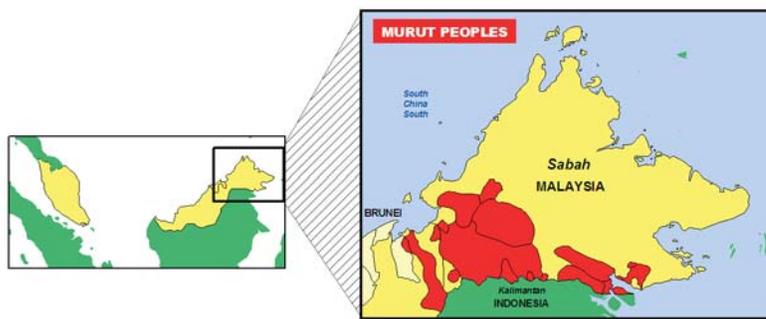


MURUT PEOPLE GROUPS



Population	Major Religion	Language
136,000	Roman Catholic/Islam	Murutic languages

Who are the Murut?

The Murut comprise several people groups that are scattered in parts of Borneo Island including Brunei, Kalimantan (Indonesia), and the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. Their largest numbers are in Sabah but some also inhabit the rural Temburong District in Brunei. They were among the last tribal groups on Borneo to renounce headhunting. The largest Murut people groups are Tagal, Tidung, Timugon, Sembakung, Paluan, Bookan, Kalabakan, and Serunding Murut. The Sabah Murut population is around 135,000 while around 1,200 are found in Brunei.

The literal meaning for Murut is 'hill people'. The Murut were formerly shifting cultivators moving their settlements every few years. Each people group has their own dialect, but most are also conversant in Malay which is the national language in Brunei and Malaysia.

What are their lives like?

The Murut used to live in communal longhouses, usually near rivers. Today, they have abandoned this style of living for individual family houses. These modern-style Murut villages are still located in the areas of their former longhouse communities. They are a very hospitable people.

Traditionally, they used the rivers as their highways. They planted hill rice and tapioca, and hunted and fished for a living. The men were skilled hunters, using blowpipes, spears and hunting dogs. Today, cultivating hill rice is their main occupation. Saw milling, timber processing and military careers are other means of livelihood.

Generally speaking, the Murut in Brunei have participated in the economic prosperity and modernization of Brunei Darussalam over the past few

decades. The Murut in Sabah have also had increased opportunities resulting from modernization, although those who live in remote locations have not benefited as much from these changes.

What do they believe?

Many of the Murut peoples in both Sabah and Brunei characterize their entire people group as being Christian. But, this is often done to distinguish their culture from their earlier culture and from the predominant Muslim culture than to characterize individual beliefs.

Many of those that call themselves Christian are nominal believers. Among church members there is a mix of Roman Catholic and Protestant affiliations. Brunei statistics reveal that the Murut community is 58% Muslim, 30% "tribal religionists" (animists) and the rest Christian. Malaysian census data count the Murut in Sabah as about 82% Christian, 13% Muslim, and 5% other. These numbers can be misleading since they count all those in a household as having the same belief as the head of the household.

What are their needs?

Opportunities for better education and economic improvement are limited in the more remote areas. Those choosing to pursue better opportunities are forced to move out of their local culture. Pray that in the face of local restrictions believers will persevere and will also share the good news. His Word is available in some of the Murutic languages. Pray that non-believers, as well as the many nominal believers, would respond to His Truth as they hear and read it.