

The Deaf of Bangladesh The Bangla Sign Language Community



In Bangladesh, the people who use sign language as their primary means of communication are an unreached people group using the Bangla dialect of the Bengali Sign Language.

During India's partition in 1947, Hindus moved west to what is now the Indian state of West Bengal and Muslims living in the west moved east to the region that became Bangladesh. Over time the two groups have developed separate dialects, the West Bengal Sign Language (WBSL) in West Bengal and the Bangla Sign Language (BaSL) in Bangladesh. Previously it has been thought that the Deaf in this region use Indian Sign Language (ISL). However, current research the great majority of the Deaf do not know ISL but use Bengali Sign Language and that it is a different language from ISL.

Greater concentrations of Deaf occur in the larger cities that have more resources for them. Deaf people who know sign language generally interact with other Deaf in many different groups, clubs, schools etc. Most members of the Deaf community, however, are not aware of how many deaf are isolated to their own neighborhood or home and have yet to learn BaSL.

The needs among the 1.5 million Bangladeshi deaf include the 99.9% who don't know the Lord, the 100% without a Bible in their mother-tongue, the 97% who could not understand a Bible even if they had one because they don't know BaSL, the 99.5% without any education, and the 40% unemployed. These factors make the Bangladeshi Deaf an oppressed and to varying levels, depressed people group.

Many Deaf are receptive to the gospel's hope and love message. However the risk of converting is subject to intense pressure from their hearing families to keep the "traditional" religious values.

Primary Religion:

Islam

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

0.1 %

Churches:

<10

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

No Scripture

Population (date):

Potentially 1.5 million



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Number Of Churches
Comment

1 known maybe 5-10 unknown
No data is available on churches for the Deaf in Bangladesh except for one. Most likely there is other Christian work going on in Bangladesh but we are not aware of it.

Is The Word Of God Translated?
Comment

No
Currently, no scripture is available in BaSL. Ninety-nine % of the Deaf are illiterate in their mother-tongue using gesture and mime to communicate and would need to learn BaSL. Most of these Deaf are a hidden group mixed in with society and often don't venture out beyond their neighborhood. Creative ways to locate these Deaf will be needed. In addition, BaSL may have high variability and may need to be standardized. Only 0.5 % of the Deaf have had some education; however, very few of these would be fluent enough in the local oral language to understand scripture in that language.

Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available
Comment

Door International dedicated 32 Bible Story sets in Kerala in the Kerala dialect of ISL in 2010. Approximately 0.001% of the total Deaf population and 5% of the educated Deaf population of Bangladesh are bilingual enough in the Delhi dialect of ISL to understand the Kerala dialect.

What Kind Of Missionaries
Are Needed?

Cross-cultural missionaries, both indigenous and foreign, are needed in the following areas; 1) medical and dental, 2) interpreters, 3) mediators, 4) advocates, 5) job creation for the deaf including micro-credit enterprises, 6) literacy development, 7) Deaf education and school administration, 8) literature production including the Bible and educational materials, 9) pastoral training and church planting (house churches).

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Group Description

Geography & Environment

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Ecosystem type | Tropical forest |
| Primary Geological type | Largely marshy jungle coastline on the southern border, rivers occur throughout a majority of the country and hills in the southeast and northern borders. |
| Climate | Tropical monsoon characterized by heavy seasonal rainfall, high temperatures, and high humidity- June -September; 10 °C (winter lows) - 32 to 38 °C (summer highs) |
| Comments | Because of low elevation and several major rivers running through Bangladesh, flooding is very common, particularly in the monsoon season. |

