

## The War-Jaintia of Bangladesh



**Primary Religion:**

Christian

**Disciples (Matt 28:19):**

30%

**Churches:**

Many

**Scripture Status (Matt 28:10):**

None

**Population (date):**

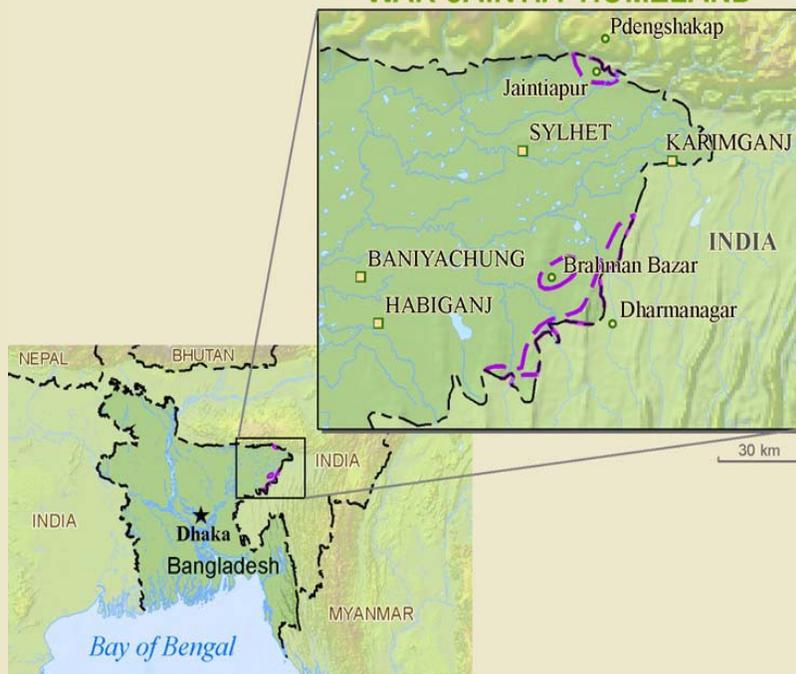
16,000 (2004)



The War-Jaintia belong to the wider Khasi ethnic group, but speak War-Jaintia. They live in isolated and scattered hilltop villages throughout Sylhet division in the areas that border India. They do so partly to be separated from the Bengalis who differ from them ethnically, religiously, and culturally, but also to be closer to their livelihood: the betel nut leaves which grow deep in the hilly forests. Nearly 100% of the War-Jaintia — men and women — are involved in the cultivating, harvesting, and selling of betel nut leaves. Almost as high is the percentage of Christians among them.

There has been great response to the gospel since missionary work began among the Khasi people in the 19th century. Most belong to the Presbyterian Church or, to a lesser extent, to the Catholic Church. However, nominalism and materialism seem to have weakened the War-Jaintia church. Also, a lack of full-time Christian workers and a decrease in missionary activity among the War-Jaintia have contributed to the weakening. A low literacy rate is another cause for the lack of spiritual vitality. Because the War-Jaintia as a group cannot read the Bangla Bible or the standard Khasi Bible well, it is difficult for them to grow as disciples.

### WAR-JAINTIA HOMELAND



## **The War-Jaintia of Bangladesh**

### **Have They Heard The Gospel?**

Call Themselves Christian	Greater than 90%
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior	30%
Believe In The Local Traditional Religion	Fewer than 5%
Have Not Heard Who Jesus is	0%
Response To The Gospel	They are proud to say that their people are almost all Christian. They and other ethnic Khasi members have been Christianized for over 100 years.

#### Comment

There are several denominations (Presbyterian, Catholic, Church of God, and Baptist). Most medium- to large-sized villages have a church from at least one, and usually two, of these denominations.

Is The Word Of God Translated?

The War-Jaintia would say yes, but actually, research shows that the language of the Bible (standard Khasi) is quite different from their mother tongue.

Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?

The literacy rate is 40-60%. It's difficult to know what percent of the War-Jaintia are literate enough to understand the Bible in either Bangla or Standard Khasi.

What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?

Missionary activity has decreased significantly among the War-Jaintia. To inject new life and energy into the War-Jaintia church, teaching and training of pastors and lay workers would be especially helpful. It would be great to see the church leadership energized and mobilized, and a new generation of leaders/pastors trained. Also, they need Scriptures they can understand.

### **Group Description**

#### **Population All Countries**

World Population For This People	28,000
World Population (Date)	28,000 (2003)
World Population (Urban Percent)	0%

## **The War-Jaintia of Bangladesh**

### **Countries Where People Group Lives**

Country Name

India

Country Name

Bangladesh

### **Geography & Environment**

Ecosystem Type

Gallery Forest

Climate

Monsoon rains from mid-May through September.

Comments

The altitude is 'low hills.'

