

**Survey Report**  
**UNESCO PARTICIPATION PROGRAMME 2024–2025**  
**Socio-Economic Survey of Bauls of Bangladesh**

**In Cooperation with**  
**Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO**

**Prepared by**

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Implemented by  
**Bangladesh Baul and Folk Artist Association**



**Evaluation Report**  
**UNESCO Participation Programme 2024–2025**

**Project Title**

**Socio-Economic Survey of Bauls of Bangladesh:**

**(A Nationwide Study on the Economic, Social and Cultural Livelihoods of the Baul Community)**

**1. Evaluation Submitted By**

**Member State:** Government of Bangladesh

**In cooperation with:**

Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO (BNCU)

**Implemented by:**

**Bangladesh Baul and Folk Artists Association  
(Bangladesh Baul and Lakoshilpi Sangstha)**

**Project Implementation Period:**

September 2025 – December 2025

## 2. Number and Title of Request

### Title of Request

#### Socio-Economic Survey of Bauls of Bangladesh

#### Contribution from UNESCO

The project was implemented with financial support from UNESCO under the **Participation Programme 2024–2025**. The funding supported the implementation of a nationwide socio-economic survey of Baul practitioners across Bangladesh.

### 3. Budget Overview

<b>Budget Category</b>	<b>Amount (USD)</b>
Specialist and Consultant	3,500
Training and Seminar	2,000
Publication	4,000
Conference and Meetings	9,500
<b>Total Allocated Budget</b>	<b>19,000 USD</b>

The total project budget initially proposed was **26,000 USD**. However, UNESCO allocated **19,000 USD** under the Participation Programme.

Despite the reduced financial allocation, the project was successfully implemented through effective financial management, institutional cooperation, and support from cultural networks.

### 4. Evaluation of the Project Implemented

#### 4.1 Purpose and Objectives of the Project

The Baul community represents one of the most distinctive spiritual and musical traditions of Bangladesh. Baul philosophy emphasizes **humanism, spiritual freedom, equality, and harmony beyond religious divisions**.

Despite their immense cultural contribution, Baul practitioners often live in **economically vulnerable conditions** and lack institutional recognition and systematic documentation.

The primary purpose of the project was to conduct a **comprehensive nationwide socio-economic survey** of Baul practitioners in Bangladesh in order to create a **reliable national database and evidence-based understanding** of their living conditions.

### **Specific Objectives**

The project aimed to:

- Estimate the total number of Baul practitioners in Bangladesh
- Analyze the **social, economic, and cultural conditions** of the Baul community
- Document **Baul lifestyle, spiritual practices, and the Guru–Disciple tradition**
- Assess **healthcare access, livelihood strategies, and economic vulnerability**
- Evaluate **social perceptions and recognition of Bauls within society**
- Document **Baul song composition, creativity, and cultural contributions**
- Collect **recommendations from Baul practitioners** regarding preservation and development of their cultural heritage
- Develop **policy recommendations** for the Government of Bangladesh, UNESCO, and cultural organizations
- Establish a **national Baul database** to support future research, cultural safeguarding, and policy planning

This initiative represents the **first systematic attempt to develop a structured national data system on Baul practitioners in Bangladesh.**

## 5. Major Results, Benefits and Impact

### 5.1 Major Results

The project successfully completed the **first nationwide socio-economic survey of Bauls in Bangladesh.**



Dhaka Division



Rajshahi Division

### Key Achievements

- **2,307 Baul practitioners** were identified during the survey listing process
- **1,535 Bauls** participated in detailed socio-economic interviews
- The survey covered major Baul-concentrated regions including:
  - Kushtia
  - Sunamganj

- Netrokona
- Rajbari
- Mymensingh
- Narail
- Narsingdi
- Other regions across Bangladesh

The research produced the **first structured national dataset** documenting the demographic, cultural, and economic conditions of Bauls.



