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# Bangladesh

**Total area:**

147,570 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population:**

163,187,000 (2017)

**Literacy:**

38%

**Official languages:**

Bengali

**GDP (PPP) per capita:**

\$4,207 (2017 est.)

**Life expectancy:**

69 years

**Religions:**

90% Muslim, 9% Hindu, 1% other religions

## Prayer points

### Fire aftermath in Bangladesh

On 22nd March, a devastating fire tore through a Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh. Around 45,000 people have been affected: 15 confirmed dead, more than 500 injured, and hundreds still missing. Shelter and hygiene needs are extremely high. Many Rohingya families living in the camp fled from violence in their native Myanmar; this is the second time these families have lost everything in a tragedy! Please pray that families and friends will be reunited, and for comfort for those grieving the loss of loved ones and their homes. Please also pray that Medair will be able to provide emergency shelter and hygiene assistance to families. Pray that God will protect families from the monsoon and cyclone season that is approaching. Pray that families will be able to rebuild shelters in time to stay safe and warm. (Medair UK - June 2021)

### Floods in Bangladesh

Please pray for the continued recovery and rebuilding in Bangladesh, following the heavy seasonal rains in September 2020 which triggered flooding that have inundated 40% of the country. The flood was described as the 'worst flooding' since 1998. Pray for all the humanitarian organisation which were involved in the relief efforts, and for the people of Bangladesh who are having to rebuild their lives and livelihoods. Pray that the Lord's presence would be tangible for the affected people. (Mission Aviation Fellowship UK - January 2021)

### Shaikh unreachable people

The Shaikh people, descended from Arabs, are spread across seven countries. Bangladesh alone has over 135 million Shaikh. They are devoted to Islam; pray that they will come to know the glory of God in Christ Jesus. Pray too for more workers to respond to the many gospel opportunities among this

people group: there is a great need for workers. (WEC International - February 2021)

### **The Shaikh people of South Asia**

The Shaikh are an unreached people group across South Asia, including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Bhutan and Nepal. Pray for a breakthrough among this muslim people group, especially for God to reveal himself to them. Pray too for gospel outreach opportunities in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. Pray that the gospel will be communicated to the Shaikh in a way they will understand, and that many will be saved as a result. (WEC International - January 2021)

### **Foster Care initiative in Bangladesh**

Pray for Global Care's partners in Bangladesh, who are developing a Foster Care initiative for vulnerable children, due to launch in early 2021. In line with best practice in child development they are attempting to develop a local family-based alternative to residential institutions for children who are unable to live with their birth families. It's a new venture for them, and unusual in Bangladesh. Pray for wisdom, perseverance, and God's blessing, as they seek to learn and model what is best for these children. (Global Care - October 2020)

### **Rohingya people**

The Rohingya unreached peoples live in eight different countries, mostly in South and Southeast Asia. Extreme persecution within Myanmar has forced nearly a million Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh over the last three years. Pray for these refugees: that in the midst of their hardship, they will seek God and find Jesus. Pray that God will send believers to befriend Rohingya refugees and introduce Jesus to them. (WEC International - October 2020)

### **Shaikh people in South Asia**

The Shaikh people are found in India and Nepal, and make up the majority of Bengali speakers in Bangladesh. Pray for the gospel to break through among this muslim people group. There has been a good deal of ministry among the Shaikh in India, but little in Nepal, so pray particularly for workers to share the good news with the Nepalese Shaikh. (WEC International - July 2020)

### **Serving those who are suffering**

The COVID-19 pandemic is like an evil tidal wave, rushing around the world, bringing death and untold destruction wherever it lands. As we watch the news and see with horror the estimates of the number of people who might die in the UK, we know that India and South Asia are just now at the start of what promises to be a nightmare. Our hearts are broken for what we see today – and for what we know is just around the corner. Already, we see that the limited medical resources will be overwhelmed – but what is most heart-breaking is to know that before long, the most immediate danger for millions will be the prospect of starvation. In the middle of a 21-day lockdown and with proper approval from their local governing authorities, our brothers and sisters serving in Asia are walking the streets, being God's hands and feet to the poorest and most disadvantaged people in their communities. Please keep our brothers and sisters serving in Asia in your prayers as they continue to seek ways to help the most disadvantaged people suffering because of the COVID-19 pandemic. (GFA World - May 2020)

