

Prayer stations

Walk with the world — Bangladesh



This resource contains creative prayer ideas to help you lift issues and situations in Bangladesh to God. You can use some or all of it:

- *In personal or small group prayer by praying through the points provided in 'Bangladesh: the headlines'.*
- *To set up prayer stations in intercessions, a prayer meeting, or as an installation for a day of prayer. (You can arrange the stations in any order, but 'Painting by numbers' works best at the beginning, and 'Big prayers' at the end).*
- *As part of the wider family of 'Walk with the world' to create a prayer room for a day of global prayer.*

Bangladesh: the headlines — the main areas of focus for our current prayers are:

- **Widespread poverty and malnutrition** to end.
- **Stable governance** – Bangladesh is still quite a young country and political unrest between the two main factions can and does flare up regularly.
- **Christians** are a small minority group. They are allowed to practice their faith, but not to proselytise. Pray for their protection, and for the spread of the gospel in Bangladesh. Also pray for the true gospel to be seen, as many Bengali Muslims perceive Western and Christian to be the same.
- **The role of women** is currently very limited, and they often suffer oppression or abuse – particularly in the home. Pray for this to change, and for men to increase in their understanding and respect for women.
- **The effects of climate change** are already having a devastating effect on Bangladesh – unpredictable weather is increasing the prevalence of severe floods and cyclones, rising sea levels are increasing salination of fresh water in some parts, and land loss is an increasing problem. Pray for a turn-around in the international situation, progress with adaptation projects, and better warning systems to be put in place.
- **Handicrafts and other industries to thrive** where they have declined following colonialism, famine and the war for independence from Pakistan.
- **Women who have been or are at risk of being** trafficked or forced into sex work, at home or abroad.
- **Garment factory workers**

Setting the scene

Help people connect with Bangladesh visually:

Use the country outline of Bangladesh to project on to a screen, or to help you draw a chalk outline on the floor or on a large sheet – if using the latter, you could lay the stations around the outside of the map so people literally walk around Bangladesh.

Also consider collecting some images and some Bengali sari fabric to create a colourful display which evokes a sense of the country.

Help set the tone for people's prayers:

Ask your worship team to cover the prayer with intercessory worship or declarational praise, or create a CD or playlist of songs which have a focus on praying for the nations, revival, and justice issues. (If you're stuck for ideas, check out our *Outward focused song index* at www.thesanctuarycentre.org/whereworldandworshipmeet-songs)

You might also like to include some Bengali music in this mix.

Intercessory prayer stations

1. Painting by numbers

Equipment needed: Print outs of the Bangladesh flag (provided below) and of the sign you create using the 'For display' text below.



Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Enlarge and print out a sign using the text in the 'For display' section.

On the day: Display the sign you have made using the text below.

For display:

Painting by numbers

- Close your eyes and paint a picture of Bangladesh based on your knowledge and impressions from the past – what do you see?
- Now read the following facts and figures about Bangladesh – how do they colour in your impressions?
 - Bangladesh is situated on the Ganges delta and has many rivers and tributaries – most of the country is just 12m above sea level, and at least 20% of it is flooded annually – during the rainy season, 50% of it is under water.

- The climate is tropical with three main seasons - a mild winter October-March, a hot humid summer March-June, and a warm monsoon season from June-October.
- Bangladesh is the eighth most populous country in the world, and among the most densely populated. The population is young – 60% are under 25, and only 3% over 65.
- Poverty is widespread (50% live below the international poverty line*), although it has fallen by 20% since the early 1990s.**
- Agriculture (including crops, livestock, fisheries and forestry) is the dominant livelihood – especially as 80% of the population live in rural areas.***
- Ask God that he would use this time to open your eyes to the reality of Bangladesh today, and to the needs of its people. Pray that he would stir up compassion in you, move you to intercede with conviction and passion, and use you – as he leads – to be part of the answer to your prayers for Bangladesh.