*Note: Engagement Baul Artist and Cultural Practitioners of Rangpur Division. Additional Secretary Ministry of Culture. Md. Shawkat Ali, Additional Secretary (Cultural Affairs); Abdur Rahim, Regional Director, Bangladesh Betar; Moinul Haque, Journalist; A.K.M.M. Arifuzzaman, District Cultural Officer; Baul Abu Naeim, Baul Aranya Abbas; Baul Dolly Mondal; Baul Rakhi Shabnam; Baul Tarikul Islam.*

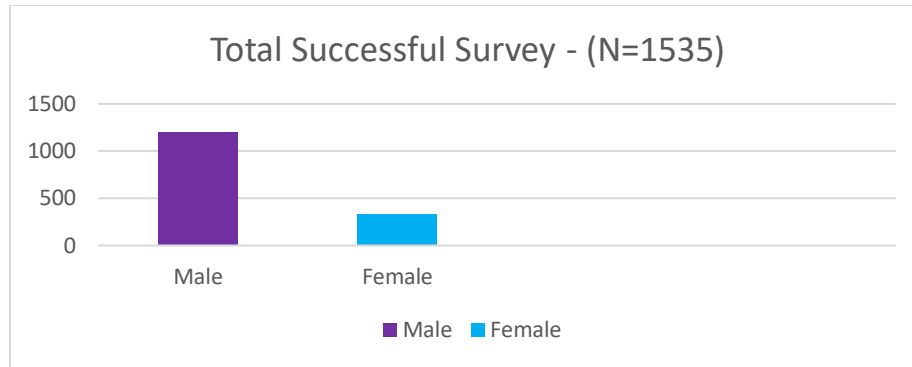
## 6. Key Research Findings

### 6.1 Demographic Profile

Among the **1,535 surveyed Bauls**:

- **Male:** 1,203
- **Female:** 332

Women constitute approximately **18% of the Baul community**, and the research indicates that they face comparatively greater social and economic challenges.



## 6.2 Family Structure

- **Nuclear Families: 68%**
- **Extended Families: 32%**

## 6.3 Age Distribution

Baul practitioners represent a wide range of age groups. However, a significant portion of practitioners are **above 40 years of age**, highlighting the importance of encouraging **younger generations to continue the Baul tradition**.

## 6.4 Generational Continuity

The survey revealed a concerning trend regarding the sustainability of Baul traditions.

- **919 Bauls reported that none of their children are involved in Baul practice**
- Only a small proportion indicated that their children are continuing the tradition

This finding indicates a **potential risk to the long-term continuity of Baul cultural heritage**.

## 6.5 Spiritual and Cultural Practices

Despite socio-economic challenges, Baul practitioners maintain strong spiritual traditions.

- **85%** actively follow the Baul lifestyle
- **90%** have received spiritual initiation (*Diksha*) from a Guru
- **86%** regularly practice Baul spiritual discipline
- **78%** wear traditional Baul attire

These findings demonstrate the **resilience and continuity of Baul philosophy and spiritual practice.**

## **6.6 Social Perception of Bauls**

The study indicates that social recognition of Bauls remains limited.

### **Social Perception Percentage**

Very Good	2.3%
Good	34%
Neutral	52%
Negative	11.6%

This suggests a **gap between the cultural significance of Bauls and their social recognition in mainstream society.**

## **6.7 Livelihood and Economic Conditions**

Baul practitioners primarily depend on:

- Musical performances
- Cultural festivals and fairs
- Alms and community donations

- Informal labor

Income sources are **irregular and often insufficient**, and many Bauls lack **financial security, savings, or property ownership**.

## 6.8 Healthcare Access

Most Baul practitioners rely on:

- Government hospitals
- Local clinics
- Traditional healers

However, many reported difficulties accessing **specialized medical treatment due to financial limitations**.

## 7. Impact of the Project



Rangpur Division

The project generated several significant impacts at both **national and community levels**.

### 1. Creation of the First National Baul Database

The project established the **first comprehensive national database of Baul practitioners in Bangladesh**, which can serve as an important resource for cultural policy and academic research.

## 2. Evidence-Based Cultural Policy Development

The findings provide **empirical data** for government institutions and cultural organizations to design targeted support programs for Bauls.

## 3. Strengthening Cultural Safeguarding

The project contributed to the documentation of:

- Baul songs
- Spiritual traditions
- Oral histories
- Cultural practices

## 4. Increased Awareness

The research raised awareness among **policymakers, researchers, and cultural institutions** regarding the socio-economic vulnerability and cultural importance of Bauls.

