

# URBAN POOR MUSLIMS IN Howrah, India



**1 MILLION**

Estimated Population

**240,000**

Muslims

**WEST BENGAL**

State/Province

**\$435**

Average Annual Income Per Capita

## MAP OF INDIA



## MAP OF WEST BENGAL



## ABOUT URBAN POOR MUSLIMS IN HOWRAH

Howrah is a city where Muslims from all over East India come for hope and a fresh start. It is the gateway to India from Bangladesh and has significant influence throughout Eastern India. As such, Howrah is strategic for engaging all of the eastern districts in West Bengal.

The Muslim population in this city and its surrounding districts is around 24% of the total population and growing rapidly—particularly in the Muslim majority areas. **With no evidence of Muslim engagement, Howrah offers a clean slate** for a new team to come in and lay a foundation of ministry, which will likely be focused on strategies to access the Urban Poor.

Another team working in a sister city is willing to lend support, fellowship and practical help to any new team wishing to work in Howrah. The fruitful, seasoned Team Leader will also **apprentice an aspiring team leader and team members** in preparation for long-term service in Howrah.

## LIVABILITY

Located in West Bengal (*in the eastern part of India*), Howrah sits just across the Hooghly River from Kolkata and **two bridges connect the cities**.

The Howrah area occupies 566 square miles of fairly flat land. In addition to the Hooghly, the city is bordered by the Damodar and Rupnarayan Rivers.

West Bengal is sub-tropical and generally hot and humid, with 57 inches of rain per year. Howrah boasts a large botanical garden and even has a newer shopping mall with a Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonalds.

Kolkata's Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose **International Airport**—and Western standard **hospitals**—is just a taxi or bus ride away. **Easy access to almost anywhere in India** is available through Howrah's iconic train station, which is the largest, oldest and second busiest in India.



# URBAN POOR MUSLIMS IN HOWRAH, INDIA

## Overview & OPPORTUNITIES

Want to uplift the Urban Poor?

### SPIRITUAL REALITIES

While Hindus represent Howrah's majority population, the Muslim minority is large—over a quarter of the city's residents. Two large recently-built mosques in Howrah reflect the rapid growth of the city's Muslim population.

Because Muslims come to Howrah to find work from all over East India, it is difficult to characterize their ethnology. Moving to an urban area offers a chance to escape caste and ethnic stereotypes. Interestingly, it is common for Muslims moving into the city to change their family names and even their family languages to mask their identity. Even so, we believe almost every unreached people group could be accessible in these slums and neighborhoods.

Urdu and Bengali, as well as various Bihari and Bengali dialects, are spoken in Howrah. Communities form more around common languages than ethnicity. Learning either Urdu or Bengali would prepare a team to work within one of the affinity communities.

The state has been ruled by a democratically elected Communist government for the past 35 years. Howrah is predominately Communist Marxist.

### ENTRY & ECONOMY

Howrah is receptive to foreigners, and is open to other ethnicities since the urban environment creates a swirl of outsiders mixing. Regarded as a novelty, especially westerners attract a trusting curiosity.

Howrah's schools are run by the state and by private institutions. Most teaching is in Bengali, English or Hindi. Literacy rates among the city's Muslim communities are poor, so there is opportunity for those who wish to empower women, who are often raising children by themselves, to learn to read, learn their rights, and access education and training to provide for their children.

Economically, the city is divided. Wealthier majorities live in the south. Nearly half the population (mostly Muslim) lives in slums in the north. Due to poor literacy rates, unemployment among Muslims is prevalent and housing conditions are shocking, with almost 8,000 people living in a square mile. Muslims find it difficult to get housing, loans and government assistance.

Therefore, community development models such as CHE (see link to the right), small business training, perhaps microfinance models and experience are needed for empowering the urban poor.

Howrah is an industrial city, involved in steel fabrication and recognized as an engineering hub. An entrepreneurial business for transformation model would work well, particularly if involved in manufacturing or export.

### CHECK THESE OUT



BOOK

**City of Joy:** *An epic of love, heroism and hope in the India of Mother Teresa*



MOVIE

**City of Joy**  
1992  
PG-13



TRAINING

Community  
Health  
Education  
(CHE)



About one million cars cross this bridge daily, making it the symbolic gateway to the city of Kolkata.