(All information 2010 Wikipedia except * Bradt guide to Bangladesh **2010 Unicef and *** 2010 The World Bank)

2. Looking back in sorrow – riches to rags

Equipment needed: A large piece of fabric laid out on the floor and print outs of the signs you create using the ‘For display’ text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Create a handout sheet that people can hold to read (you might need several copies) using part 1 of the text in the ‘For display’ section and print out a sign using the part 2 section.

On the day: Lay out all the equipment needed, including the templates you have made, on the floor, and display the sign you have made using the text below.

For display:

Looking back in sorrow – riches to rags – uncomfortable facts

- Bangladesh as a nation is a recent creation – its borders were set in 1947 (as East Pakistan) as independent from India. Then in 1971 it separated from Pakistan, and became Bangladesh, following religious persecution, violence and a war for independence. It has been democratic since 1991.
- The area that is now Bangladesh was once Bengal (a region of India) and used to be incredibly wealthy. In the sixteenth century its wealth supported the Mughal Empire and by the mid eighteenth century, its fine cotton and silk textiles were in demand all over the world and its capital Dhaka was a thriving centre for weaving.
- Britain gradually gained control of Bengal during the seventeenth and eighteenth century through the East India Trading company – initially through trading deals, and then through battles which led to the English crown ruling the region, and using its wealth to finance its imperialistic designs on India as a whole.
- Throughout this time, Britain drained Bengal of its wealth through unfair duties (thereby destroying the nation’s cotton industry) and by financing its activities in India with Bengal’s wealth.
- A number of horrendous famines throughout this period increased poverty still further, culminating in the 1943 when 3-5 million people died from starvation – a tragedy that modern Bangladesh is still recovering from.

- Today Bangladesh is left with little wealth, 50%* of its people living below the international poverty line, and few natural resources. It is also already suffering the effects of a changing climate and rising sea levels, which it has done little to cause.
- Bangladesh's history makes hard reading. But its people are still being exploited today by richer nations through unfair trade laws, the impact of climate change and unethical working practices in the garment industry.

(Information taken from development workers in the country, the Bradt travel guide and *2010 Unicef)

Looking back in sorrow – riches to rags – responding with repentance

- Take a moment to absorb the facts, and the part that previous generations in Britain have played in Bangladesh's difficult history.
- Step on to the fabric as a sign that you want to stand with the Bengali people.
- Ask God to heal their land, and to convict those in our nation who are still exploiting it.
- If you would like to, kneel on the fabric to symbolise repenting on behalf of the UK for the part it has played in Bangladesh's past, and its actions in the present.
- Lastly, sit cross legged on the fabric – pray that God would help the Bengali people to rebuild their nation to prosperity, so that its people may escape poverty. Pray for mercy, but also for inspiration, fresh and creative ideas, and a hopeful future.

3. Face to face with poverty

Equipment needed: Quite a number of small squares of paper or post it notes, blue tack, pens and print outs of Bangladesh's country outline (you can use the one provided at the top of this sheet) and of the sign you create using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Enlarge and print out the country outline, and a sign using the text in the 'For display' section.

On the day: Put out the pens and paper and put up the sign you have made. Stick up the country outline above the pens and paper.

For display:

Face to face with poverty

- The reality of poverty in Bangladesh is stark.
 - 50% of people live below the international poverty line of \$1.25 per day (2002-2007)
 - 46% of children under 5 are moderately or severely underweight (2003-2008)
 - 20% of the population do not have access to safe drinking-water
 - 64% of the population do not have access to proper sanitation facilities
 - Only 54% of adults are literate (2003-2008)*
- What do you think of when you read these kind of statistics? How do they make you feel? What do you want to say to God?
- Write down any emotions, questions or thoughts – one per piece – on the paper provided, and stick them to the country outline of Bangladesh.

- Philippians 4:6-7 says we should turn our anxious thoughts and worries into prayers. Offer your uncertainties, questions, and emotions to God.