Language & Linguistics

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| Attitude Towards Mother Tongue | Somewhat receptive |
| Monolingual | Approximately 2 % of the Bangladeshi Deaf (as defined below) are mono-lingual in Bangla Sign Language (BaSL); 1% are bilingual in BaSL and ISL and 97% have not been exposed to BaSL. |
| Comments | <p>In order to make estimates concerning this people group we must first give a sociolinguistic definition of the group. Deafness ranges from very mild to total which effects a person's ability to succeed in hearing schools without interpreters. Generally, deaf with severe or higher deafness (≥ 60 dB; Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for the Hearing Handicapped 2010) attend schools for the Deaf because they are not able to succeed in a hearing school. In most cases, schools for the Deaf are the dominate domain of sign language acquisition (Johnson and Johnson 2008). Based on Japan International Cooperation Agency Planning and Evaluation Department (2002), 15 % of the deaf in Bangladesh have severe or higher deafness and would be the most likely to learn sign languages and become a part of the Deaf community. This is the group of people we refer to as the Bangladeshi Deaf.</p> <p>Lewis (2009) estimated 7.6 million deaf (5 % of the population) and Seidman (2011) estimated 11 million deaf (6.8 % of the population) in Bangladesh. Based on the 20% disability estimate by World Bank (The Danish Bilharziasis Laboratory for the World Bank, People's Republic of Bangladesh 2004) and the 26 % hearing impaired (mild (40dB) to total deafness) among the disabled (Japan International Cooperation Agency Planning and Evaluation</p> |

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Department 2002), 5% of the population has some level of hearing impairment. The two deaf population estimates above are near 5% and thus include all deaf from mild to total and people who became deaf at an older age who are not a part of the Deaf community. This conclusion is also supported by a study at Gallaudet that states 37 to 140 per people 1000 (3.7 to 14 %) in the USA have some level of hearing impairment (Mitchell 2005).

Hicare (2007) estimated the Deaf population in Bangladesh at 1.2 million which should be near 1.5 million in 2012. This figure is consistent with the percentage of the population that has severe or higher hearing impairment, stated by Japan International Cooperation Agency Planning and Evaluation Department (2002). Thus the most accurate Bangladeshi Deaf population is 1.5 million for 2012. From here on, all statistics will be based on the 1.5 million Deaf that are most likely to learn the BaSL and become a part of the Deaf community if they are exposed to other Deaf or receive education in a school for the Deaf.

Other Mother Tongues of this Group

Only 2.3 % of the Deaf have both parents Deaf (Johnson and Johnson 2008) in India and is most likely the same in Bangladesh. The probability of both parents having different mother-tongues is rare but can happen.

Corrections to Ethnologue Entry

Not yet entered in the Ethnologue. Recommendations currently being submitted to the International Standards Organization.

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Bilingualism

Deaf children born to one or both Deaf parents (1 in 10 Deaf) are the first to acquire BaSL. Other children acquire BaSL when they start attending a school for the Deaf, generally around 8 years of age. A few Deaf learn BaSL for the first time in Deaf sports clubs, Deaf associations and gatherings. Even though all Deaf live in the midst of spoken languages, very few are bilingual in sign language and a spoken are generally fewer in numbers than males in all domains of language acquisition, except those having Deaf parents or siblings, so fewer are bilingual. The above comments are applicable to the urban cities with schools for the Deaf, but not applicable for other cities and rural areas where 76% of the deaf live. In communities with a large enough Deaf population and an opportunity for the Deaf to meet, a signed language may have emerged that is different from BaSL. This has been documented in communities in India but has yet to be documented in Bangladesh. Education of the Deaf is mostly "oral" in that lip-reading and verbalizing without signed language is the norm. Bengali is generally the medium of education. Some teachers may have learned some BaSL

Literacy

Adult Literacy

Due to the ineffectiveness of the "oral approach" to education, literate Deaf should be considered equivalent to 8 years of education. 99.5% of the Deaf lack education and 81% of those don't complete grade 8. Therefore, 99.9% are illiterate in any spoken language.

Percent Literate for Men

0.2%

Percent Literate for Women

Less than 0.2%

Percent of Girls Primary Education

Defined as 6-8 years: less than 0.2%

Percent of Boys Primary Education

Defined as 6-8 years: less than 0.2% Ackerman, et. al. (2005) states, "Approximately 40 percent of regular students enrolled at the primary level drop out before completing grade 2, and 40 percent of those who do continue, repeat the grade. It's been shown that only two percent of second graders demonstrate competencies expected at that grade level."

Literacy Attitude

Uneducated Deaf are indifferent and educated Deaf are very receptive and often desire to learn to read. Literacy of a spoken language is difficult for the Deaf because they have to memorize what every word looks like. They cannot sound the word out as hearing people do when learning to read; therefore, their brains only have one way to associate the word to meaning, while hearing people have two ways, hearing the word sounded out and seeing the word in print.

