



Policy Paper Presentation

Effective Utilization of GI for Socio-Economic Benefits & Export Diversification

Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD)

Presentation of the 10th SMEDWC Meeting

Venue: Ministry of Industries (Mol) Conference Room

Date: 11 September 2025



GIs in Bangladesh: Overview

Definition & Benefits

- **Definition:** A sign used on products that originate from a specific place and have qualities or reputation linked to that origin.
- **Benefits :**
- Promote rural development, **cultural preservation & premium pricing**
- Protect **traditional knowledge**, ensure quality, and boost **tourism** & economic engagement

Bangladesh Context

- **Legal framework:** Geographical Indication(GI) of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 2013 under DPDT
- 60 GI-certified products since 2016
- Key products: Jamdani, Muslin, Hilsa, Khirsapat mango etc

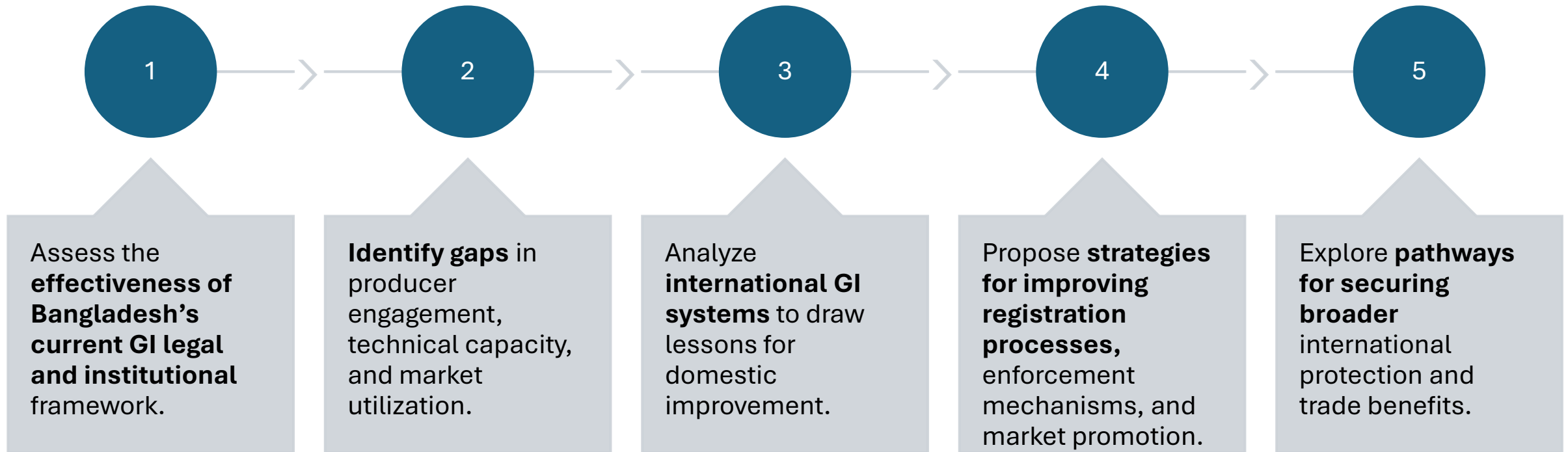
Challenges

- Limited **commercial** use;
- low producer **awareness & engagement**
- **Weak producer organizations & technical capacity**
- Weak R&D, **Quality control**, Compliance
- Poor **enforcement & overlapping** GIs with neighboring countries
- Lack of **international protection**

Opportunities

- Safeguard **cultural heritage & traditional products**
- Boost **rural development**, income generation, and **poverty alleviation**
- Enhance product differentiation, **Export**, quality control, global market access
- Strengthen **ecosystem: producer engagement**, institutional support, marketing, and international protection

Objectives



Methodology



Literature Review: Academic papers, reports (national & international), and news articles to explore GI concepts, global frameworks, and country-specific experiences.



Legal Analysis: Examination of the Geographical Indication of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 2013 to assess strengths, weaknesses, and provisions of Bangladesh's GI system.