*Note: Under the UNESCO Participation Programme 2024–2025, the Socio-Economic Survey of the Baul Community in Bangladesh has been conducted with the support of Bangladesh national commission for UNESCO (BNCU).*

*As part of this initiative, survey teams visited different regions across the country, establishing direct communication with Baul communities. They engaged in meaningful interactions, exchanged ideas, and spent time in akhras, meeting individuals personally. Informal discussions took place in a friendly environment—often over tea and music—reflecting the true spirit of Baul culture.*

*Some photographs of these interactions and field activities are attached herewith.*



Nazrul University Student



With the Head Custodian of the Lalon Shah



*Note: 1. Rabindra University, Bangladesh, 2. Akhrabari of Prominent Baul Shadhok Rashid Sarker, 3. With the Student of Music, 4. With Prominent Baul Leader & Artists at Bangladesh Baul & Lakoshilpi Sangstha Office.*

## 8. Fulfillment of Expected Results

The project successfully achieved its planned objectives.

Expected outputs that were fulfilled include:

- Conducting a nationwide survey
- Creating a national Baul database
- Producing a comprehensive research report
- Developing policy recommendations

## 9. Modifications to Initial Objectives

No major changes were made to the initial project objectives.

However, due to field-level constraints such as **non-response and unreachable respondents**, the final number of completed interviews was slightly lower than the original listing.

Despite this, the final sample remained **sufficiently large and geographically representative**.

## 10. Difficulties Encountered and Solutions

### Communication Barriers

Some respondents could not be contacted because:

- **224 phone numbers** were switched off
- **453 respondents** did not answer calls
- **70 respondents** declined participation
- **25 phone numbers** were incorrect

## **Solution**

The research team conducted repeated contact attempts and relied on **local Baul networks and cultural organizations** to reach respondents.

## **Geographic Dispersion**

Baul practitioners are scattered across **remote rural areas**, which made communication and coordination challenging.

## **Solution**

Local **cultural leaders and Baul organizations** assisted in identifying respondents and facilitating communication.

## **Lack of Formal Identification**

Many Bauls do not possess formal identification as Baul practitioners.

## **Solution**

The research team used **community verification and network validation** to confirm respondents.

## **11. UNESCO Visibility in the Member State**

The project significantly increased **UNESCO's visibility in Bangladesh**, particularly in relation to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

## **Public Communication**

Information about the project was shared through:

- Cultural networks
- Research meetings
- Community consultations
- Baul organizations

**Public Participation**





Baul practitioners from different regions actively participated in the survey and shared their experiences and perspectives.

### **Role of NGOs**

The **Bangladesh Baul and Folk Artists Association** played a central role in coordinating field activities, communication, and engagement with Baul practitioners.

### **12. Consultation with UNESCO Field Office**

The project was implemented in close coordination with the **Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO (BNCU)**.

The Commission provided institutional guidance and ensured that the project aligned with the objectives of the **UNESCO Participation Programme**.

### **13. Conclusion**

The project successfully completed the **first nationwide socio-economic survey of Bauls in Bangladesh**.

The research generated:

- **A reliable national dataset**
- **Comprehensive documentation of Baul cultural practices**

- **Evidence-based policy recommendations**

The findings highlight both the **cultural importance** of Baul traditions and the **socio-economic challenges** faced by Baul practitioners.

The study provides a strong foundation for future initiatives focusing on:

- Cultural safeguarding
- Social protection
- Economic support for Baul practitioners
- Academic research
- International promotion of Baul philosophy

Through its support, **UNESCO made a significant contribution to the documentation and preservation of Baul cultural heritage**, which remains a vital component of Bangladesh's cultural identity.

Stamp, Signature and Date

Name: Sardar Hirak Raja

Organization:

Bangladesh Baul and Lokoshilpi Sangstha

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Official Stamp: \_\_\_\_\_

**Attachment:**

1. Recommendations of the Research Report Evaluation Meeting
2. Survey Questionnaire

**Recommendations of the Research Report Evaluation Meeting**

Based on a comprehensive review of the nationwide survey and the first reliable database of Bauls of Bangladesh, the Research Report Evaluation Meeting put forward the following key recommendations for policy adoption, institutional action, and long-term safeguarding:

### **1. Formal Government Recognition of the Database**

The meeting strongly recommended that the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO (BNCU) officially recognize the Baul database as the **authoritative national reference** for all Baul-related policies, programs, and interventions.