### **Lift up widows**

Life as a widow can be so difficult, but in many places in Asia, becoming a widow is like living in hell on earth. Society often believes widows have sinned in some horrible way which resulted in their husbands' deaths, and, as a result, widows can be labelled as cursed and rejected as outcasts. Pray that widows will be able to grieve their husbands' deaths, and for God to provide for each widow's needs. Pray each widow will find hope and the joy of Jesus for her and her children's future. (GFA World - May 2020)

### **Bangladeshi converts face hardship for Jesus**

When Bangladeshis begin following Jesus, they know their lives will be a struggle. Pray for the converts who face the threat of divorce or loss of custody of their children if their faith is discovered.

Some believers are expelled from their villages while others have seen their homes and churches burned down. Pray that they will have joy and perseverance in these times. Pray that God will continue to be the light through the body of the church and that God's love and peace will fill and unite the body of Christ that they will be filled with a passion to share the Good News with the lost. (World Outreach International - April 2020)

### **the Shaikh people of Bangladesh**

The Shaikh are the majority Bengali speakers in Bangladesh and are also found in India and Nepal. Please pray for a breakthrough among this Muslim people group, and for God to reveal himself to them. Pray for Shaikh believers: that they will be witnesses to their communities and have opportunities to speak about the gospel. Pray that they will be faithful and obedient in living for God and that, because of this, they will bear fruit for his kingdom. Pray that the gospel will be made more accessible to the Shaikh. Pray for outreach opportunities in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. And pray that the gospel will be communicated in a way that is easily understood, leading many to salvation. Please pray for any Shaikh believers who are imprisoned for sharing their beliefs. Pray that the Lord will protect them while they are in prison and that, by their actions and words, they will be witnesses to those around them. Pray for the conversion of those working in the prisons: that God will work salvation in the midst of difficult circumstances. "The problem in the nation is not the lack of harvest but of harvesters," says a Christian worker among the Shaikh. There is great spiritual darkness and a need for workers and prayer partners to help reach the Shaikh, particularly in Bangladesh. Pray for more workers to join in these efforts. Much prayer is needed for Shaikh families and communities to embrace the good news of Jesus Christ. Many labourers are needed to sow God's word among people and households of peace, so that God's truth will spread throughout families and communities. Please pray that the Spirit of God will accomplish this. Pray that, as the Shaikh read the Qur'an, they will be drawn to Jesus the Messiah (*'Isa al-Masih'*) and to the Bible. Pray for a revelation of Christ that they cannot explain away, and that many will turn to Jesus and be saved, as a result. Pray for work among Bangladeshi communities in the UK. Pray that the Lord will raise up Shaikh believers to share the good news with their own people group. And pray for networking between those working with the Shaikh in the UK and those in Bangladesh. There are large populations of Shaikh in India and Pakistan. Pray for discernment and leadership in considering how to reach these people, and for empowerment for those who are committed to sharing the gospel in those nations. (WEC International - January 2020)

### **Pray for the orphaned and disabled children of Bhola, Bangladesh**

For the approximately two million people who live on the island of Bhola in Bangladesh, life is defined by hardship. With practically no medical facilities or social provision available, Bhola's name: 'forgotten place,' is sadly apt. Thank the Lord for the work of Bhola's Children UK, a NGO that supports the orphaned and disabled children of Bhola, through cleft-lip surgeries and medical help, sign-language lessons, academic education and life skills such as farming and cooking. Pray that through the support these children receive, they can grow up to live full and healthy lives. (Mission Aviation Fellowship UK - September 2019)

### **Reaching Bangladeshi Muslims**

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated nations on earth. With a population of 167 million, almost 95% are Muslim. There are few local believers to bring them the Good News and those that do respond are often left without fellowship. The vast majority of Muslims are without any access to the gospel and the local church remains culturally divided from them. Long term workers report openness and fruitfulness among Muslims, but there is a great need for more workers. Barriers need to be broken down between people groups, local believers need to be trained and equipped and the lost reached with the Good News. Pray for more workers who would be effective in making disciples among Bangladeshi Muslims and for the local church to grow in sensitivity to the culture of the Muslims they are trying to reach. (Frontiers - August 2019)