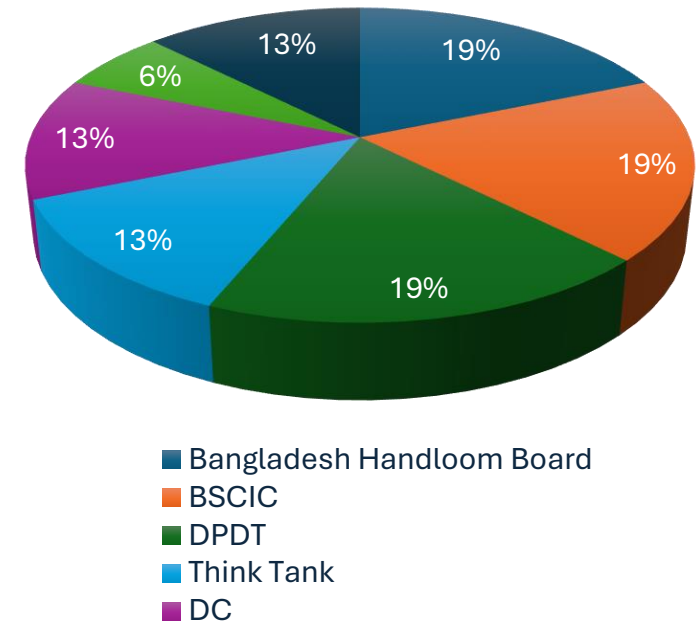


Qualitative Synthesis: Integration of expert opinions and published analyses on challenges, benefits, and current GI practices.



Outcome: Provides a well-rounded assessment to guide evidence-based policy recommendations, covering legal, institutional, producer-level, and international dimensions.

Distribution of Respondents in the Study



Global GI Protection Approaches

Sui Generis Systems

Dedicated legal frameworks for GI registration, use, quality control, and enforcement.

EU model: **PDO (Protected Designation of Origin)** & **PGI (Protected Geographical Indication)**.

Often enforced **ex-officio**; supports rural development, heritage, and market recognition.

Trademark Systems

Used when no sui generis system exists.

Types: **Collective Marks** (associations maintain standards) & **Certification Marks** (compliance with origin/production rules).

Less comprehensive than sui generis systems for enforcement and cultural protection.

Sui Generis

Bangladesh
India
Japan
Vietnam
Italy
Switzerland
Türkiye

Trademark System

United States
Australia
New Zealand

Hybrid Systems

Brazil
Canada
China

Collective Trademarks and Certification Marks can complement GI protection, as Collective Trademarks safeguard marks used by groups or associations (e.g., Napa Valley Vintners), while Certification Marks assure compliance with specific standards. Including these provisions in Bangladesh's Trademark Act could enhance producer benefits and market recognition.

International & National Frameworks for GI Protection: Legal & Institutional Landscape in Bangladesh

WTO TRIPs Agreement

- Provides global baseline for GI protection.
- **Article 22:** Defines GIs; prevents misleading use/unfair competition.
- **Article 23:** Stronger protection for wines/spirits (debate on extension).
- **Article 1.1:** Flexibility for national systems (sui generis, trademark, hybrid).

Lisbon Agreement (WIPO) and its Geneva Act (2015)

- Covers **Appellations of Origin (AOs) & GIs**.
- **Single international application** → protection in multiple member states.
- Strong safeguards against misuse/imitation.
- Reduces **costs & administrative burden** for producers.

