into independent church since the 1930s—less than a hundred years under Indonesian leadership.
5. Most of our member churches belong to rural or traditional agrarian churches. Some of their congregations are in the towns or big cities. Only Indonesia Christian Church (GKI) and The Protestant Church of Western Indonesia (GPIB) belong to urban churches. As for the size, some churches have only small number of membership (less than 10,000) but others have some hundred thousand members. Of course you know when you check their respective annual dues. We do not have the number of Indonesian Christians of our WCRC-Indonesia members yet. Our estimation about 10 millions (about 50% of Indonesian Protestantism).
6. All WCRC Indonesia member churches are also members of our national Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI). We take our chance to have a short meeting of WCRC member representatives in the annual board meeting of the national Communion.
7. Indonesian churches face some national challenges, such as religious radicalism, ecological crisis, and human rights. Religious radicalism among Muslims was rooted in the past history of Indonesian struggle for independence from colonialism but recently supported by transnational radical movements. Our ecological crisis is caused mainly by big corporations supported by our government. They take over our people land. They convert our tropical forest into monocultur of palm oil plantation, or breaking the ground for mineral minings. They also convert people lands in the suburban cities to exclusive real estates. Land grabbing created injustice to our ecology and to our people. They are uprooted from their soil and lost their traditional economic resources. Many of them become migrant workers and become victims of human trafficking syndicate. Human rights has become a major issue as some religious minorities, included some Christian communities, are discriminated against. Other minorities, such as LGBT and Indigenous people are also marginalized.
8. Toward the General Council in Leipzig, we organized some meetings and distributed information to our member churches. We were proud that some Indonesian young theologians—Septemmy Lakawa, Isabella Sinulingga—were asked to contributed their insights for the General Council. We also happy that one of our delegation, Rev. Sylvana Apituley, was elected as one of the vice-presidents of WCRC in Leipzig. And we are thankful that our language, Bahasa Indonesia, was one of the official languages in the General Council.

Some Concerns

1. Executive Committee of WCRC-Indonesia has difficulty of communication with member churches. Most of the churches did not reply to emails. It is a contradiction to the nature of WCRC as a communion of one Christ's body lives in an era of modern-sophisticated information and communication technology. Therefore it is needed serious efforts to develop better communication. As an effort we keep up-to-date postal addresses, phones, and identify a contact person of each member church. Online information is also updated, such as information from Hannover as we read in WCRC Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/worldcommunion>) or blog (<http://wrcr.ch/blog>). We also share as we get information from member churches. We utilize Facebook group, WhatsApp group and website for sharing information.
2. The second concern is the unpaid annual dues of most of our member churches, which ever increase as churches leaving their dues unpaid. While waiting for the Executive Committee's new policy on this matter, churches are advised to pay their respective dues, begin on year 2015, while the back years can be paid in installments. It seems that the WCRC needs to review the amount of annual dues for some member churches which factually have no resources to pay, such as churches with small number of members (only some thousands) while they are economically poor.
3. Another concern is the financial limitation of most of our churches. Unpaid annual dues are related to this limitation. Indonesia is a big country with relatively expensive travel cost. That is the main reason why we schedule our member churches meeting during a gathering of church leaders, such as annual meeting of our national communion of churches, or of the Indonesia Protestant Church (12 out of 27 WCRC members belong to this church).
4. After the last General Assembly we did not have any programs. Personally I thought that it seems that the an effort to establish a regional council of WCRC for churches in Indonesia is failed. There is no support both from member churches and WCRC Executive Committee.

I would like to close this report with my sincere gratitude of being included in this WCRC ecumenical ministry. I was appointed in 1912 as president/moderator of Regional Council of Indonesia (we prefer to call it WCRC-Indonesia). In 2016 I was asked to continue. This year will be the end of our term. In November this year our national Communion of Churches in Indonesia was scheduled for XVII General Assembly in Sumba, and it will be the opportunity for member churches to decide the future of WCRC-Indonesia and its new management. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Best regards,
Zakaria J. Ngelow