

# Bangladesh

Capital: Dhaka  
Population: 161,317,626 h  
Adult literacy: 51%  
Life expectancy: 64 years



## Target: Hardcore

### Something is changing in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in Asia and one of the world's most densely populated nations. Its name literally means "the country Bangla".

Unlike other nearby countries, the vast majority of Bangladeshis speak only one language, Bengali. (In India hundreds of languages are spoken).



However, there is one English word that is quite familiar to the poorest of the poor: the word "target". The Institute for Integrated Rural Development (IIRD) has chosen to apply this tag to identify people and families that form the "hard core" of poverty - the poorest of the poor - those whom they have targeted to be beneficiaries of their programs in Bangladesh. This NGO was founded in 1987 by William Christensen, an American Marianist priest, who had arrived in the country a year earlier, after seven years of service in India and Nepal.

Today, hundreds of IIRD workers serve in six upazilas (sub-districts), where more than 214,968 families live. Of these, 54,628 have been designated as "targets". Among these, 15,000 rural families have benefited from the installation of hand-operated water pumps in areas where surface water is often unfit for consumption.

A similar number of families have been targeted in the program for the distribution of iodized salt, needed to prevent diseases, such as goiter. Other targets include hundreds of landless families that have been helped to acquire parcels of land for farming or to become involved in cooperatives for wetlands fish farming.

Others of IIRD's targets are the tens of thousands of families that have benefited from trees planted on the edges of thousands of kilometers of roads, trees which help to stem the brutal erosion caused by annual floods and also to provide a livelihood for thousands of families by producing wood, fruits and mulberry leaves for raising silkworms.

Nearby, IIRD has identified targets in thousands of women who have been provided with dignified work in the processes of harvesting, spinning and weaving silk, and have

been offered workshops in sewing, small business management and other productive activities.

IIRD has worked to facilitate access for targets to more than 1,200 associations for "cooperative savings", to which 10,000 women mutually entrust the small savings that they have managed to put aside.



After more than twenty years of helping the poorest people to chip themselves away from the "hard core" of poverty, the IIRD continues to work in behalf of new targets, a labor that is its very reason for being.

[www.iird.interconnection.org](http://www.iird.interconnection.org)

### You can change your world

¿Quiénes crees que son los que más sufren en tu entorno? Who would you deem to be those who suffer most greatly in your surroundings? Which groups are in the worst situations? -- the homeless, immigrants, lonely seniors ...?

Make a map of the needs of your neighborhood or city. Do you know where the hard core needy are? ...and what they need? Which agencies are there to help them? (e.g., Catholic Charities or other diocesan or parish organizations).

Work with these agencies to the extent that you can. Offer your services. They are bound to have something useful and helpful that you can do.

**Prayer: «The one who has sent me is here with me»**

Lord, You are God, become one of us. To get to know us and love us, you couldn't have gotten any closer. Forgive me my misgivings. Though You are our King, in our lives You have never been imperious or remote, as kings are wont to be.

*Jn 8, 21-30*