### **2. Institutionalization of the Database System**

It was recommended that the database be integrated into relevant government and cultural institutions to ensure **evidence-based planning**, with clear responsibility assigned for data management, security, and periodic updating.

### **3. Adoption of National Criteria for Identifying Genuine Bauls**

The meeting emphasized the urgent need to formally adopt the survey's identification criteria as a **national standard**, in order to prevent misuse of Baul identity and to ensure that benefits reach genuine practitioners only.

### **4. Introduction of Targeted Economic Support Measures**

Given the documented economic vulnerability of Bauls, the meeting recommended:

- Introduction of **monthly allowances or honorariums** for registered Bauls
- Ensuring **fair and standardized remuneration** for participation in state-sponsored cultural programs

- Development of **alternative livelihood and income-generation opportunities**

## **5. Inclusion of Bauls in Health and Social Protection Systems**

The evaluation meeting recommended immediate steps to:

- Provide **health cards** to registered Bauls
- Include Bauls in **national health insurance and social safety-net programs**
- Organize **mobile medical camps** in Baul-concentrated areas, with special attention to elderly and chronically ill practitioners

## **6. Strengthening Legal Protection and Security**

In light of reported harassment and discrimination, the meeting recommended:

- Establishing **legal and administrative protection mechanisms**
- Creating **rapid-response systems** at local levels for reported threats
- Strengthening coordination between cultural institutions and law enforcement agencies

## **7. Safeguarding Baul Cultural Heritage**

To ensure cultural continuity, the meeting strongly recommended:

- Systematic documentation of **Baul songs, philosophy, oral traditions, and life histories**
- Establishment of **national archives and research repositories**
- Support for academic research, publications, and curriculum inclusion

- Enhanced use of **UNESCO platforms** for international promotion and safeguarding

## **8. Ensuring Baul Representation in Policy and Decision-Making**

The meeting recommended recognizing Bauls as **professional cultural practitioners** and ensuring their representation in:

- Cultural policy-making bodies
- Advisory committees
- National and regional cultural planning processes

## **9. Strengthening Inter-Institutional Coordination**

The meeting highlighted the need for improved coordination and recommended:

- Using the database as the **single reference point** for all Baul-related initiatives
- Establishing **inter-ministerial and inter-agency coordination frameworks**
- Allocating **dedicated budgets** based on verified data and needs

## **10. Enhancing the Institutional Role of the Bangladesh Baul and Folk Artists Association**

Finally, the meeting recommended strengthening the institutional capacity and formal role of the Bangladesh Baul and Folk Artists Association as a **key partner in implementation, monitoring, and verification** of all Baul-focused programs.

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## **Concluding Recommendation**

The Research Report Evaluation Meeting concluded that the database should be treated not merely as a research outcome, but as a **strategic national asset**. Proper utilization of its findings can transform symbolic recognition of Bauls into **sustainable protection, dignity, and development**.

## 1. Questionnaire

### Personal Information

#### Sl. No. – Personal Information – Code

1. Name of District
2. Name of Thana/Upazila
3. Name of Post Office
4. Village
5. What is the respondent's father's name?
6. What is the respondent's name?
7. Respondent's mobile number
8. Alternative mobile number (if any)
9. Respondent's gender
  1. Male
  2. Female
  3. Third Gender
10. Respondent's age
11. Highest level of education completed (Education Code)
12. Marital status
  1. Married
  2. Unmarried
  3. Widowed
  4. Divorced
  5. Separated

13. Number of children
  14. How many of the children are involved in Baul practice?
  15. Respondent's National ID number (optional – may provide or may refuse)
- 

### **Baul-Related Information**

16. Are you involved in Baul music?  
 Yes  No
17. How many years have you been involved in Baul music?
18. Do you follow the Baul way of life?  
 Yes  No
19. If not, why do you not follow the Baul way of life?
20. Have you received initiation (Diksha) from a Guru?  
 Yes  No
21. If you have not received Diksha, why not?
22. Do you practice Baul spiritual discipline (Sadhana)?  
 Yes  No
23. Do you wear Baul attire/appearance?  
 Yes  No
24. Do you currently have a Baul Guru?  
 Yes  No
25. If yes, write the name of the Guru
26. Age of the Guru

