

# MAPPING: KEY FIGURES NATIONAL REPORT: BANGLADESH

ICA-EU PARTNERSHIP



## Table of Contents

<b>I. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II. PUBLIC NATIONAL STATISTICS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>II. KEY FIGURES.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>I. ICA MEMBER DATA .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>II. GENERAL OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>III. SECTOR OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>III. GRAPHS .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>I. PERCENTAGE OF COOPERATIVES PER SECTOR.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>II. PERCENTAGE OF MEMBERSHIPS PER SECTOR.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>IV. ANNEXES.....</b>	<b>9</b>

## **Bangladesh- Key Figures National Report**

### **I. Introduction and context**

This report is part of a global mapping exercise launched by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and its regional offices within a partnership signed with the European Commission for the period 2016-2020, which aims to strengthen the cooperative movement and its capacity to promote international development. Other research projects include a worldwide legal frameworks analysis, and several thematic researches on themes of significance for cooperatives.

Responding to challenges and existing knowledge gaps facing the cooperative movement, this research provides exhaustive information on cooperatives worldwide. This has been achieved by collecting the input of ICA members through an online questionnaire, and completing it with relevant national statistics, in order to obtain an accurate picture of the national situation. Mapping out cooperatives in each country provides a more precise picture of the cooperative context at national and regional levels, enhances the movement's visibility, networking, partnerships, opportunities, as well as advocacy, and empowers cooperators by providing them tools for positive change.

Within this framework, the present report showcases information about the cooperative landscape in Bangladesh.

#### **i. Historical background**

The development of cooperatives has been a prominent part of government policy in Bangladesh for over a century. Credit cooperatives were first set-up under the British colonial administration in early 1900s as a means of addressing extortionate practices by money lenders.

During the Pakistan era (1947-1971), the importance of cooperation and self-help was acknowledged and the creation of cooperative societies was promoted in sectors ranging from (existing) agricultural credit to fisheries to animal husbandry in the First Five Year Plan (1955-1960).

The Provincial Government of East Pakistan was also interested in encouraging housing cooperatives in cities and towns, as it viewed such a self-help strategy for urban development and construction to be more cost-effective than its own building efforts. Cooperatives were thus seen as a decentralised strategy for (rural) development and social capital enhancement, which could potentially realise the benefits of large-scale organisation without the need for compulsion or state



intervention, while also offering economic gains to members as they could perform many services for themselves instead of paying third parties.

The Comilla Kotwali thana (an administrative unit below sub-division and district) was home to one particularly notable instantiation of cooperative development. The 'Comilla Model' of rural development was launched in 1959 under the auspices of a newly-created East Pakistan Academy of Rural Development (now the Bangladesh Academy of Rural Development) with funding and technical support of the Ford Foundation and Michigan State University. The Academy, along with providing field training for officials, sought to improve agricultural production, reduce the economic precariousness of small-scale cultivators and reduce indebtedness. Multi-purposes village cooperatives were the center piece of this strategy, particularly from 1961 onwards, with the creation of the Comilla Cooperative System. This system developed bottom-up solutions to the credit, farming and infrastructural problems encountered by village communities by creating cooperatives in which villagers could save, borrow and gain access to subsidised agricultural technology. The cooperatives also provided a platform for members to express their concerns and through which rural works and irrigation projects could be aligned with their expressed needs. Other than agricultural cooperatives, the Academy also incubated a number of non-agricultural cooperatives, comprising auto drivers and rickshaw pullers, craftsmen, butchers and small-scale entrepreneurs.

The independence of Bangladesh did not diminish the long-standing interest in cooperatives, but instead offered an opportunity to recalibrate the movement in new directions. In the wake of the Liberation War of 1971, cooperatives were deemed to be an important mechanism for distributing essential commodities across the country, improving farm productivity and disbursing quick loans on easy terms. The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IDRP) established in 1970s based on the Comilla model, was restructured in 1982 and brought under the Bangladesh Rural Development Board. Under the aegis of this body, the number of agricultural cooperatives grew to 170,000 in 2010, of which only 18,000 were active. The newly-independent country undertook a number of initiatives to promote cooperatives in various sectors under successive governments. There continues to be an active interest in promoting cooperatives in the economy.

## ii. Public national statistics

Public national statistics on cooperatives in Bangladesh have been taken from the annual report published by the Department of Cooperatives, Govt. of Bangladesh for the year 2019-2020.

### NUMBER OF COOPERATIVES

In 2019-2020, there were 192,020 cooperatives.



## NUMBER OF MEMBERS

In 2019-2020, there were 11,509,825 members in cooperatives. Of which, 76.8% were men and 23.2% women members.

### iii. Research methodology

The aim of the mapping research is to collect and make publicly available reliable and up-to-date data to understand what the cooperative movement represents in the targeted country. With this view, the data detailed in the present report has been collected using the methodology detailed below.

The methodological tools include a questionnaire used to collect the data, which was distributed online to the members, as well as a methodological note provided for further guidance. They were built jointly with all ICA regional offices with the support of external experts from the European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises (Euricse) and are applied in a harmonised way in all the target countries.

The classifications used in the research are consistent with the internal system used within the ICA movement (e.g. on membership status and types of cooperative organisations) and with standards increasingly adopted in recent studies and by international organisations like the ILO – e.g. using international classifications of economic activities such as the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) rev. 4, which ensures the comparability of statistics both nationally and internationally, as well as with statistics on other forms of enterprises.