Active Program

Most likely Bengali and maybe Hindi

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Publications in Mother Tongue

Centre for Disability in Development-CDD 2002 Manual on Sign Supported Bangla (3 sets), Dhaka Centre for Disability in Development.

Bangladesh Sign Language Committee eds.1994 Bengali sign language dictionary. Sutrapur, Dhaka: National Centre for Special Education, Ministry of Social Welfare.

Economics

Subsistence Type

Agriculturalists

Avg. Annual Income

\$848 (Byron 2012)

Occupation

Mostly menial jobs for the rural and lower caste. Occupations of the employed include manual labor, skilled labor / trade, technician, and professional.

Products/Crafts

Various handicrafts

Trade Partners

Not applicable

Modernization/Utilities

Telephones - Few telephone communication devices (TTY's) for Deaf in Bangladesh.

Cell Phones

Many Deaf text.

Television Broadcast Stations

There is no closed captioning available.

Comments

Without adequate education most Deaf lack good communication skills to be employed; thus, many Deaf are without work. Microcredit enterprises should be initiated to employ Deaf. A growing number of Deaf communicate through the internet. Although this is limited to those who can write some English, have had some computer orientation and can afford access. Probably <0.2 % of the Deaf can take advantage of this means of communication because of lack of education and poor reading and writing skills. Of those that access the internet, most do not own their own computers, but go to cyber cafes that are common in larger cities or to computer training centers for the Deaf. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics estimates that in 2000 the number of persons in poverty amounted to 64.3 percent of the total population (Ackerman, et. al. 2005). In 2010, the population under the poverty line was estimated at 40% (Indexmundi.com 2011).

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Community Development

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| Health Care | Health care is poor in rural areas and fair/good in urban areas, if one can pay for it. |
| Comments | A study of 100 students of a Dhaka school for the Deaf yielded the following causes of deafness (Chowdhury, et. al. 2005). |
| Cause of deafness | Infection 35% (including rubella, influenza, varicella, and meningitis) Low birth weight and preterm delivery 16% Hypoxia 10% Neonatal jaundice 8% Ototoxic drugs 6% Trauma 5% Metabolic disorder 3% Miscellaneous 17% |
| | In general, people only seek medical help for serious symptoms and do not go for any preventative care. This lack of health awareness and practice leads to serious health problems. For Deaf, this lack of proactive treatment leads to more deafness due to the increase in ear infections and late treatment, low iodine content in water, use of non-iodized salt (70% of house holds; (Ackerman, et. al. 2005). Further health problems for the deaf are compounded by poor communication between hearing and deaf persons. Most deaf people receive very little education on general health care. In 1999 the doctor to population ratio was 1:5000 |
| Diet | Poor in the slums; fair to very good among the middle and upper class |
| Comments | A staple across the country is rice and dhal (lentils). Fish are a major source of protein. |
| Water | Poor |
| Comments | Chronic arsenic poisoning often occurs from natural arsenic contamination in the drinking water supply (Smith, et. al 2000) |
| Shelter | Many of the houses are on stilts to accommodate for frequent flooding. |