### **IFES holding four regional camps**

The IFES movement in Bangladesh is holding four regional camps in March - June. The theme for each is "Be Shining - Isaiah 60v1". Pray that each Christian student would shine on their campus, that their friends would turn to Christ and that this would bring glory to God in Bangladeshi universities. It is a complex place to share Christ, so the movement also ask for prayer for protection for their country "from political complexity and violence. Also please pray for security, economic development, and political stability." (IFES - April 2019)

### **Rohingya refugees**

Elections took place in December in Bangladesh and this caused some unrest, as well as disruption to the number of foreign aid workers who were trying to get into the country to serve the needs of the Rohingya community. Pray for open borders so that medical teams can get back into the refugee camps to help this displaced community. A medical clinic in one of the camps uses teams of Christian doctors, nurses and midwives to serve alongside Bangladeshi medical personnel to minister to the many needs of the Rohingya people. We now have reports of Rohingya individuals coming to know Christ. Pray for God to show mercy on the people suffering in the camps and for a political way forward to help them return to Myanmar in peace one day. (Reach Beyond - February 2019)

### **Mobile medical clinics provide counselling**

Mobile medical clinics were recently carried out in two villages within an unreached area of Central Asia. Over 450 people were seen in the four days the clinic ran and individuals were able to share their health and life concerns. Many who came to see the psychologist had problems which caused ill health and depression. The team remarked how many of these individuals had sad eyes. But, once they had the opportunity to share their stories away from others in the community, they could see ways to solve their problems. At the clinic, miracles were happening: sad eyes became bright! Counselling gave them hope for the future. Pray for these people to begin a journey with Christ as a result of the medical help they received from believers. (Reach Beyond - December 2018)

### **Monsoon rains protection needed**

The Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are at grave risk from monsoon flooding. A report by the Parliamentary Committee for International Development has warned that "a substantial proportion of the Rohingya refugees' accommodation is vulnerable to the heavy rainfall the imminent monsoon season would bring". People are going to die without decisions and actions to enable relocation. Pray that the Bangladeshi Government and other agencies would act to protect refugees from further tragedy. (FFM - September 2018)

### **Healthcare for refugees**

A new medical clinic has been built in one of the Rohingya refugees camps and dedicated recently. Teams of Christian doctors, nurses and midwives from around the world will serve alongside Bangladeshi medical personnel to minister to the many needs of the Rohingya refugees. Pray for God to show mercy on all the suffering people in the camps. Pray that the teams will stay disease-free, for health, strength and stamina, and for more Rohingya translators to be found. Ask that the compassion of Christ will be clearly shown to all. (Reach Beyond - July 2018)

### **Over the Border in the Hills**

The Rakhine people used to live in Myanmar, but now many are settled just over the border in the hills of southeastern Bangladesh. Although 89% of Bangladeshi people identify as Muslims, most Rakhine people are Buddhist. For generations they have remained faithful to their Buddhist traditions. While Burmese Bibles are available, the community has been largely unreceptive to God's word, with only 3% of the Rakhine people in Bangladesh professing faith in Jesus. Praise God that hope is alive. Despite oppression, the church in Bangladesh is growing. Please pray that God's word would take root among the Rakhine people and that followers of Jesus in Bangladesh will know how God wants them to reach out to the migrants arriving from neighbouring countries. (Wycliffe Bible Translators - March

2018)

### **Alleviating Leprosy**

Give thanks for a new project that will help women and children affected by leprosy or other neglected tropical diseases, as well as people with disabilities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. Pray that leprosy sufferers will benefit from this community-based rehabilitation and nutrition project and that our partnership with the local government health centres in the urban districts would be of service to them. Pray too that another project in the Chittagongs, involving people forming local associations in order to own and run their own projects, will be successful in their multiple elements: disability care; raising awareness of people's rights; improvement of social status; and economic and income development. (The Leprosy Mission England and Wales - May 2017)

