



The People's Republic of Bangladesh is located on the south coast of Asia. Its name means Bengal Country in the Bengali language. It covers an area that is almost exactly the same as the state of Montana. Its population is 150 times as large, making Bangladesh one of the most densely populated countries in the world. The capital city is Dhaka.

People who live in Bangladesh are called Bangladeshi. In 1972, the country's Constitution granted all citizens freedom of religion, although its state religion is Islam.

Most Bangladeshi are Sunni Muslim (about 91%); about 8% are Hindu. The 0.3% who are Christian belong mostly to the Roman Catholic Church. At present, there are about 400,000 Catholics spread across the country in 105 parishes.

Education is free and the government even gives grants to some private schools, helping the adult literacy rate recently rise to almost 75%. There is a very high drop out rate for girls, however. This has led the government to pay families stipends to send their girls to schools at least through the 10th grade.

The Catholic Church, though small in numbers, is looked to as a leader in many social services areas, none more so than the field of education.



Info

Population: 169.8 million

Religion: 91% Muslim
8% Hindu
.6% Buddhist
.3% Christian
.1% Animist

Dioceses: 8,
including 2 archdioceses



The Parish of St. Anthony of Mohipara, in the Diocese of Rajshahi, was created as a full-fledged parish in 2007. There are also some 'catechumen villages' under this Parish. This means that there are pockets of Catholics who live in the general area but they are too far away to get to the main church for regular Mass and faith formation. Religious Sisters and catechists go to them to teach the basics of Catholicism. Priests visit for the Sacramental needs of the people when they are able. Together, they work hard to deepen the faith and to inculcate the Gospel values in the people.



Learning the Sign of the Cross with help from Missionary Childhood

The faith formation of children is organized at the village and the Parish level. The regular activities include catechism classes, religious hymn practice, prayer session and retreats for children. Because the villages are scattered and distant, the Missionary Childhood animators must visit village to village and organize programs for small groups of children. Then, for a better formation and education, the children are gathered at the parish center at least for a one week mission education session.

All faith formation programs in Catholic dioceses in Bangladesh are done with the help of the Missionary Childhood Association (MCA). Thanks to the subsidy received from MCA members worldwide, Bangladeshi children are provided with text-books, tuition fees, food, and school uniforms.

Because the people of the St. Anthony of Mohipara Parish and the surrounding villages are very poor, the children also receive medicine when they are sick, nutritious food, and durable clothing. 296 children benefited from this MCA project.

All of this was accomplished with sacrifices from MCA members totaling \$4,500.

The children are very thankful to the benefactors.

***Thanks to our Vatican MCA office for this story and photos!**