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| Electricity | According to Wikipedia, "Only 40% of the population has access to electricity with a per capita availability of 136 kWh per annum. Problems in Bangladesh's electric power sector include corruption in administration, high system losses, delays in completion of new plants, low plant efficiencies, erratic power supply, electricity theft, blackouts, and shortages of funds for power plant maintenance. Overall, the country's generation plants have been unable to meet system demand over the past decade." (Wikipedia 2012) |
| Energy/Fuel Comment | Fair According to Wikipedia, "Bangladesh's energy infrastructure is quite small, insufficient and poorly managed. The per capita energy consumption in Bangladesh is one of the lowest (136 kWh) in the world. Noncommercial energy sources, such as wood fuel, animal waste, and crop residues, are estimated to account for over half of the country's energy consumption. Bangladesh has small reserves of oil and coal, but very large natural gas resources. Commercial energy consumption is mostly natural gas (around 66%), followed by oil, hydropower and coal." (Wikipedia 2012) |
| Clothing | The sari is women's universal dress, both in the cities and countryside. Strict Muslim women wear <i>burkhas</i> when out of the house. Some girls and some women wear a <i>salwar kameez</i> . A cotton <i>lungi</i> and a jersey called <i>kurta</i> is the common attire for men. |
| Transportation | Because of Bangladesh's many rivers, ferries are a major form of transportation. The railway acts as an important method of mass transport in Bangladesh. Other public transport includes bus, van, train, auto rickshaw, bike rickshaw, subway, taxi, airplane. |
| Infant Mortality Rate | 72/1000 per year in Bangladesh in 2004 (Ackerman, et. al. 2005) |
| Life Expectancy | 62.6 (Ackerman, et. al. 2005) |
| Leading Cause of Death | Cerebrovascular disease is the leading cause of death in adults. Drowning is the leading cause of death among children. Approximately one third of the country floods each year during the annual summer monsoon season. |

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Society & Culture

Family Structures

Family, Household, and Kinship

AsiaRecipe.com (2000) best describes family structure as follows, "Family and kinship were the core of social life in Bangladesh. A family group residing in a *bari* would function as the basic unit of economic endeavor, landholding, and social identity. In the eyes of rural people, the *chula* defined the effective household--an extended family exploiting jointly held property and being fed from a jointly operated kitchen. A *bari* might consist of one or more such functional households, depending on the circumstances of family relationship. Married sons generally lived in their parents' household during the father's lifetime. Although sons usually built separate houses for their nuclear families, they remained under their fathers' authority, and wives under their mothers-in-law's authority. The death of the father usually precipitated the separation of adult brothers into their own households. Such a split generally caused little change in the physical layout of the *bari*, however. Families at different stages of the cycle would display different configurations of household membership.

Patrilineal ties dominated the ideology of family life, but in practice matrilineal ties were almost as important. Married women provided especially important links between their husbands' brothers' families. Brothers and sisters often visited their brothers' households, which were in fact the households of their deceased fathers. By Islamic law, women inherited a share of their fathers' property and thus retained a claim on the often scanty fields worked by their brothers. By not exercising this claim, however, they did their brothers the important service of keeping the family lands in the patrilineal line and thus ensured themselves a warm welcome and permanent place in their brothers' homes.

Marriage is a civil contract rather than a religious sacrament in Islam, and the parties to the contract represent the interests of families rather than the direct personal interests of the prospective spouses. In Bangladesh, parents ordinarily select spouses for their children, although men frequently exercise some influence over the choice of their spouses. In middle-class urban families men negotiate their own marriages. Only in the most sophisticated elite class does a woman participate in her own marriage arrangements. Marriage generally is made between families of similar social standing, although a woman might properly marry a man of somewhat higher status. Financial standing came to outweigh family background in the late twentieth century in any case. Often a person with a good job in a Middle Eastern country was preferred over a person of highly regarded lineage.

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Marriages are often preceded by extensive negotiations between the families of the prospective bride and groom. One of the functions of the marriage negotiations is to reduce any discrepancy in status through financial arrangements. The groom's family ordinarily pledges the traditional cash payment, or bride-price, part or all of which can be deferred to fall due in case of divorce initiated by the husband or in case the contract is otherwise broken. As in many Muslim countries, the cash payment system provides women some protection against the summary divorce permitted by Islam. Some families also adopt the Hindu custom of providing a dowry for the bride. Although the majority of married men (10 million) had only one wife, there were about 580,000 households, between 6 and 10 percent of all marriages, in which a man had two or more wives.

Although the age at marriage appeared to be rising in the 1980s, early marriage remained the rule even among the educated, and especially among women. The mean age at marriage in 1981 for males was 23.9, and for females 16.7. Women students frequently married in their late teens and continued their studies in the households of their fathers-in-law. Divorce, especially of young couples without children, was becoming increasingly common in Bangladesh, with approximately one in six marriages ending in this fashion in the 1980s.