(*2010 Unicef)

4. Hall of mirrors

Equipment needed: A mirror (that you are happy to temporarily write on), a Bible, and prints of an enlarged version of the picture below, and of the sign you create using the 'For display' text below.



©Laura Bardwell

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Enlarge and print out a sign using the text in the 'For display' section. Then using eye-liner or marker pen, write the word 'nmoshka' on the mirror – ideally it should be placed so that it would be written across the forehead of any face reflected in it.

On the day: Lay out all the equipment needed, and display the sign you have made using the text below.

For display:

Hall of mirrors

- Dhaka is the fastest growing city in the world, with a population of over 15 million*. When you are on the city's streets, looking in any direction you see thousands of people. It's hard not to be overwhelmed. Just like on our TV screens, it's sometimes difficult to see these people as individuals, created in God's image.
- **Nmoshka** is a phonetic English spelling of a traditional Bengali greeting still used by Christian and Hindu communities living in Bangladesh today. It means 'I greet the holy one I see in you.'
- Look at yourself in the mirror and meditate about what God says about you in scripture, and whose image you are created in, by reading one or more of these scriptures:
Genesis 1:26, Psalm 8, Psalm 139, John 3:16
- Thank God that he has made you unique, that you are his child, and that he sees you as an individual.
- Now hold up the image of the Bengali boy to the mirror, and stand slightly to one side, so that you can see him reflected in the mirror.
- Thank God for this boy and hundreds of thousands more that you will never meet, or even see. Thank him that each one is made unique by him, and reflects his image.
- Ask God for you to look at people living in poverty through his eyes. Pray for the more than 131 million people (81 % of the population) living in extreme poverty in Bangladesh. Thank God that he knows them as individuals, not just as a statistic.

(* 2010 CBS)

5. Made in Bangladesh

Equipment needed: Enough strands of wool (approx 15 cm long) and beads for each person to have one piece of wool, and five beads, and enlarged print outs of some or all of the photos below, and the sign you create using the 'For display' text below.



Dying thread



Spinning



Thread



Morning weaver



Laura meeting a supplier

(All images ©2010 Laura Bardwell)

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Enlarge and print out the photos, and a sign using the text in the 'For display' section. Then get together the threads and beads you will need.

On the day: Lay out all the equipment needed, and display the sign you have made using the text below.

For display:

Made in Bangladesh 1

- The Bengali people have a rich history of handicrafts, but much of the weaving, and other crafts, they were once so famous for, died out due to colonialism, poverty, and modern-day trade systems. (In recent years, weaving has had a revival and is now flourishing, but there is still a long way to go even with this success story.)
- Re-establishing handicrafts is a crucial part of growing Bangladesh's economy and infrastructure – currently most things are imported and natural resources are scarce. Making crafts is an effective way for people to earn secure livelihoods. But it is also a matter of justice and heritage.
- Laura Bardwell (pictured above) is working with Oasis UK in Dhaka to establish an ethical jewellery business, which hopes to employ poor craftswomen living in one of Dhaka's many slums, and women who are at risk of trafficking, or who have been trafficked. This project is one of a number of initiatives across the country which different NGOs are running.
- Take a piece of wool, and begin to make a bracelet...

Made in Bangladesh 2

- Tie a knot at one end of your wool
- Thread your first bead on to it and pray for weavers and textile workers to flourish

- Thread a second and pray for lost trades, such as pink pearl harvesting, to be revived
- Thread a third and pray for Laura, Oasis, and other organisations working to re-establish old crafts, or develop new ones, so that people can earn a living through things that have been made in Bangladesh
- Thread a fourth and pray for inspiration and creativity to grow, and particularly for young Bengali people to have new ideas of things they can make and sell
- Thread a fifth and final bead and pray for yourself to be part of the answer – are there items that you can buy for presents, or similar, that support handicrafts in Bangladesh? (Visit www.traidcraft.co.uk when you get home...)
- Tie the string round your waist, or to a belt hoop (remembering to knot the other end) and take it away to remind you of your prayers.