27. Mobile number of the Guru
  28. For how long have you been following this Guru?
  29. For how many years has your current Guru been involved in Baul practice?
  30. Did you have any Baul Guru before this one?  
 Yes  No
  31. How many Baul Gurus did you have previously?
  32. What was the reason for changing your Baul Guru? (Write)
  33. Do you have your own Baul Akhra (center)?  
 Yes  No
  34. If you do not have a Baul Akhra, why not?
  35. Do you have any officially recognized disciples?  
 Yes  No
  36. How many disciples do you have?
  37. If you do not have recognized disciples, what is the reason?
- 

### **Social Status**

38. Are you associated with the Bangladesh Baul Organization and Folk Artists Association?  
 Yes  No
39. If yes, since which year are you associated?
40. If not associated, what is the reason?

41. What is the social status of Bauls in your area?  
1. Very good 2. Good 3. Average 4. Bad 5. Very bad
42. How are Bauls viewed by society?  
1. Very good 2. Good 3. Average 4. Bad 5. Very bad
43. Do Bauls have social, economic, literary, and philosophical contributions?  
 Yes  No
44. Overall, how would you describe the current condition of Bauls?  
1. Very good 2. Good 3. Average 4. Bad 5. Very bad
45. If bad, in which aspects is it bad? (Write)
46. If very bad, in which aspects is it very bad? (Write)
47. Is unity/organizational structure necessary for the well-being of Bauls?  
 Yes  No
48. What should be done to improve Bauls' condition through collective/organizational efforts?
49. What steps do you think are necessary at national and international levels for the preservation, promotion, and dissemination of Baul and Baul philosophy? (Write)
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### **Health of Bauls**

50. Where do you receive health services from?  
 Government hospital  
 Private hospital

- Traditional healer (Ojha/Kabiraj)
- Others

51. In the last 30 days, how much money was spent on medical treatment for you and your household?  
Amount (in Taka): \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Economic Condition**

52. What are your sources of livelihood or income?  
1. Music 2. Business 3. Job 4. Others

53. Do you receive benefits from any social safety-net program (allowances, cards, etc.)?  
 Yes  No

54. Which local committees are you involved with?  
 School  
 Mosque  
 Madrasa  
 College  
 None  
 Others

55. How many Baul songs have you composed?  
Number: \_\_\_\_\_

56. Besides Lalon, whose songs do you perform?  
Bijoy Sarkar  
Moslem Uddin Boyati  
Prafulla Gosai  
Radha Raman

Shah Abdul Karim

Hasan Raja

Radharaman Dutta

Gagan Chandra dam (also known as Gagan Harkara)

Durbin Shah

Jalal Uddin Khan

Dolonchapa

Maheshwar Chakraborty

Ramkanai Das

Others

57. What is your total monthly income (in Taka)?
58. What is your total monthly expenditure (in Taka)?
59. Do you or any member of your household have any savings?  
 Yes  No
60. If yes, how much savings do you have?
61. Do you have any movable or immovable property?  
 Yes  No
62. How do manage your life during the closure of cultural events or transition period during Corona ,Agugu 5, 2024
63. If yes, what is the estimated value of the property?

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## **Recommendations for Improving the Economic Condition of Bauls**

What types of measures do you think are necessary to improve the economic condition of Bauls?

- Government financial support: special allowances or grants for Bauls, low-interest loans

- Culture- and music-based employment: regular cultural programs, Baul music festivals, tourism-based programs
- Artists' welfare fund: medical support, insurance, and emergency assistance
- Preservation and promotion of Baul music: audio-video recording, promotion through digital platforms
- Training and skill development: musical instruments, music production, marketing training
- Handicrafts and alternative income sources: support for handicrafts, agriculture, or small businesses
- Social safety-net programs: old-age allowance, healthcare, housing support
- Rural tourism development: Baul village visits, cultural tourism
- Others

63. If you have any additional comments, please write below: