

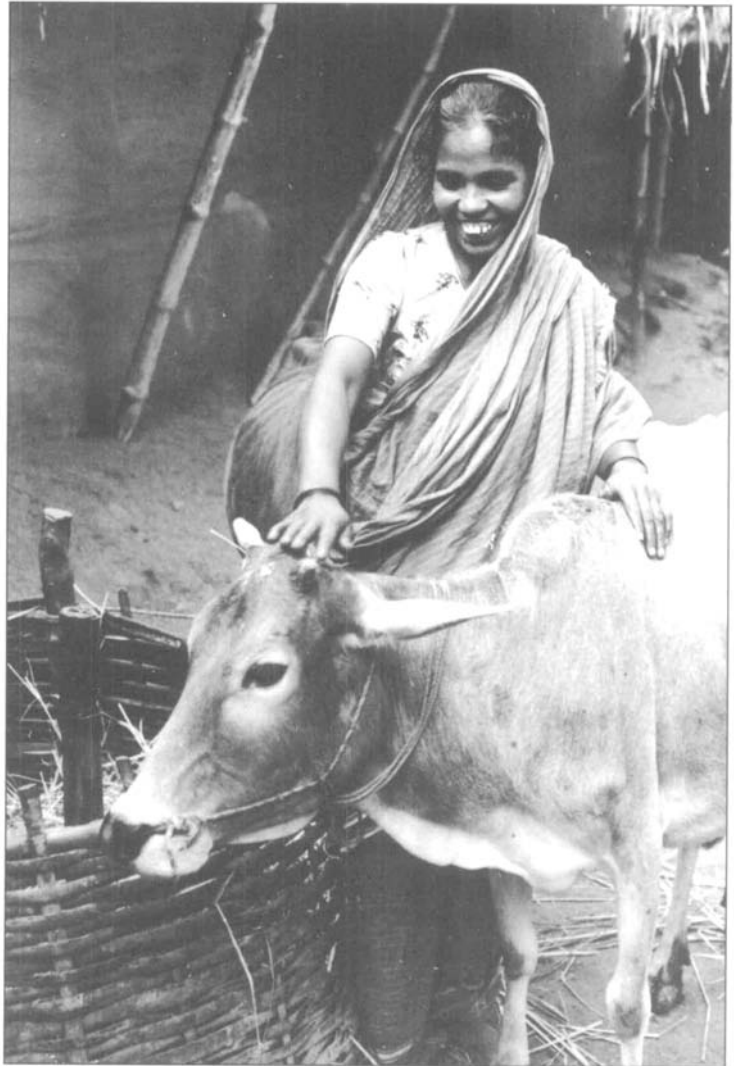
Oxfam in Bangladesh

Oxfam has worked in Bangladesh since 1971, responding with emergency assistance at times of crisis, and funding local organisations that are seeking long-term solutions to poverty and powerlessness. Working through individuals and groups, often in remote areas, Oxfam supports people in their struggle to become self-reliant and to overcome some of the obstacles that keep them in poverty. Most of the people and projects featured in this book have benefited from Oxfam support, and their stories illustrate the fact that a small investment of funds in the right place at the right time can have a profound effect on people's lives.

The main areas of development which Oxfam has funded in Bangladesh are reducing vulnerability to disasters, making the best use of land, education, health care, legal rights, and strengthening community organisations. An important focus of Oxfam's work has been supporting groups of landless people, especially women. Functional education and information on land rights can enable people to take effective action. This work is supported by advocacy on land reform.

As the capacity of the major national NGOs in Bangladesh has grown, Oxfam has focused its support on small and emerging organisations, which often work on a very localised scale. Many of the large, established NGOs started originally with support from Oxfam.

Because of Bangladesh's vulnerability to natural disasters, helping people to prepare against cyclones and floods is an element of all development projects supported by Oxfam, as is the emphasis on building recovery capacity through development.



Jahanara Khatoon bought this cow with a loan from the women's group in her village. The group has received support and advice from the Community Development Association (CDA), an NGO funded by Oxfam. Besides helping the women to set up a rotating loan scheme, CDA encouraged them to grow vegetables, and provided literacy training and health education. Jahanara has gained in confidence since learning to read, and takes more of a share in decisions within the family now that she is able to make a financial contribution by selling milk from her cow.



Area: 144,000 square km

Population: 120 million

Population growth rate: 1.95% per annum

Population density: 780 per square km

Life expectancy: 55 years

Male/female ratio: 106:100

Average female age at first marriage: 1974: 15.9 years
1984: 17.8 years
1991: 18.2 years

Infant mortality: 115 per 1,000 live births (0 - 5 years)

1 doctor for every: 5,200 people (UK 1 - 650)

1 hospital bed for every: 3,200 people

Literacy: 32% of adults (43% of men, 22% of women)

Religious affiliation: 87% Muslim, 11% Hindu, 1% Buddhist, 1% Christians and animists

Principal exports: garments, jute and its products, shellfish, tea, and leather.

Main trading partners: US, EU and Japan

Main aid donors: US, UK, Canada, and Japan

Gross Domestic Product: 1991 US\$23,394m
1992 US\$23,783m
1993 US\$24,050m

Average annual income: US\$220 per capita

Rice production: 1991 17.8m tonnes
1992 18.27m tonnes
1993 18.6m tonnes

Sources: UNICEF, DTI, Economist Intelligence Unit, World Bank

Sources and further reading

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