

**MISSIONS ATLAS PROJECT
INDIAN OCEAN
BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY**

Snapshots Section

Country Name: British Indian Ocean Territory

Country Founded in: 1965

Population: Between 2000 and 4000 military personnel and military-related contract workers.

Government Type: The United Kingdom oversees the territory, which has been leased to the United States for military purposes.

Geography/location in the world: The British Indian Ocean Territory is a group of islands located in the Indian Ocean—south of India and between Africa and Indonesia. The territory includes all of the Chagos Archipelago's 55 islands.

People groups: U.S. military, U.K. military, and contract workers



Picture of flag:

Religion Snapshot: Information not available.

Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/io.html>

Source: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/diego-garcia.htm>

Source: <http://www.joshuaproject.net/countries.php?rog3=IO>

Country Profile

Basic Facts

Country Name: British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)

Demographics: The current inhabitants are military and civilian contractors. There are about 50 British troops stationed on the island. Approximately 1,700 people are with the United States military, and about 1,500 are civilian workers. Many of the workers are from the Philippines.

The original inhabitants of the islands no longer live there. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the British government required the Ilois (or Chagossian) people to move to another island. Between 1,200 and 2,000 people were relocated. Some ended up in Seychelles, but most were moved to Port Louis on the island of Mauritius.

Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/io.html>

Source: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/diego-garcia.htm>

Language: Because the territory belongs to the British and is leased to the United States, English is the major language spoken. However, there are believed to be civilian workers from the Philippines who most likely speak Filipino.

Source: <http://tagaloglang.com/The-Philippines/Language/filipino-tagalog-pilipino.html>

Society/Culture: The only people who live on the islands are military personnel and independent contractors working for the military. This defines the society and culture of the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Government: Although the territory has been leased to the United States for military purposes, the territory is under British control.

The chief of state is Queen Elizabeth II who appointed both Commissioner Colin Roberts and Administrator Joanne Yeadon as head of government. They reside in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London and are represented on the islands by the officer who commands the British Forces on the island of Diego Garcia.

Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/io.html>

Source: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/diego-garcia.htm>

Economy: The British Indian Ocean Territory is set apart for military purposes. Construction and other projects are done by military and contract workers from the United Kingdom, Philippines, Mauritius, and the United States.

The territory sells fishing licenses and postage stamps. There are no industrial or agricultural operations. Currency is the U.S. dollar.

Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/io.html>

Source: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/diego-garcia.htm>

Literacy: Unknown

Land/Geography: The British Indian Ocean Territory is located in the Indian Ocean—south of India and between Africa and Indonesia. The territory encompasses 54,500 sq km (21,000 square miles) and includes all of the Chagos Archipelago's 55 islands.

The largest of these islands is Diego Garcia where the joint UK-US military facility is located. Diego Garcia's land area is 44 sq km (17 square miles). Total area for all the islands is 60 sq km (23 square miles).

The terrain is flat and low, usually no more than two meters (6.56 feet) above sea level. It is a hot and humid tropical climate, somewhat cooled by trade winds.

Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/io.html>

Source: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/diego-garcia.htm>

History

The Portuguese explored the Chagos archipelago in the 1500s. The largest of the islands, Diego Garcia, is believed to be named after a Portuguese captain or navigator.

The history of the Ilois (or Chagossian) people is unclear. Some speculate they arrived at the islands in the late 1700s as Indian laborers. Others speculate that they were African slaves brought by early French settlers to work on coconut plantations.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the British government granted independence to many of its Indian Ocean territories. The islands that remained under British control were organized under the name of *British Indian Ocean Territory* in 1965.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the British government required the Ilois (or Chagossian) people to relocate to other islands. Between 1,200 and 2,000 people were moved more than 1,000 miles away. Some ended up on the island of Seychelles, but the majority was moved to Port Louis on the island of Mauritius.

In 1970, the British leased the island of Diego Garcia to the United States.

In 1982, the British government established a trust fund in order to provide compensation for the Ilois people.

In 1998, the Ilois began to sue the British government for more compensation and for the right to move back to Diego Garcia. A ruling in 2000 declared their forced evacuation invalid, but it also upheld the military status of the island, which only allows military personnel to live on the island.

Another ruling in 2003 denied additional compensation. The judge said the Ilois people had been treated “shamefully,” but their claims for compensation were unfounded. In 2004, the British

government issued an “Order of Council” that would prevent the Ilois from ever returning to Diego Garcia.

In April 2006, a small group of Ilois were allowed to make a short visit to their homeland. Then in May of that year, the High Court in London said that the Ilois could return to other islands in the Chagos archipelago, such as Salomon and Peros Banhos, but not to Diego Garcia in particular. However, the United States opposed the decision on the fear that allowing civilians anywhere at all in the Chagos archipelago could lead to terrorists infiltrating the islands.

Finally, in 2008, the final court of appeal in the UK, from the House of Lords, said the Ilois had no right of return. However, attempts continue to be made on behalf of the Ilois (Chagossian) people. In October 2009, Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clezio, winner of the 2008 Nobel prize for literature, wrote a letter to U.S. President Barack Obama asking him to authorize the Chagossians to return to Diego Garcia.

The current United States lease on the islands expires in 2016.

Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/io.html>

Source: <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0108108.html>

Source: <http://www.infoplease.com/atlas/country/britishindianoceanterritory.html>

Source: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/diego-garcia.htm>

Source: <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/dg.html>

Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_pictures/4897046.stm

Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7683726.stm

Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/1005064.stm

Source: <http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=109178§ionid=3510212>

Christian History

Since the main island is occupied by British and US military, there is no record of mission activity with the previous people, the Ilois.

Religion

Non-Christian

No known congregations or groups.

Christian/Evangelical

No known congregations.

People Groups

The British Indian Ocean Territory is a military installation. The people groups who live there are military personnel and military contract workers.

Missiological Implications

1. Evangelical Christians and churches should recognize that this population will support only ministry to the military populations. Since military chaplains will supply some spiritual contact, Evangelicals can only support these ministries.
2. Evangelical Christians and churches should consider some efforts toward evangelism among the groups on the islands.

Links:

British Indian Ocean Territory photos on Flickr – Search all photos

<http://www.flickr.com/search/?q=%22british+indian+ocean+territory%22>

British Indian Ocean Territory photos on Flickr – Search Creative Commons

<http://www.flickr.com/search/?l=commderv&w=all&q=%22british+indian+ocean+territory%22&m=text>

BBC News – In pictures: Chagossians' visit

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_pictures/4897046.stm

BBC News – Chagos exiles 'cannot return'

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7683726.stm

BBC News – The Chagos Islands: A sordid tale

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/1005064.stm

CIA World Factbook – British Indian Ocean Territory

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/io.html>

GlobalSecurity.org – Diego Garcia

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/diego-garcia.htm>

Infoplease.com – Where in the World Is Diego Garcia?

<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/dg.html>

Wikipedia – British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Indian_Ocean_Territory