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Please Pray

- Pray for the upcoming training of church leaders from the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) network of churches. Those trainings include:
 - Disaster Response Management to help their communities reduce risks of disasters and to more effectively respond to disasters.
 - Timothy Leadership Training (TLT) for lay leaders of churches that are remote and do not have pastors.
- Pray for the successful start of our HIV project that is targeting children affected by HIV in Papua.

Transformation in the Sumatra Church

During a recent trip to our church partner in South Sumatra, the South Sumatran Christian Church (GKSBS), we were able to see tangible ways in which God is transforming the church and its surrounding communities.



During the first stop on our tour of the Air Sugihan sub-district, in the village of Muktijaya, we were invited for lunch at the home of a man named Ayub (Job), which seemed a fitting name for a man that had lived a very hard life. He told the story of how the area we were in was used for Suharto's 'transmigration program' starting in 1982. Each family that was part of the transmigration program received a house on a few hectares (5-8 acres) of land to farm. It was swamp land and the acid level in soil and water was too high to grow rice in the beginning, so they survived on garden crops and fruit trees in the beginning years. Eventually they were able to grow one crop of rice

per year, instead of the optimal three seasons.

Ayub explained that in the early years after moving to Air Sugihan, most families barely survived. He says that even though the soil and

water are not good in Air Sugihan, they plan to stay and hope that life will continue to get better. Ayub's village has worked closely together with GKSBS to try new farming techniques

that have improved their rice yields and food security. Ayub says that they work closely with their Muslim neighbors and that even though there has been conflict in other areas in South Sumatra, they have lived in peace with their Muslim neighbors.

GKSBS has gone through a significant transformation during the last ten years. They have become a church that is identified with caring for and working with the poor. They struggle with justice issues related to land rights, and children's and women's rights. GKSBS has worked intentionally to build peace with the Islamic community in South Sumatra through integrated

community development and holding interfaith dialogue forums. The leadership of GKSBS has shifted their attention on the completion of activities to focusing on the impacts within their communities. They have also embraced the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, which encourages communities to discover the "hidden treasures" (assets) they have for realizing their future hopes and dreams. Leaders from the GKSBS church in South Sumatra have actually started training others to use the Appreciative Inquiry (AI), Results Based Management (RBM) and ABCD approaches to community development. For example, leaders from GKSBS went to Aceh to help train some of the staff from local church-based relief agencies that were responding to the tsunami in Aceh (YEU and Yakkum) in ABCD approaches to community change.

At the heart of GKSBS's transformation is the youth of the church. The church has suffered a long history of dislocation from society, but now they are actively caring for the poor and marginalized, and building strong relationships with their Muslim neighbors.