Typical spouses knew each other only slightly, if at all, before marriage. Although marriages between cousins and other more distant kin occurred frequently, segregation of the sexes generally kept young men and women of different households from knowing each other well. Marriage functioned to ensure the continuity of families rather than to provide companionship to individuals, and the new bride's relationship with her mother-in-law was probably more important to her well-being than her frequently impersonal relationship with her husband.

A woman began to gain respect and security in her husband's or father-in-law's household only after giving birth to a son. Mothers therefore cherished and indulged their sons, while daughters were frequently more strictly disciplined and were assigned heavy household chores from an early age. In many families the closest, most intimate, and most enduring emotional relationship was that between mother and son. The father was a more distant figure, worthy of formal respect, and the son's wife might remain a virtual stranger for a long time after marriage.

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The practice of purdah (the traditional seclusion of women) varied widely according to social milieu, but even in relatively sophisticated urban circles the core of the institution, the segregation of the sexes, persisted. In traditional circles, full purdah required the complete seclusion of women from the onset of puberty. Within the home, women inhabited private quarters that only male relatives or servants could enter, and a woman properly avoided or treated with formal respect even her father-in-law or her husband's older brother. Outside the home, a woman in purdah wore a veil or an enveloping, concealing outer garment.

The trappings of full purdah required both a devotion to traditional practice and the means to dispense with the labor of women in the fields. For most rural families the importance of women's labor made full seclusion impossible, although the idea remained. In some areas, for example, women went unveiled within the confines of the para or village but donned the veil or the outer garment for trips farther from the community. In any case, contact with men outside the immediate family was avoided.

The segregation of the sexes extended into social groups that had rejected full purdah as a result of modern education. Although urban women could enjoy more physical freedom than was traditional and the opportunity to pursue a professional career, they moved in a different social world from their husbands and often worked at their professions in a specifically feminine milieu."

Neighbor Relations

Amiable

Authority/Rule

In urban areas authority/rule is carried out by police and law officials. In rural areas police are not present. If a crime is severe, it may take days for police to arrive. Disputes between families are resolved by heads of kinship groups or local political leaders. Police may be paid to ensure they do not investigate. Non-violent disputes over property or rights are often decided through village councils headed by the most respected heads of the strongest kinship groups. When mediation fails, police may be asked to proceed with formal legal proceedings (Advameg, Inc 2012)

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Social Habits/Groupings

AsiaRecipe.com (2000) best describes family structure as follows, "The basic social unit in a village is the family (paribar or gushti), generally consisting of a complete or incomplete patrilineally extended household (chula) and residing in a homestead (bari). The individual nuclear family often is submerged in the larger unit and might be known as the house (ghar). Above the bari level, patrilineal kin ties are linked into sequentially larger groups based on real, fictional, or assumed relationships.

A significant unit larger than that of close kin is the voluntary religious and mutual benefit association known as the "the society" (samaj or millat). Among the functions of a samaj might be the maintenance of a mosque and support of a mullah. An informal council of samaj elders (matabdars or sardars) settles village disputes. Factional competition between the matabdars is a major dynamic of social and political interaction.

Groups of homes in a village are called paras, and each para has its own name. Several paras constitute a mauza, the basic revenue and census survey unit. The traditional character of rural villages was changing in the latter half of the twentieth century with the addition of brick structures of one or more stories scattered among the more common thatched bamboo huts.

Although farming has traditionally ranked among the most desirable occupations, villagers in the 1980s began to encourage their children to leave the increasingly overcrowded countryside to seek more secure employment in the towns. Traditional sources of prestige, such as landholding, distinguished lineage, and religious piety were beginning to be replaced by modern education, higher income, and steadier work. These changes, however, did not prevent rural poverty from increasing greatly. According to the FY 1986 Household Expenditure Survey conducted by the Ministry of Planning's Bureau of Statistics, 47 percent of the rural population was below the poverty line, with about 62 percent of the poor remaining in extreme poverty. The number of landless rural laborers also increased substantially, from 25 percent in 1970 to 40 percent in 1987.

