

# PROFILE: BANGLADESH



**Bangladesh is one of the world's poorest and most densely populated countries. Comparable to England and Wales in land size, its population exceeds the UK's by 100 million.**

Formerly East Pakistan, Bangladesh was created in 1971 when the two parts of Pakistan divided after a bitter conflict. A fragile democracy was restored in 1990 after 15 years of military rule.

As a low-lying river delta in the tropics, the country is prone to regular monsoon flooding and is vulnerable to sea level rise due to climate change. Most Bangladeshis rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. Poverty prevails across the country – nearly half the population survive on less than one dollar a day.

Public health indicators and educational standards are low, mortality rates are high, women and minority groups are marginalised, corruption is endemic – and religious extremism is on the rise.

Christians form a tiny minority in Bangladesh and often feel marginalised and discriminated against. Women's rights are also an ongoing concern, especially with regard to violence against women and trafficking.

## TEARFUND'S WORK IN BANGLADESH

Tearfund has supported partners in Bangladesh since the late 1960s. When Cyclone Bhola struck in 1970, killing at least 500,000 people, Tearfund chartered planes to airlift relief supplies and used empty return flights to import jute products into the UK.

Subsequent disasters include massive floods in 1988 and 1998 and a cyclone in 1991 that killed at least 138,000 people.

In 2007, Cyclone Sidr left thousands dead and devastated southern Bangladesh. Generous giving from our supporters and the general public enabled Tearfund to supply life-saving aid and reduce the threat of future disasters.

Our Bangladeshi partners continue to build resilience in vulnerable communities. Here are some examples of their work:

Koinonia is building two mixed-use cyclone shelters, promoting improved farming methods, and providing safe water in areas polluted by arsenic.

LAMB is empowering church leaders in north-west Bangladesh to minimise the impact of floods and droughts in 37 vulnerable communities.

The Salvation Army is providing ten villages with disaster preparation and response training – and developing community action plans.

The Church of Bangladesh's social development department is helping churches in south-west Bangladesh to meet the challenge of climate change. Twenty-five congregations are providing 'animators' to set up disaster management committees at village level.

Planned activities include canal re-excavation, raising of house plinths, trialling of solar panels and promotion of saline-resistant crops and hanging gardens.

Bangladesh Nazarene Mission is mobilising local churches to help 50 communities in south-west Bangladesh to diversify crops, install rainwater harvesting systems, line ponds, plant trees, and train volunteers to provide early warnings and to help evacuate vulnerable residents.

- **Pray for people living in poverty in Bangladesh.**
- **Please pray for our Bangladeshi partners as they seek to help others.**
- **And pray for Bangladesh: for justice, peace, health and hope for everyone.**