### **Language & Linguistics**

Comment

War-Jaintia is the same language as what had been called Amwi in India. This people group is very resistant toward War-Jaintia as the medium of anything other than local, familiar speech. For official functions like church services and the Bible, they want standard Khasi, which is one of two second languages for this people group. Approximately 75% have Bangla as a second language, and 20% have Khasi as a second language.

### **Literacy**

Adult Literacy Percentage

40-60%

Percent Literate For Men

60%

Percent Literate For Women

40%

Literacy Attitude

Indifferent

Comment

There are no current literacy programs for War-Jaintia.

Comment

As a group, they don't seem very interested in personal reading.

### **Economics**

Subsistence Type

Agriculturalists

Occupation

Almost everyone cultivates and sells betel nut leaves.

Income Sources

Betel nut and leaf cultivation.

Trade Partners

Bengalis

Modernization / Utilities

Most villages do not have electricity, and almost everyone relies on water from wells/tubewells and small rivers. Where there is electricity, there are TVs, radios, etc. Even where there is not electricity, a number of households run TVs with battery.

## **The War-Jaintia of Bangladesh**

### **Community Development**

Health Care (Quality)	Good
Comment	They usually have to travel outside their village area to access clinics and hospitals, but they generally have the financial means to make use of them.
Diet (Quality)	Good
Water (Quality)	Good
Shelter Description	Their shelters are good and generally better than that of the average Bangladeshi.
Electricity	Most villages do not have electricity. In villages without electricity, at least the headman and often a number of other households use a generator in the evening.
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	Good
Clothing	Traditional Khasi dress for women and lungis (wraparound skirt) or western clothes for men
Transportation	Walking, buses, jeeps, and cycle rickshaws

### **Society & Culture**

Family Structures	Matrilineal
Neighbor Relations	Neighbor relations are tense. They are always wary of encroachment on their land by Bengalis.
Authority / Rule	Every village has a headman whose word seems to be law.
Cultural Change Pace	Slow
Identification With National Culture	Distinct
Self Image	Threatened
Comment	They are proud of self-identity but also feel threatened by the majority community.
Celebrations	Christmas is the biggest celebration of the year.
Recreations	Chewing betel nut.
Media	They listen to radio programs in Bangla, some Hindi, a little standard Khasi, and a little English. They watch TV shows in Bangla and Hindi.

## **The War-Jaintia of Bangladesh**

Attitude To Outsiders  
Comment Very receptive  
Very receptive to foreigners, as long as the headman approves.

Attitude To Change Somewhat resistant

### **Youth**

Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds) Household chores, caring for younger siblings, picking and sorting betel nut leaves.

### **Education**

Comment A few villages have government primary schools; most medium-sized and large villages have schools supported locally or by various NGOs.

Comment Possibly less than half of all children complete class 5.

Language Of Instruction Early Years Bangla; some standard Khasi in a few village schools

Comment Most primary schools are not mixed.

Comment Children from most villages have to stay in a boarding situation to attend school beyond class 5, and there are relatively few enrolled in secondary school.

## **Status of Christianity**

### **Church Growth**

Reached Status Engaged

Reached Classification Evangelized

Bible Schools 0

Christian Clinics/Hospitals 0

Christian Literacy Centers 0

Comment There are three lead pastors for the War-Jaintia community in Bangladesh. There are also one or two lay leaders in each village.

### **Religion & Response**

Religious Practices & Ceremonies Christmas is their biggest celebration.

Attitude To Christianity Very receptive

Resistance / Receptivity Very receptive.

## The War-Jaintia of Bangladesh

Spiritual Climate and Openness

Most say they are Christian but do not seem to have a personal commitment to Jesus Christ.

Recommended Approaches

The War-Jaintia are very hierarchical and have great respect for their leaders and elders, so any missions activity must first be approved and backed by the village headmen and religious leaders.

Items For Prayer

--Pray that they would have a hunger for God's Word, and a personal commitment to Jesus Christ.

--Pray that materialism would be replaced by a passion for God and they would take specific and sacrificial steps to gain access to Scriptures they can understand..

--Pray for protection and growth of the young generation that is growing up without a strong church, and without strong Christian role models.

### History Of Christianity In Group

Year Began

1800s (in India)

By Whom

Welsh Presbyterian Mission

By Whom

Baptist

### Scripture

Translation Status

Definite need

Comment

The language of the Bible (standard Khasi) is quite different from War-Jaintia. There is a definite need for scripture translation; however, there is no desire in the community because they want to use the standard Khasi Bible. Some who have been educated in Bangladesh can use the Bengali Bible.

Comment

### Missions and Churches

Organization Name

Santal Mission Norwegian Board

Main Ministry

Community Development

Comment

Their main ministries are education, community development, and church planting. They have been working among the War-Jaintia for many years, but their ministry seems to be less active now than in the past.