### **Poverty in Bangladesh**

The tiny country of Bangladesh is the home of Bengal tigers, beautiful beaches and a lush, green landscape. It is also a land of brutal poverty, corruption and wave after wave of unrelenting natural disasters. Once among the wealthiest areas of the Indian Subcontinent, Bangladesh is now one of the poorest. More than a third of its people live below the poverty line. Bangladesh has a young population, with more than half of its people under age 15. Pray for young people in Bangladesh to have their eyes opened to the truth of Jesus. Pray for Bangladeshis seeking asylum around the world to meet with believers in Jesus who would share Him with them. Pray for more workers to go out and work in the harvest fields of Bangladesh. (Frontiers - March 2016)

### **A 'challenge to action'**

It is challenging to be a Christian in Bangladesh but there are many opportunities to share the gospel with other faiths. Christians are not allowed to establish Bible study groups on campuses so most groups are located in Christian hostels, school compounds and churches. The Christian student movement has been issuing a 'challenge to action' through its leadership training events to encourage student leaders to establish new Bible study groups. Pray that they will see lifelong, committed graduates to support the ministry sacrificially, as many are so involved with their professions that they forget the blessing of student ministry. (IFES - March 2015)

### **Devastating floods**

An estimated 20 million people in south Asia have been affected by devastating floods triggered by monsoon rains - the worst in 50 years. Across India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, loved ones have been killed, homes and livelihoods lost and vital infrastructure destroyed. Tearfund's partners are battling extreme weather conditions and extensive flood damage to get emergency aid including food and shelter to those most in need. (Tearfund - November 2014)

### **Justice for Bangladeshi Garment Workers**

The Church of Bangladesh is reporting some success in its Justice for Bangladeshi Garment Workers Campaign, but says that much more still needs to be done. The campaign was launched after 1,129 people, mostly garment workers, were killed following the collapse of the Rana Plaza building a year ago. So far, the campaign has secured new legal safety standards for Bangladesh factories and more pay for the lowest paid garment workers. In addition, 150 global high-street brands are now working with local trade unions to make the factories safe. As well as praying, the group is urging Christians in developed countries to help put pressure on retailers. (Church Mission Society - July 2014)

### **Medical care for leprosy sufferers**

Give thanks for the only reconstructive referral centre in Bangladesh: the Danish-Bangladesh Leprosy Mission hospital which provides specialist leprosy treatment and general medical services for people affected by leprosy. Their emphasis is on supporting children, women and the ultra-poor. An ophthalmologist goes to the hospital every week to treat eye conditions and regular surgical camps also take place. Pray that, in a male dominated society, where women are particularly vulnerable,

they will come forward for treatment and not feel marginalised and lonely. (The Leprosy Mission England and Wales - September 2013)

### **Working in hazardous conditions**

More than 1,000 people died when a garment factory building in Dhaka collapsed in April. This tragedy, the worst of its kind, has highlighted the exploitation faced by thousands of young women, and girls as young as ten, who risk their lives every day working in hazardous conditions. Pray for Christian organisations in Bangladesh as they step up their work to bring about a sea change in the circumstances which force young women away from proper education and into these huge garment factories. (WorldShare - July 2013)

### **Political unrest**

The situation in Bangladesh is worsening following months of protests and political tension. Much of the current unrest began when Islamist leaders accused of wartime atrocities were sentenced to death. Clashes between protesters and the army have been violent, and more than 50 people have been killed so far, with hundreds more injured. Thousands more are being affected by strikes and protests, causing disruption to education, public services and infrastructure. Please pray for peace and political stability in Bangladesh, and for increased tolerance between different religious and political groups. (Tearfund - May 2013)

### **To save sinners**

Ali started following Christ in 1991. He describes his life before he knew Christ as 'ugly', without any good reputation to show as a Muslim. Eventually, Ali felt he needed to change, so he sought forgiveness. "But in Islam, if you miss just one prayer (out of the five) in a day, you're guilty of spending many years in hell. And I have missed it a thousand times!" His despair led him to explore other faiths. "A Christian showed me in the Bible that Isa (Jesus) came to save sinners," Ali recounted. "He read me Mark 2:17: '*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*' In that verse, I found hope. I made up my mind to follow Jesus." Give thanks for Ali's testimony and pray for other Muslims in Bangladesh to find forgiveness in Jesus. (Open Doors UK and Ireland - January 2013)