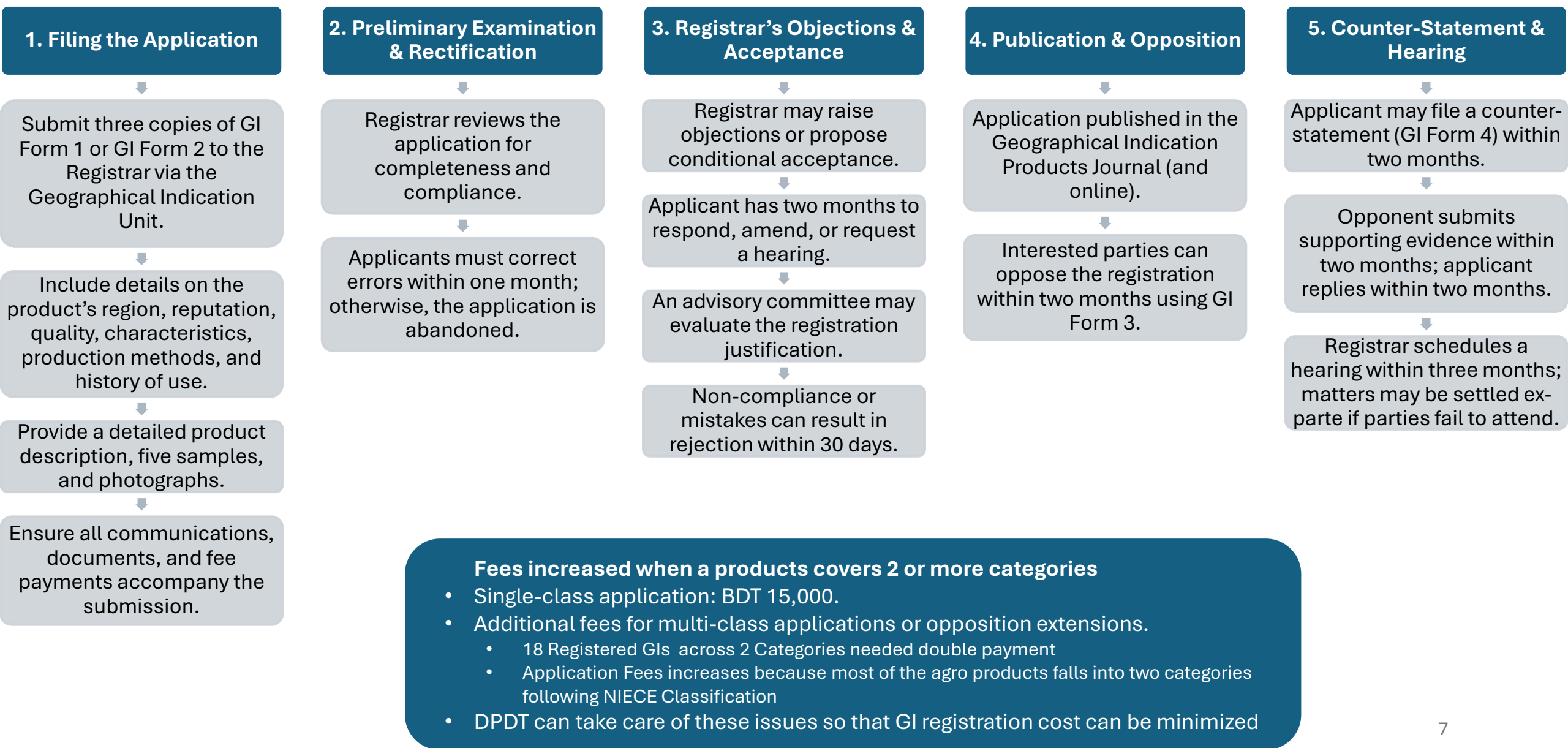
Legal Framework in Bangladesh

- GI Act, 2013 + GI Rules, 2015 → **sui generis system**.
- Aligns with **WTO TRIPS** but **not part of Lisbon/Geneva Act** → limited multilateral protection.
- Section 3 ensures Act's supremacy over conflicting laws.

Institutional Structure in Bangladesh

- GI functions managed by **DPDT** (Ministry of Industries).
- Intended **GI Unit not yet established** → handled by limited staff.
- Stakeholders:
 - Ministry of Commerce – export/trade support
 - Ministry of Agriculture & local govt. – producer linkages
 - Producer associations – weak role in quality control
 - NGOs/Development partners – training & market support

GI Application Process & Fees – Bangladesh



90% of GI Application by the Govt Organization, 8 are Shared GI with India

- **Registered GIs:** 60 products (textiles, agriculture, handicrafts, food)