6. Clothe me in righteousness

Equipment needed: Small cardboard templates of clothing items such as t-shirts and trousers (you could make these using clip art, cookie cutters, or paper dress-up dolls), paper, pens, scissors, scraps of fabric, and a print out of the signs you create using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Enlarge and print out signs using the text in the 'For display' section. Then get together the items you need, and make several clothing item shape templates. (Think about how many people will be using the station at any one time to help you work out how many templates you need to make.)

On the day: Lay out all the equipment needed, including the templates you have made, on the floor, and display the sign you have made using the text below.

For display:

Clothe me in righteousness 1

Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land... boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals... The LORD has sworn by himself, the Pride of Jacob: "I will never forget anything they have done." (Amos 8:4-7)

- Do you think Amos might have something to say about the international garment industry and its effects on the poorest people in Bangladesh (and other nations) today?
- Outsourcing production to developing countries increases profits for clothing companies:
 - 1.3 million people work in the garment industry in Bangladesh* – making and exporting products worth \$10 billion each year in around 4,000 factories for famous names such as George (Asda), Zara, Tesco, H&M and Marks and Spencer**.
 - Many of these workers are labouring for long hours in sweat shop conditions – some work as long as fifteen hours a day, seven days a week for a wage that is not even enough to live on*.
 - Organisations such as Tearfund are campaigning to 'Lift the label' on these kind of practices, and calling for a minimum standard of all UK clothing companies signing up to the Ethical Trading Initiative.
- The garment industry in Bangladesh is vital to the country's economy. If it underwent significant reform, it could play a hugely positive role in Bangladesh's growth and development, and the lives of its people.

(*2010 Tearfund, 2006 ** 2010 Multiple news agencies following December 2010 factory fire.)

Clothe me in righteousness 2

- Use the templates provided to make one or two items of clothing yourself... as you cut round the shapes, pray for:
 - Company leaders, share holders and executives in the garment industry – ask God to stir up new compassion in their hearts, to convict them of exploitative systems and behaviour, and to help them establish just practices which protect and increase the livelihoods of their poorest workers.
 - All those working in garment factories in Bangladesh – mostly women – for strength, protection, stability of income, and the growth of movements to speak up for reform.
 - Shoppers in the UK and other rich nations to vote for a more ethical garment industry with their voices (through campaigning) and their wallets (through boycotting).
- Take a moment too to honestly consider your spending habits before God. Is there anything you want to do differently? If so, take one of the garments you have made away with you to remind you to look into this issue when you get home.

7. Water talk

Equipment needed: A jug of water, glasses, a bowl of salt water, one glass filled with water and labelled 'poison' and print outs of the pictures below, and the sign you create using the 'For display' text below.



© 2010 Liz Baddaley @ the Sanctuary

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Enlarge and print out the photo and a sign using the text in the 'For display' section. And gather together the items you need.

On the day: Lay out all the equipment needed on a table, and display the sign you have made using the text below.

For display:

Water talk 1 – the facts

- Pour yourself a glass of water and have a drink as you read... think about how easy it is for us to access water, and for us to forget about how vital it is.
- If you think of Bangladesh... you think of water... look at the picture and think about all that water...
- Bangladesh is situated on the Ganges delta and has many rivers and tributaries – most of the country is just 12m above sea level, and at least 20% of it is flooded annually – during the rainy season, 50% of it is under water.

- The country is prone to flooding and cyclones, leading to destruction and land loss, and this has increased in recent years due to climate change – experts believe significant amounts of land will be lost if sea levels rise globally, and 20 million people could become climate refugees.
- Rising sea water levels are also causing salination of fresh water in some parts of the country, and more than 77 million people are exposed to poisoned water as there are very high levels of arsenic in the soil elsewhere.

