

BANGLADESH

The Bengali



Where do they live...

Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated countries. Approximately 20 percent of the 144 million people live in cities. The rest live in thousands of small villages across the Bengal region. Homes made of *adobe* (mud) brick and bamboo are spread throughout the countryside; few have electricity or plumbing. Despite sustained domestic and international efforts to improve economic and demographic prospects, Bangladesh remains a poor, overpopulated, and ill-governed nation.

Their Family

Marriage is often arranged by the family. Caste and social rank are very important. Wedding ceremonies, however are different for the Hindu and Muslim. In urban areas, many men wear Western style clothing, yet women generally wear a traditional *saree*—a long piece of printed cloth wrapped around the body.

Their Religion and Beliefs

About sixty percent of Bengalis are Muslims, while the rest are Hindu. The 95 million Bengali of Bangladesh are the largest group and are 99.9% Muslim. The Hindu Bengali have long been bound by demonic spirits of oppression and false religion which can only be broken through prayer and intercession. Only a few Bengali have ever heard the Gospel, and fewer than 1% profess Christianity.



Who they are...

The Bengali are one of the most significant people groups in South Asia. They are considered to be the original inhabitants of the Bengal region of southwest Asia. This territory is divided politically between Bangladesh and West Bengal, a state in India.

Bengali is the native language spoken by most of the groups in this region. Although the Bengalis are primarily classified according to language, their culture remains very diversified.

What are their needs...

As is common in other Muslim countries, women are very poorly educated. Schools and school teachers are desperately needed. There is also a serious lack of doctors, nurses, hospitals, and medical supplies. Food shortages and unsanitary living conditions contribute to widespread tuberculosis, cholera, and malaria. More than half a million Bangladeshis are suffering with leprosy.

Although there have been reports of real progress among the Muslim and Hindu Bengali in Bangladesh, a determined effort must be sustained in order to reach them with the Gospel.

What you can do...

- Adopt the Bengali people of Bangladesh
- Learn as much as possible about this group
- Organize strategic prayer
- Provide financial resources
- Arrange short missions trips

until there is a strong church established among them.



How to pray for them...

- Ask God to raise up prayer teams who will begin breaking up the soil with prayer and intercession.
- Take authority over the principalities and powers that have kept the Bengalis in spiritual darkness for generations.
- Ask the Lord to call people to go to Bangladesh and share Christ with the Bengalis.
- Pray that the small number of Bengali Christians will be a light for the Gospel in this area of spiritual darkness.
- Ask God to raise up Christian medical teams, businessmen, and teachers to take the Gospel into this region.
- Pray that Christian radio and television broadcasts, Bibles, and literature will be made available to the Bengali.
- Pray that God will reveal Himself to the Bengali through dreams and visions.
- Pray that the Bengali will begin to hunger for a personal relationship with God.
- Pray for the Lord to send Christian school teachers to work among the Bengali.
- Ask God to call loving Christian doctors and nurses to work in Bangladesh.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to soften their hearts towards Christians so that they will be receptive to the Gospel.
- Ask the Lord to raise up strong local churches among the Bengali.

Sources:

Joshua Project Profiles, CIA—*The World Fact Book*, Culturegram