Urban Society

In 1988 about 18 percent of the population lived in urban areas, most of which were villages or trade centers in rural areas. Urban centers grew in number and population during the 1980s as a result of an administrative decentralization program that featured the creation of sub-districts (upazilas--see Glossary;

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Local Administration, ch. 4). In appearance these small urban areas were generally shabby. Most of the urban population merely congregated in ramshackle structures with poor sanitation and an almost total lack of modern amenities. Towns were populated mostly by government functionaries, merchants, and other business personnel. Most dwellings contained nuclear families and some extended family lodgers. A few households or a neighborhood would constitute a para, which might develop some cohesiveness but would have no formal leadership structure. With the exception of a small number of transients, most town populations consisted of permanent inhabitants who maintained connections with their ancestral villages through property or family ties. Most towns had social and sporting clubs and libraries. Unlike in the rural areas, kinship ties among the town population were limited and fragile. Most towns had social and sporting clubs and libraries. Unlike in the rural areas, kinship ties among the town population were limited and fragile.”

With the Deaf, greater concentrations occur in the larger cities and metropolitan areas that have more resources for the Deaf, including jobs, education, vocational training, social benefits and Deaf gathering points (Johnson and Johnson 2008).

Youth

Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)

Deaf children who are not in schools tend to be helpers in the home and fields, or they are beggars in the streets for their families.

Youth Problems (Teens)

With a low literacy rate, advancement in school is extremely difficult. Only a few qualified interpreters are available in a few schools. When the education is primarily “oral”, comprehension is much lower. A pool of trained interpreters does not exist. Even if interpreters were available, the cost of hiring one would likely be prohibitive for either parents or the schools.

Youth Greatest Needs (teens)

They need a better educational system with teachers and administrators trained in sign language. They need sign language to be used in class rooms along with oral methods. A change of attitude in the society would help, especially parents' attitudes toward their deaf children. Society should see sign language as okay and healthy for the Bangladeshi Deaf. More schools could be developed for the Bangladeshi Deaf in cities that lack them. Bangladeshi Deaf teachers are needed. The Deaf may be trained as teachers of the Deaf, and few deaf teachers may be designated in each school for the Deaf. This would provide good adult Deaf role models

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as well as motivated and committed teachers. Adult deaf role models are needed.

Deaf who don't have sign language generally don't associate with other Deaf and generally don't go outside of their neighborhood unless they are with a hearing friend, co-worker, or relative. Women are more sheltered than men, going out of the home less often. They generally take care of household chores that can take hours everyday. Many parents are ashamed to have a Deaf child and often restrict their outside activities. Other parents and family members shelter their Deaf children from potential harm from being outside their home or neighborhood. This group is relatively unknown and hard to find and will require creative ways to locate them and reach them with the gospel.

Deaf that know sign generally interact with other Deaf and can be found in Deaf gathering points including small groups, religious gatherings, Deaf associations and sports clubs, schools for the Deaf, and a few businesses that employ several Deaf. Most of these Deaf are not aware of how many Deaf are isolated to their own neighborhood or home and have yet to learn BaSL. Often Deaf are paid a small amount to join a rally or demonstration procession in the streets. Deaf also frequently attend community events, particularly when food is served.

Tensions that built between Muslims and Hindus during the partition of India continue to exist today. It is likely that some of the most depressed groups of Deaf form gangs.

Cultural Change Pace

Slow

Identification with Nat'l Culture
Comment

Integrated

The Deaf are integrated as much as possible with the hearing population. Thus they identify with the national culture as much as possible.

Yet, the Deaf frequently feel disadvantaged compared to the hearing population at large. They report problems communicating with any type of official or in much official business.

Self Image

Depressed. Abuse is common among Deaf, particularly with women. Deaf often feel rejected and isolated, and often become depressed.

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Judicial/Punishment

Bangladesh modeled their law after the British legal system following partition in 1947. Since then socio-cultural values and religious guidelines have pushed the legal system in a new direction. The judiciary now consists of a Supreme Court, Subordinate Courts and tribunals (Wikipedia 2012b).

Celebrations

Primary Islamic holidays in Bangladesh include: Eid-ul-Azha (10th day of the Muslim month Zilhaj): goat or cow is sacrificed in honor of Allah. Shob-i-Barat (14th or 15th day of Shaban): when Allah records an individual's future for the rest of the year. Ramadan (the month Ramzan): month-long period of fasting between dawn and dusk. Eid-ul-Fitr (first day of the month Shawal, following the end of Ramzan): giving alms to the poor. Shob-i-Meraz (27th day of Rajab): commemoration of Mohammed's ascended to heaven.