Water talk 2 – praying for life

- Think about the refreshment and life of the water you have just drunk and pray for all those in Bangladesh who don't have access to fresh water.
- Look at the bowl of salty water – so different to what you have just drunk – pray for governments and individuals to take climate change seriously and to make radical cuts to carbon emissions.
- Now imagine that the cup of 'poisoned' water was the only water available to you – would you drink it? Pray for all those whose drinking water is contaminated.
- Pray for breakthroughs in science and development to find alternative fresh water sources for the people of Bangladesh – now and in the future.
- Look at the picture of the fisherman and pray for Bangladesh's fishing industry – particularly those who are small-scale and independent, many of whom are under threat from bigger companies overfishing in their areas.

8. Stable government

Equipment needed: A Jenga set (or similar game) and a print out of the sign you create using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Enlarge and print out a sign using the text in the 'For display' section.

On the day: Split the Jenga game into two. With one half of the pieces construct a very precarious tower.

With the other, construct a small stable tower in the usual way, leaving a few pieces lying by the side of it for people to build. Then display the sign you have made using the text below.

For display:

Stable government

- Bangladesh's government is still young, and the political situation is volatile. There are two leading parties who often abolish key elements of the other's work, or progress, and start from scratch when power changes hands.
- Look at the two towers in front of you. Look at the first one and think about how unstable a nation might be that it is experiencing many challenges, but is built on unstable governance.
- Pray for an end to unstable government, factions, extremism, and corruption where they exist.
- Now take one or two bricks and lay them on top of the stable tower. Pray for God to raise up righteous leaders who will lead Bangladesh wisely and without self-interest.

9. At the foot of the cross

Equipment needed: A cross, and a print out of the sign you create using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Enlarge and print out a sign using the text in the 'For display section'.

On the day: Put out the cross, and display the sign you have made using the text below.

For display:

At the foot of the cross

- Kneel at the foot of the cross to pray...
- Offer up everything you have learnt about Bangladesh today. Pray that God would work miracles through the institutions and organisations working to rebuild Bangladesh – government, NGOs such as Christian Aid, Tearfund and Oasis, churches and everyone involved with development work.
- Take a moment to acknowledge how much Bangladesh needs God – pray for his peace, light, comfort, wisdom and strength to grow in the country.
- There are more than a million Christians in Bangladesh, but they make up less than one per cent of the population. Pray for:
 - their protection in a country which is nearly 90% Muslim*, especially for former Muslims who are often rejected by their families when they convert to Christianity
 - their unity and continued freedom
 - how they are perceived by Muslims – because of history, and because many Bengali people believe Christian to be synonymous with Western, there is much misunderstanding and tarnishing of the true gospel
 - growth in the number of Christians, churches, and the influence of the gospel in Bangladesh.

(* Operation World)

10. Big prayers

Equipment needed: Enough balloons, luggage tags (or squares of card with a hole punched through), and pieces of string for everyone taking part, pens, a chair or rail (to which people can tie their balloons) and a print out of the sign you create using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Enlarge and print out a sign using the text in the 'For display' section. Then get together all the items you will need, and make the tags if necessary.

On the day: Lay out all the equipment needed, on the floor or a table, and display the sign you have made using the text below.

For display:

Big prayers

- Take a moment to remember all the needs you have been praying about, and to meditate on just how big God is.
- Think of a big prayer for Bangladesh – what do you want to see change more than anything? What will you dare to pray?
- Write your prayer on one of the tags provided.
- Take a balloon and blow it up in stages. As you breathe in, pray that God would increase your faith, and as you breathe out into the balloon to inflate it, pray that he would increase his Spirit's loving and powerful work in Bangladesh
- When you have got the balloon as big as possible, and you have finished praying, tie the balloon alongside the others that have already been done.
- Take a moment to look at others' big prayers too. Commit all of them to God. And give him a moment or two to prompt you as to anything you should be doing to be part of the answer to your prayers for Bangladesh.