Bangladesh and India: Shared GI Registration

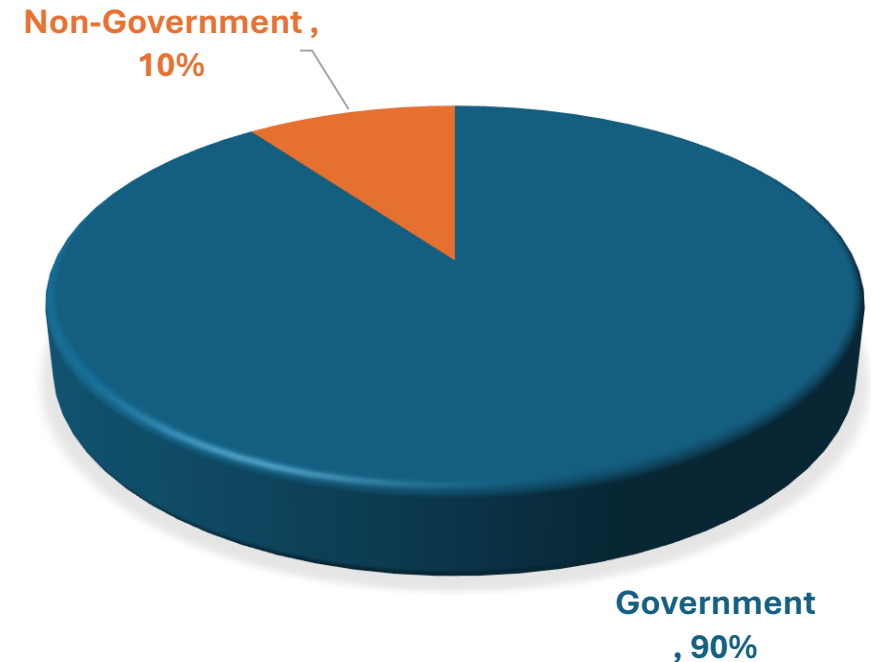


Jamalpur Nakshi Katha
Chapainawabgong Khirshapat Mango
Rajshahi Chapainawabgong Fazli Mango
Dhakai Muslin
Jamdani saree
Gopalgong's Rosogollah
Tangail Saree
Sundarban Honey

Nakshi Katha of West Bengal
Maldah Khirshapati Mango
Maldah Fazli Mango
Bengal Muslin
Upadha Jamdani
Banglar Rosogollah
Tangail Saree of Bengal
Sundarban Honey

Bangladesh GI Act, 2013 (Section 7) allows registration of **homonymous GIs** (same/similar names from different regions) but a **bilateral agreement** is necessary to enable mutual recognition, joint promotion, quality standards, and cross-border enforcement.