Regarding the target organisations, considering that a worldwide survey has very challenging goals, and while the value of directly collecting data from non-member cooperatives must be recognised, the present Mapping exercise targets cooperative organisations members of the ICA.

Furthermore, in order to complete the ICA members' data, the decision was taken to also look at external sources, to provide additional and more exhaustive cooperative statistics for the country. As a result, the data is collected following two strategies contemporaneously: 1) collecting statistics already available in the country; 2) carrying out a survey targeting ICA cooperative members.

The Mapping report for Bangladesh was prepared using information available in the annual report published by the Department of Cooperatives, Govt. of Bangladesh for the year 2019-2020 and legal framework analysis report for Bangladesh prepared under the ICA-European Commission partnership.

## II. Key figures



Bangladesh has two ICA member organisations:

1. National Cooperative Union of Bangladesh (Bangladesh Jatiya Samabaya Union; BJSU)

BJSU is the national apex body representing the cooperative movement in Bangladesh. It became a member of the ICA in 2008.

2. Bangladesh Samabaya Bank Ltd. (BSBL)

BSBL is the apex cooperative bank in Bangladesh. Its members are the government, central cooperative banks, land development cooperative banks at district level, other apex cooperative societies and central cooperative societies. It became a member of the ICA in 2016.

### i. ICA member data

The data on ICA membership in this section was collected from the annual report published by the Department of Cooperatives, Govt. of Bangladesh for the year 2019-2020.

### ii. General overview

As the national apex body representing the cooperative movement in Bangladesh, it represents 192,020 cooperatives with 11,509,825 memberships. Of which 76.8% (8,838,596) were men and 23.2% (2671,229) women members.

### iii. Sector overview

The sectors used below correspond to the categories used in the ISIC rev. 4. to classify the economic activities carried out by the organisations concerned.

Cooperatives in Bangladesh are present in diverse sectors including agriculture, fisheries, thrift and credit, dairy, handicraft, etc.

Sectors	Percentage of cooperatives (2019-2020)	Percentage of memberships (2019-2020)
Agriculture	47%	52%
Other (housing, women, etc.)	34%	19%
Thrift and credit	8%	16%
Fisheries	6%	5%

Handicraft	2%	1%
Dairy	1%	1%
Transport	1%	1%
Water	1%	5%

Table 1: Cooperatives and memberships per sector in Bangladesh (2019-2020)

### III. Graphs

#### i. Percentage of cooperatives per sector

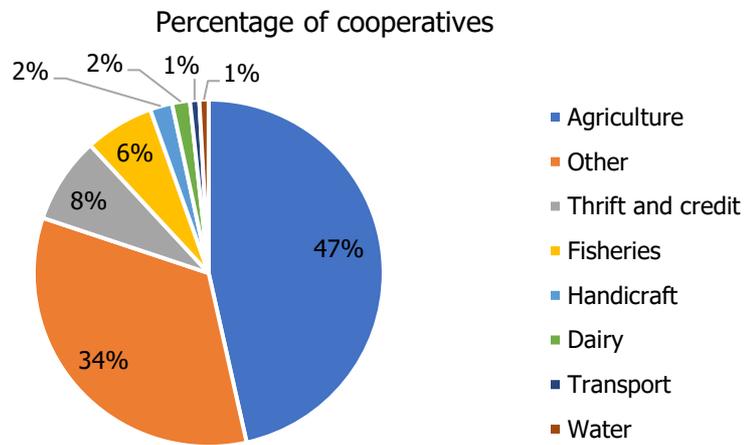


Figure 1: Percentage of cooperatives per sector in Bangladesh (2019-2020)

#### ii. Percentage of memberships per sector

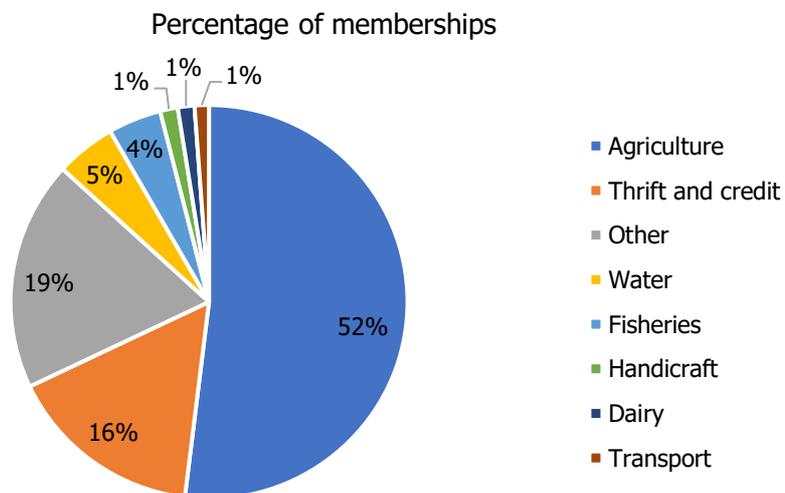


Figure 2: Percentage of memberships per sector in Bangladesh (2019-2020)

## IV. Annexes

Sources and contacts are listed below.

### Sources

1. [Bangladesh Legal Framework Analysis Report](#), 2021.
2. Department of Cooperatives, Govt. of Bangladesh (2019-2020). [Annual Report](#).

### Contacts

Further details on the Mapping research and other country reports are available on [www.coops4dev.coop](http://www.coops4dev.coop)

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