### **Dignity and empowerment**

Fixing sanitation problems, stopping domestic violence, preventing child marriages. These are just a few of the ways in which Bangladeshi women who have gained dignity and empowerment through a church-run programme are now transforming whole villages. The Church of Bangladesh Social Development Programme has formed development groups with around 20 women who meet for discussion and skills training. They are often given small loans and taught how to save money. Pray that these women and others would continue to be empowered, and would spread the Good News in their communities. (Church Mission Society - May 2012)

### **Mass poisoning**

According to a study by The Lancet in 2010, up to 77 million Bangladeshis have been exposed to toxic levels of arsenic in drinking water in recent decades. The arsenic occurs naturally - deposited over thousands of years in the Greater Ganges delta. The World Health Organization termed this as 'the largest mass poisoning of a population in history'. Koinonia is an organisation helping 20,000 people in three districts of southern Bangladesh by monitoring arsenic levels, providing clean water supplies, and providing medical and nutritional support for arsenicosis patients. Pray for their work. (Tearfund - November 2011)

### **Impact of climate change**

On top of the regular threat of flooding and cyclones, in Bangladesh climate change is an ever present reality. A sea level rise of 1.5 metres could see a fifth of the country left under water. In a country where most of the population rely on agriculture for their livelihoods and almost 80 million people

survive on less than US\$1 a day, this would be nothing short of catastrophic. In July, a three-year programme to help vulnerable communities to be better prepared for future floods will begin with awareness and training work in ten communities close to the flood-prone river Padma. Pray for the success of this work, as those involved seek to lift people out of material and spiritual poverty. (Tearfund - July 2011)

### **Rohingya refugees**

In 1991, up to 200,000 Rohingya (a Muslim ethnic minority in Myanmar) were forced to flee to Bangladesh following persecution by the ruling military junta. Having been unable to return, thousands of children are now growing up in refugee camps and facing a bleak future. Although primary schools have been allowed to be established in the camps, there are no secondary schools and the refugees are officially barred from leaving the camps to find education elsewhere. Pray for Rohingya refugee children and families to come to know the true hope found in Jesus. (Viva - March 2011)

### **Praying for growth**

Bangladesh is the most densely populated agricultural nation on Earth. Located on the Bay of Bengal and comprising a lush matrix of rivers and deltas, it is infamous for its frequent floods and violent cyclones which, together with poor governance, have kept this largely Muslim nation as one of the poorest in the world. The Church in Bangladesh is tiny and the 'cares of this world' often take precedence over spiritual growth. Nevertheless, many of the elements necessary for explosive church growth seem to be in place: translated Scriptures, correspondence courses, winsome media materials, a growing numbers of believers, maturing leaders, and official religious tolerance. Pray that the Lord will build His Church in Bangladesh to bring hope to this struggling nation. (Serving In Mission - November 2010)

### **The Mahimal**

The 150,000 Mahimal Muslim fishermen sail their boats on the waters of the Sylhet region of Bangladesh, the only hint of modern technology being the nylon nets they use to haul in their catch. Before they set out on their first fishing voyage of the year, they say prayers to Allah, receive blessings from religious leaders and offer money to mausoleums of holy saints in hopes of ensuring success. In spite of all their efforts and the importance of fish in their country, these boatmen are confined to the lowest classes of society. Around 98% of the population of Bangladesh are Muslims and the Mahimal are one of many of the people groups who are unreached with the gospel. Ask God to open doors for Christian witness in Bangladesh. (AsiaLink - September 2010)

### **Christians facing opposition**

Although the Bangladeshi Government publicly supports freedom of religion, attacks on Christians continue. Some Muslim extremist groups have political party affiliations. In rural areas, Muslims put pressure on Christians and new believers face opposition from their families and communities. Furthermore, police discrimination against Christians is common and pastors are the victims of harassment and violence. In January a pastor received death threats after reporting eight Muslims for raping his wife and robbing his house. Praise God that the number of believers from a Muslim background is growing and pray for the leadership training programmes currently taking place, as well as for advocacy bodies working to support and advise believers facing discrimination. (Open Doors UK and Ireland - July 2010)

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