Hindu celebrations include: Saraswati Puja (February): dedicated to the deity Saraswati (the Swan god) who is the patron of learning. Durga Puja (9 days in October) dedicated to the warrior goddess Durga, who has ten arms, carries a sword, and rides a lion. On the last day of the festival, images of Durga and her associates are placed in a procession and set into a river. Kali Puja is also called the Festival of Lights (November): honors Kali, a female deity who has the power to give and take away life. Candles are lit in and around homes. Many other Hindu and Islamic celebrations and rituals take place.

Non-religious holidays include: Ekushee, also called Shaheed Dibash (21 February): National Day of Martyrs commemorating those who died defending the Bangla language in 1952. Shadheenata Dibash, or Independence Day (26 March), celebrating Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan. Poila Boishakh, the Bengali New Year (first day of the month of Boishakh, generally in April): Poetry readings and musical events. May Day (1 May) celebrates labor and workers. Bijoy Dibosh, or Victory Day (16 December): commemorates the day in 1971 when Pakistani forces surrendered to a joint Bangladeshi–Indian force (**Advameg, Inc 2012**).

Recreations

Deaf organization meetings are a social time and lead to other recreational times. There are also sports clubs for the Deaf. Deaf often socialize around traditional games such as carom. Some travel in groups to visit natural attractions in Bangladesh. Other forms of recreation include art painting, drama (jatra, folk drama), traditional and dance.

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| Media | According to MediaBangladesh.net (2012), "The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees freedom of print, electronic and internet media, though some media outlets have been harassed. The Bangladesh media is ranked at 136th out of 178 countries of the world on the Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index." Bangladesh has ~24 television stations and 15 AM and 13 FM radio stations. Approximately, 600,000 use the internet daily. |
| Local Lang Broadcasting Comment | None in BaSL, many in Bengali BTV broadcasts news in sign language at 5:00 and 6:00 pm everyday and has taken initiative to air news in sign language at eight (Rahman 2010) |
| Attitude to Outsiders Comment | Somewhat resistant The Deaf are very receptive to other Deaf. |
| Attitude to Changes Comments | Indifferent Group consensus to change eases individual change Since the Deaf are born to any ethnic group and economic status, they participate in the society of their families as much as possible. Yet, as a Deaf community, they do have some distinguishing features. Social factors vary because deafness crosses all religions, ethnic groups, economic status, etc. |
| <u>Education</u> | |
| Primary Schools | 32 |
| Primary School Enrollment | 2400 (World Concern n.d.) |
| Secondary Schools | 1 (class 9-10) |
| Secondary School Enrollment | 100 (Yahia 2009) |
| % Eligible Enrolled | 0.6% |
| Teacher to Student Ratio | Classrooms often contain 70 children to one teacher (Ackerma, et. al. 2005) |
| Language of Instruction Early Years | Bengali (maybe some schools use Hindi and/or English) |
| Language of Instruction Middle Years | Bengali (maybe some schools use Hindi and/or English) |
| Language of Textbooks Early Years | Bengali (maybe some schools use Hindi and/or English) |
| Language of Textbooks Middle Years | Bengali (maybe some schools use Hindi and/or English) |
| Unmixed Schools | Some schools lump all disabled children together so you may have Deaf and hearing in the same classroom. Number of these mixed schools in Bangladesh is not known. |
| Comment | Figures shown are approximates. Most schools for the Deaf are located in cities; thus, the majority of the Bangladesh Deaf in rural areas (72%; Trading Economics 2012) have no access to education. Males are more likely to receive an education than females. |

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Labor/Tasks

Deaf children who are not in schools tend to be helpers in the home and fields or they are beggars in the streets for their families.

Problems

Because of the lack of education for the vast majority of the Deaf and social stigma, abuse, and discrimination, many Deaf are very oppressed, resulting in depression, gangs, poor mental health and development, etc.

