

South Asian Peoples

The greatest concentration of lostness on Earth.

Bangladesh & Northeast India

The Northeast Cluster, which includes Bangladesh and the seven sister states of India, is probably one of the most forgotten corners of the world. In the sister states, Christianity has had a foothold for decades, but in Bangladesh, most people follow Islam. Natural disasters and dire poverty, as well as suppression of basic human rights and hopeless religions, keep the people of this area oppressed. Bengalis, Assamese, and many tribal groups — 149 million people in all — proudly identify themselves by their religion and language. Wars were fought to maintain them.

Make an Impact

In the last hundred years, whole tribes in Northeast India have come to Christ. In more recent days, we have seen hundreds of Bengali Hindus and Muslims be saved. Still, vast numbers — nearly 200 million — have yet to hear the Gospel. Join us for a short-term trip and help distribute tracts and share the Gospel. Come and train new believers to share Bible stories. Come train pastors and other leaders. Come share your medical skills through human needs projects.



Northeast Cluster at a Glance

Countries & Indian States	Bangladesh, Seven Sister States: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura	Population	200,000,000
Language	Bengali, Assamese, many tribal languages	UUPGs	Jalia Kaibarta, Patni, Mahimal, Ganaka
Religion	Muslim 70%, Hindu 25%, Buddhist & Other 5%, Christian <1%	Partnership Opportunities	Evangelism, Bible distribution, torying training, leadership training, medical
Climate	March-Nov.: Tropical, hot & humid December-February: Pleasant, mild	Visit IMB's: www.Call2Embrace.org	

A vast multitude from every South Asian Nation, Tribe, People and Language knowing and worshiping our Lord Jesus Christ. ~ Revelation 7:9

Bangladesh ~ Bhutan ~ India ~ Maldives ~ Nepal ~ Pakistan ~ Sri Lanka ~ and throughout the world
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Top 8 UUPGs - Unreached Unengaged People Group

(6 September 2011)

1. **Bania (Assamese) (PEID#48006) – India, population 1,347,29**

It is thought that an ancient Ahom king brought the first two families of the Bania to Assam. These two families became gold and silver smiths by profession, and today their descendants are called Bania. Though most Bania men marry only one woman, multiple wives are permissible. All sons receive equal shares of the father's property and possessions, but women cannot inherit. Women play dominant roles inside the home but less so in social and political spheres. The Bania's traditional trade is to make gold and silver ornaments. The economically poorer Bania families have taken to rickshaw and cart pulling, while others are employed as day wage laborers. Within Bania society, very few are employed in white-collar jobs. Bania maintain close social and economic ties with their neighboring groups, except Muslims. After the post-Independence period, literacy has been on the rise within the Bania community. They take advantage of modern medicine, and their villages usually have electricity.

How can you pray? Pray that a church will adopt the Bania before the end of 2011. Pray for open doors among the Bania and for God to lead workers to homes of peace. Pray for developmental and literacy programs among the people.

What can you do? Mobilize your church to adopt and engage the Bania.

2. **Jalia Kaibarta (PEID#41428) – India, population 749,357**

The Jalia Kaibarta people of northeast India have come a long way in a short time. Before India gained its independence in 1947, the Jalia Kaibarta struggled under the caste system. Typically farmers and fishermen and members of the lowest social class, they languished in poverty with an extremely low literacy rate. A deep sense of inferiority among the people added to their difficulties. Now, things are beginning to change. Many Kaibarta are abandoning caste restrictions and moving to the cities in search of white-collar jobs. The Jalia Kaibarta may have advanced socially and economically, but they are a long way from the Truth of Christ.

How can you pray? Praise God for wide open doors in two communities in Assam where workers have been given access and are being well-received. Ask God to help workers identify homes of peace, and ask that new believers and churches would quickly emerge from these. Pray for the new believers and emerging churches in these Kaibarta communities...for wisdom, courage and boldness.

What can you do? Coordinate with workers to send teachers from your church to participate in educational workshops for local teachers. This will help in building upon access the team has in Kaibarta communities and open up opportunities to share.

3. **Hindi (PEID#1175) – Bangladesh, population 489,457**

Hindus of Bangladesh comprise about 12 percent of the population, making them a minority in one of the largest Muslim countries in the world. And yet, they represent the third largest Hindu state in the world (after India and Nepal). According to the 2001 census, there were over 11 million Hindus in Bangladesh. Hindus in Bangladesh may speak Bangla or Urdu, but this profile focuses upon the Hindi speakers numbering almost 500,000. Bangladeshi Hindus worship spirits, deities of rivers, mountains, vegetation, animals and stones. Ritual bathing, vows, and pilgrimages to sacred rivers, mountains, shrines and cities are important practices. An ordinary Hindu will worship at the shrines of Muslim saints without being concerned with the religion to which that place is affiliated. Hindus revere many holy men. Some believe that they attain spiritual benefit merely by looking at a great holy man.

