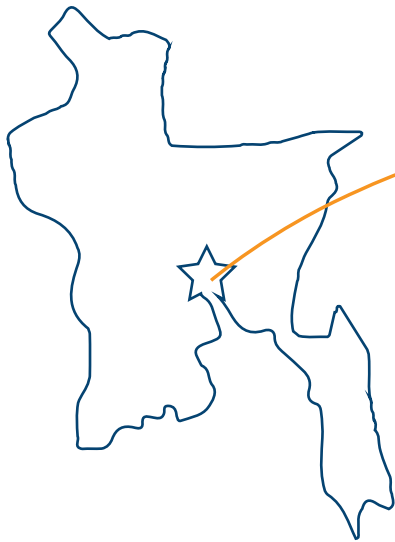


BANGLADESH



CAPITAL:
DHAKA



BANGLADESHI TAKA

130,170 SQ KM
IN LAND SIZE

POPULATION OF
162 MILLION



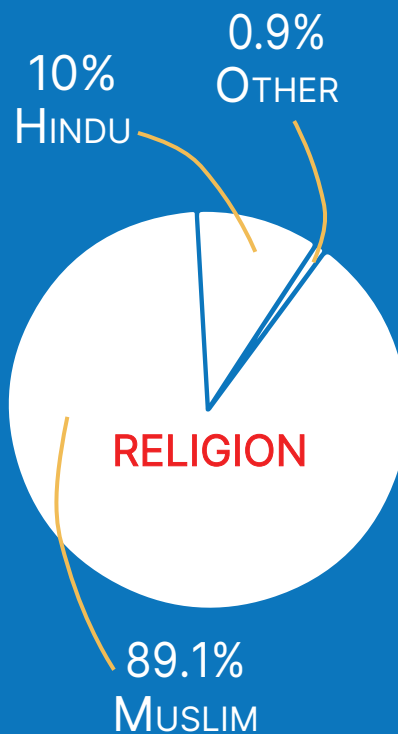
LANGUAGES

BANGLA



44.1%

DO NOT HAVE
ACCESS TO PROPER
SANITATION



MAJOR INDUSTRIES:

TEXTILES
FARMING
SHIPBUILDING



FAVOURITE SPORTS:

CRICKET
SOCCER

BANGLADESH



A child with disabilities enjoying the festivities.



Preparing to perform.

Geography

Often called the nation of rivers, Bangladesh is in a huge delta region formed by the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna river systems. It is one of the most flood-prone countries in the world. The country shares land borders with India and Myanmar and with the Bay of Bengal to the South. Bangladesh has a tropical and monsoonal climate.

History

Bangladesh was loosely controlled by various Buddhist and Hindu empires for much of the first millennium. Islam began to spread across the region in the 10th century.

Following 200 years of British rule, the partition of 1947 resulted in Bengal being split along religious lines. West Bengal (primarily Hindu) remained with India and East Bengal (primarily Muslim) became a physically isolated part of Pakistan (renamed East Pakistan).

Bangladesh became an independent country in 1971 when the two parts of Pakistan split after a bitter nine-month war that also drew in neighbouring country India.

Facing many challenges, the government was overthrown in 1975 and Bangladesh was under military rule for 15 years. Even though democracy was restored 1990, politics in the country remain volatile. Islamic extremism has also been rising in the traditionally tolerant country.

Cultural

Although Bangladesh is a relatively young sovereign country, it has an ancient heritage as part of the historic region of Bengal. This has resulted in rich and vibrant cultural traditions, artistic expressions and delicious cuisine.

A strong cultural concept in the country is harmony. A common phrase that parents tell children is “manush hou”, which roughly means “be human”. More generally, it means that one should act in a way that places the trait of being human above such differences such as religion or ethnicity.

It is also a very community and family-focused society. People often act in the best interests of the community rather than their individual preferences. Elders are greatly respected.

AMS Projects in Bangladesh – Anondo Neer

Unfortunately, children with disabilities are often abandoned and grow up in orphanages and institutions, or since they are perceived as a burden, are kept inside the house. Dhaka is currently home to more than 18 million people, and social services are at capacity. Many of these families tend to slip through the cracks.

The Marist Missionary Sisters are overseeing this project through three centres in Dhaka. The goal of the project is to help these children and young adults, many of whom are both intellectually and physically disabled, to not only develop their potential but also to feel valued and accepted for the person that they are. This will be achieved by providing a supportive environment, where the intended development can take place through training in life skills; literacy and numeracy education; essential physiotherapy; and opportunities for socialising with other disabled people and the wider community.

A portion of the children and young adults are learning simple income-generating skills. Since most of the project’s participants are those from low-income families, help is given through medical care and special equipment or devices. Emotional support, health education and counselling are also provided to the immediate family of those who is a part of the program.

Further reading/resources:

CIA World Fact Book (www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/)

SBS Cultural Atlas (www.culturalatlas.sbs.com.au)