Greatest Needs

The greatest need is the building of schools for the Deaf, particularly in the rural area where 72% of the people live, and the use of total communication with BaSL as the mode of education. Other needs include improving health care and health education, improving water quality and sanitation, increasing job opportunities for the Deaf, changing social attitudes toward the Deaf, training BaSL interpreters, giving advocacy for equal rights to Deaf, including getting bank accounts, driver's license, court and legal representation, prevention of abuse and discrimination.

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Status of Christianity

Church Growth

Comment (Reached Status) Unknown

Religion & Response

Attitude to Christianity
Comment

Very resistant
Many Deaf tend to be very receptive to the gospel's hope and love message. However, Deaf are members of their hearing families and the risk of converting is subject to intense family pressure to keep the "traditional" religious values. Eighty-nine and half percent of the population is Muslim.

Attitude to Religious Change

Very resistant

Resistance/Receptivity

Unknown

House Gatherings and
Corporate Meetings

Unless obviously God-orchestrated and initiated by the Deaf themselves, large corporate meetings are not recommended initially. Instead, already existing smaller Deaf social groups meeting in homes or wherever they normally gather as the Lord raises up Deaf persons of peace who want to be taught of Jesus and pass on what they have learned to their friends is a preferred initial strategy. The Deaf themselves will decide where and when to meet.

Each small Deaf group would designate their own leader who will receive teaching to bring back to them. Teaching will usually be a Bible story or the gospel presented in a visual way. Normal in-home hospitality with "tea" would be extended to the guests by the hosts. Prayer and worship would be incorporated more and more as the group grows in discipleship

How Will the Church Be Led?

A behind-the-scenes mature, committed hearing disciple or team and face-to-face Deaf maturing disciples would provide ongoing input, training and leadership as asked to by the growing believers and house churches. Since the Deaf have no Bible and no way to learn more independently, a behind-the-scenes discipling/leadership team would teach designated Deaf who in turn will go and teach their Deaf friends. The discipling leadership team will teach the Deaf teachers individually or in groups as the Deaf themselves initiate. The discipling source leaders should be ready to counsel, troubleshoot, advocate for, interpret for, mediate disputes if called upon, etc. as the face-to-face Deaf leaders pursue their help. A good working knowledge of BaSL is a given for both hearing and deaf leaders.

The Bangladeshi Deaf of Bangladesh

To preface, since signed languages are not written and the Bangladeshi Deaf are mostly illiterate, they think and function as oral communicators. All of the characteristics of an oral culture apply to the Bangladeshi Deaf such as concreteness, thinking and communicating in stories, preferring drama and songs, etc. Yet, the Deaf mainly operate in a visual mode. So much of the following ideas reflect these oral characteristics of the Deaf packaged in a visual way.

Worship

Indigenous signed praise or story songs with step or dance incorporated beat. Choreographed group praise or story songs.

Possible equipment

Drums and/or fold out wooden mat floor to feel the beat

Experimental

Creative indigenous use of light (cell phone flashlights) women's scarves or shawls, and hands

Teaching Set-up

Horseshoe or circle sitting configuration so all can see and participate, blackboard or flipchart for drawing, etc. Bible story signed followed by either observed or interactive discussion, spontaneous volunteer skit/mime of story and/or life application Videotaped "authorized" versions of the Bible story teachings which have been animated from one of the Deaf leaders, put on DVD and simultaneously released circulating copies. These could also be posted on the internet for anyone with computer access to view.

Since they have no Bible to check, these would help to guard against inaccurate, false or incomplete teaching among the Deaf who have heard the stories passed on by the Deaf grapevine chain.

These DVDs would be produced using an animated overlay figure of the signer to achieve anonymity in order to prevent them being targeted both by other antagonistic Deaf, hearing families/communities or the government.

Items for Prayers

Pray for the 1.5 million Bangladeshi Deaf, for the 97% of the Deaf who have no language and the 98.8% that have no education, for the 20 - 30% unemployed among the educated Deaf and an unknown much higher number of unemployed among the uneducated and home-bound Deaf.

Pray for the Bangladesh Government to establish more schools for the Deaf.

Pray for workers among the Deaf to learn sign language.

Pray for resources for the Deaf and a Bible in their own language

Pray for awareness of the Deaf to recognize and include Deaf as unreached people groups and to advocate for the Deaf