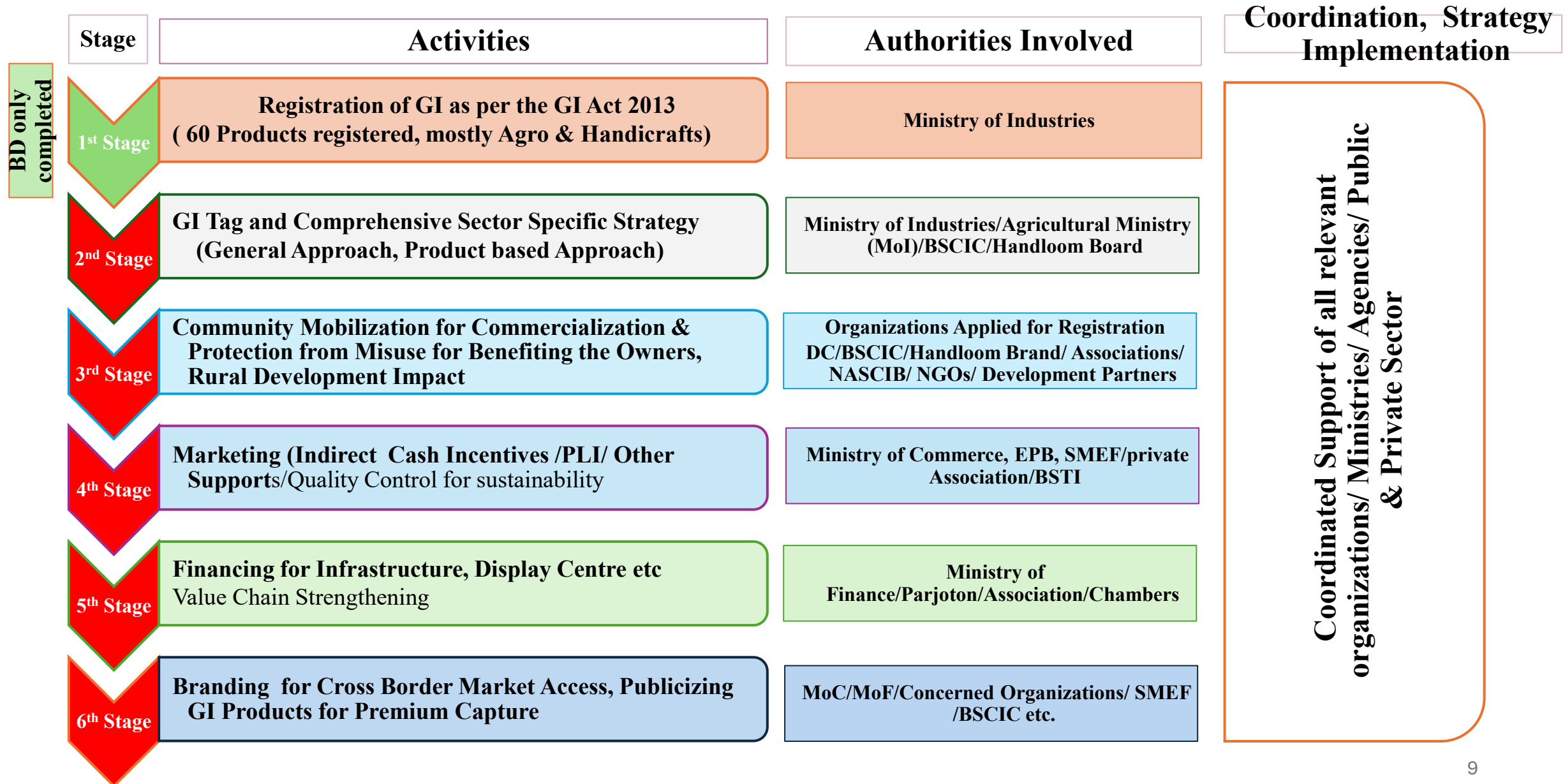
GI APPLICANTS SUMMARY



~90% of GI applications come from government bodies: DCs 45%, Handloom Board 15%, BSCIC 5%, UNOs 5%; only 10% from private associations, showing a top-down approach.

Heavy govt. reliance → limited producer ownership → risk of “paper GIs.”

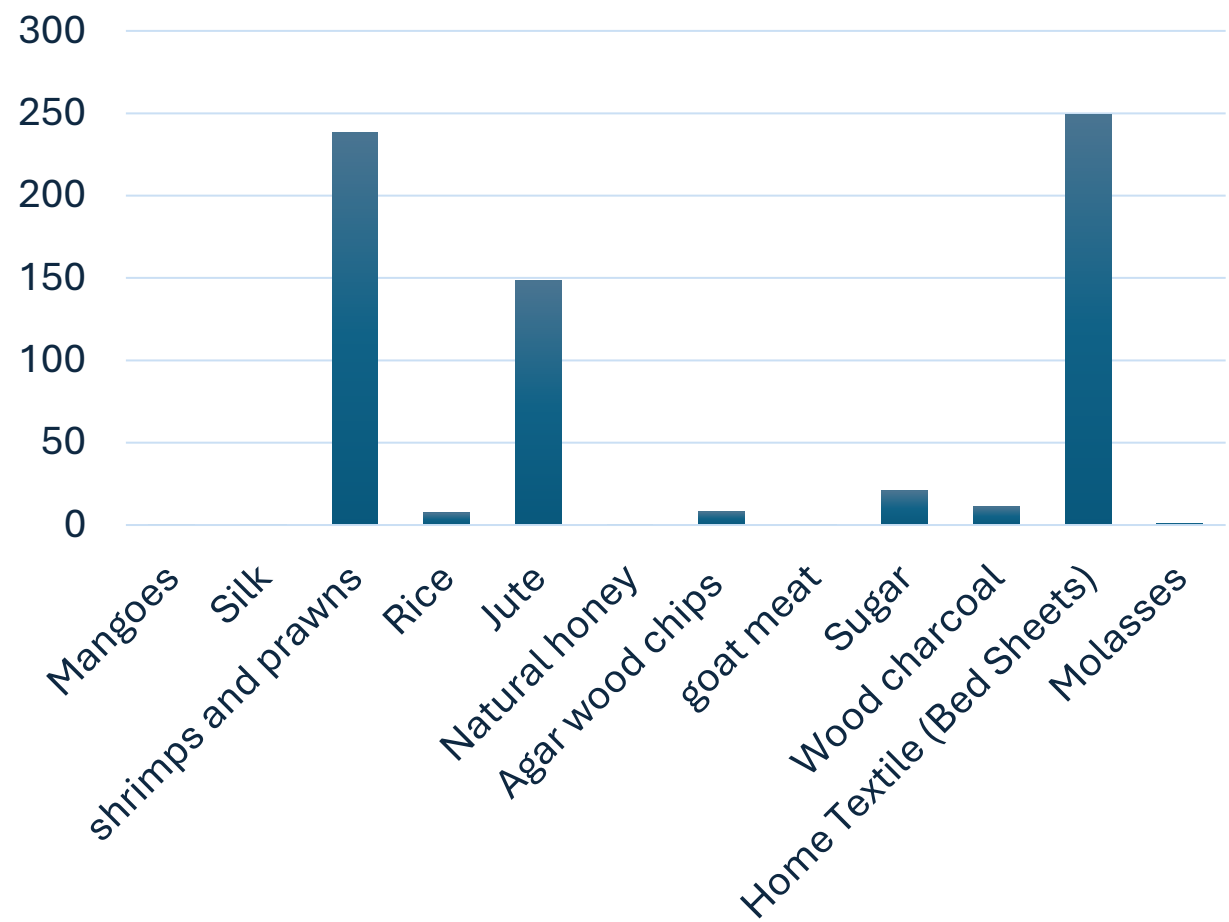
Full Life Cycle of Enjoying the Benefits of GI- BGD Completed Only One Stage