How can you pray? Pray that the Gospel would come with power and spread rapidly among the Hindi speakers of Bangladesh so that they may turn from idols to serve the True and Living God. Ask the Lord to open their eyes to see the futility of depending on idols and to help them break from family traditions. Pray for believers to have boldness to share the Good News.

What can you do? Mobilize your church to adopt and engage the Hindi-speakers of Bangladesh.

4. Bhumij/Bhumija (Assamese) (PEID#41999) – India, population 215,544

The Bhumij are Assamese-speaking industrial and daily wage laborers. As part of the Munda-Santal of northeastern India and Nepal, many of the Bhumij depend on farming for survival. Some rural families depend on village or cottage industries, such as weaving. They supplement their meager agricultural earnings with hunting and gathering. Tribal culture is quickly changing under the impact of external influences, such as industrialization, new communication links, tribal welfare schemes and community development projects. Today, their supreme god is the sun god; however, they have also adopted the Hindu deities in addition to tribal gods and goddesses. The Hindu village priest is the ritual specialist, and they observe many Hindu festivals. They do have a firm belief in an almighty creator and also in “mother earth.”

How can you pray? Ask God to call out prayer teams to break up the soil through worship and intercession. Ask God to encourage and protect the small number of Hindus who have converted to Christianity. May the King of Glory come in among the Bhumija of India, filling them with faith and boldness.

What can you do? Mobilize your church to adopt and engage the Bhumija.

5. Mahimal (PEID#41640) – Bangladesh, population 153,842

The principal sects among Muslims in Bangladesh who take up fishing or related occupations are known as “mahefarosh or mahimals.” The Mahimal are located in the Sylhet division of northeast Bangladesh, and we know of no evangelistic work among them. A large number of Bengali people depend upon fishing for their livelihood. Fishermen in rural Bangladesh usually live a community life in neighborhoods or villages around water. They cooperate closely with one another, not only in fishing, but also in economic activities, such as marketing and purchasing, and in social life and family affairs. They have lived communally for many generations, creating, in the process, their own history, distinct traditions, and patterns of daily life.

How can you pray? Ask God to bring someone to work with the Mahimal, opening doors for them in the community and giving divine appointments, connections, and favor with influential people who can help them. Pray that the Mahimal, like the early disciples, will become “fishers of men”(Mt. 4:19) among their own people.

What can you do? Mobilize your church to adopt and engage the Mahimal of Bangladesh.

6. Mahisyadas (PEID#48368) – India, population 151,433

The Mahisyadas live in Tripura. There are two stories as to their origins. Some say their name originated from the word meaning buffalo (mahis). Another story says their name originates from the Tripura word for fish (matsya), because that was their original occupation. Today, the Mahisyadas have left fishing and become cultivators, so you may find them using the name Halluadas or Halladas. “Hal” means plough. The Mahisyadas live in the forested areas of Tripura and speak Bengali. They are non-vegetarian and love to eat rice. Common last names among the Mahisyadas are “Das, Bhomik and Sarkar.” They follow Hinduism.

How can you pray? Pray that the seeds of the Gospel would be planted among the Mahisyadas. Pray for the Mahisyadas to recognize and choose to follow the One True God.

What can you do? Mobilize your church to adopt and engage the Mahisyadas of Tripura.

7. Dhoba (Assamese) (PEID#47912) – India, population 115,078

Dhobis are one of India's communities formerly known as "untouchables." As their ancestors before them, they earn their meager living by washing clothes for the higher castes. Before they begin work, they first they must bow to the washing stone. After the men wash the customers' clothes, the women iron them and keep the money they earn to pay for household expenses. When a Dhobi girl marries, her dowry usually contains just a few items, but almost always an iron. Mothers teach the girls to iron at an early age, and boys help their fathers by washing the smaller articles of clothing and by delivering packages of clean clothes to their owners. Most of the Dhobis follow popular Hinduism and worship local gods, as well as the washing stones. The vast majority of Dhobi are Hindu.

How can you pray? Pray that the Dhobi people will hear the Gospel and discover that Jesus Christ can wash away their sins. Pray that believers will tactfully share Gospel recordings and play Christian radio broadcasts for Dhobi Hindus. May the Dhobi believers be a beacon of light for the nation to see that Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Light.

What can you do? Mobilize your church to adopt and engage the Dhobi

8. Ganak(a) (PEID#41714) – India, population 113,248

The Ganak are Hindus who worship idols and believe strongly in astrology. When they are born, their horoscopes are read and tell them what their jobs will be and how long they will live. They are quick to accept the existence of Jesus Christ but slow to understand that He is the only God!

How can you pray? Ask God to give wisdom to FBC Alvarado, who has adopted the Ganak as they partner with workers in India to engage this UPG. Pray for short-term volunteers who are giving specific focus to accessing the Ganak community. Lift up the recently initiated Assamese Hindu One Story Project that will be instrumental in reaching out to the Ganak.

What can you do? Connect to the "Kits for Kids" project by Baptist Global Response (BGR) to provide kits that can be distributed among Ganak community schools, giving new access to these communities