Market Diversification & Export Potential

Exported Products Without GI Branding

Exports in 2024-25 (in million USD)



Total Export (13 GI Related Products) USD 840 million

Potential with GI Branding

Potential with GI Branding

- Some GI products are already exported, but **exports occur without direct use of GI Tag**.
- GI products have potential to reduce overreliance on RMG by promoting agro-based and craft-based exports.
- GI products can fetch premium prices in foreign markets, similar to other globally recognized GI goods.
- Bangladeshi GI Products with Export Potential:
 - Mango
 - Hilsa Fish
 - Agar & Atar
 - Jamdani Saree
 - Rajshahi Silk
 - Shataranji (Rangpur)
 - Dhakai Muslin

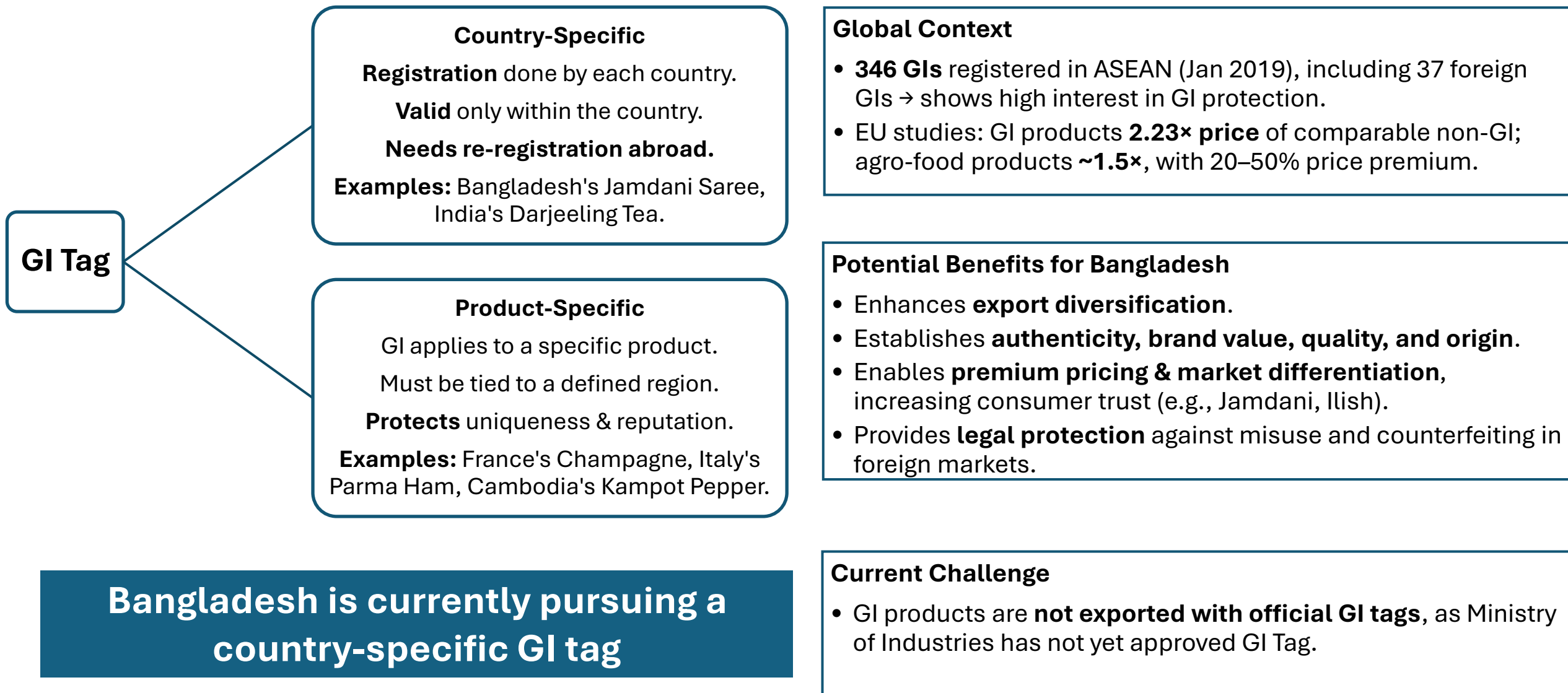
Opportunities:

- Branding through GI registration to command higher prices.
- Entry into niche, high-value international markets.
- Expansion via value-added processing (e.g., dried mango, packaged sweets).

Challenges:

- Weak GI-based branding in exports.
- Quality control, certification, and compliance hurdles.
- Limited producer awareness of GI's role in exports.

GI Tag in Bangladesh – Announced Soon



Direct Cash Incentive will not be allowed at the Post-LDC Stage

Sector	FY 2023-2024	July 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025	July 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025	% Decrease
Agar Attar	20%	10%	8%	60%
Rice	10%	5%	3%	70%
Agro & Agro-Processed	20%	15%	10%	50%
Handicrafts	20%	15%	10%	50%
Halal Meat & Processed	20%	15%	10%	50%

Agro exports have declined after the phase-out of cash incentives, and exporters warn that without alternative support, official exports may further shrink.

Observation:

- Among 60 GIs, 60–70% are agro-based.
- Post-LDC: Direct Cash Incentive (CI) not allowed.
- Govt should shift to indirect CI mechanisms, e.g.:
 - Low-cost financing
 - R&D and lab facilities
 - Production-linked incentives (PLI)
 - Compliance & environmental support

The Hilsa Success Story: Beyond the GI Tag

1. Economic Significance

Annual Value: Generates over **\$3 billion** annually.

National Contribution: Accounts for **1.15% of GDP** and **12% of total fish production**.

Livelihood: Supports **450,000 direct** and **2.5 million indirect** livelihoods.

2. A Multi-Pronged Strategy

Conservation First: Hilsa revival began before the 2017 GI, led by government-imposed breeding season bans.

Impressive Growth: Production rose **92%**, from 299,000 MT (2008–09) to 571,000 MT (2023–24).

3. The GI Tag's Role

GI recognition formalized and safeguarded Hilsa's success but did not create it.

True growth came from conservation, livelihood diversification, and coordinated government action.

Urgent Need: Finalize GI tag quickly and ensure packaging plus TCL infrastructure support.

Jamdani Saree: The "Paper GI" Problem

1. Cultural & Economic Significance

National Ambassador: As Bangladesh's first GI and a **UNESCO-recognized Intangible Cultural Heritage**, Jamdani is a flagship product.

Domestic Market: The Jamdani Industrial Estate alone earns **BDT 30-32 crore** annually, with anticipated Eid sales reaching **BDT 150-160 crore**.

2. The Core Challenge: A GI Without a Strategy

The "Paper GI" Problem: The GI registration was a **legal success but a commercial failure** due to a **"coordination gap among players"** and a lack of a clear post-registration strategy.

Weaver Hardship:

Weavers receive **no guidance or training** on how to use GI certificates.

Monthly income of **BDT 5,000-7,000** is insufficient, forcing many to sell their looms.

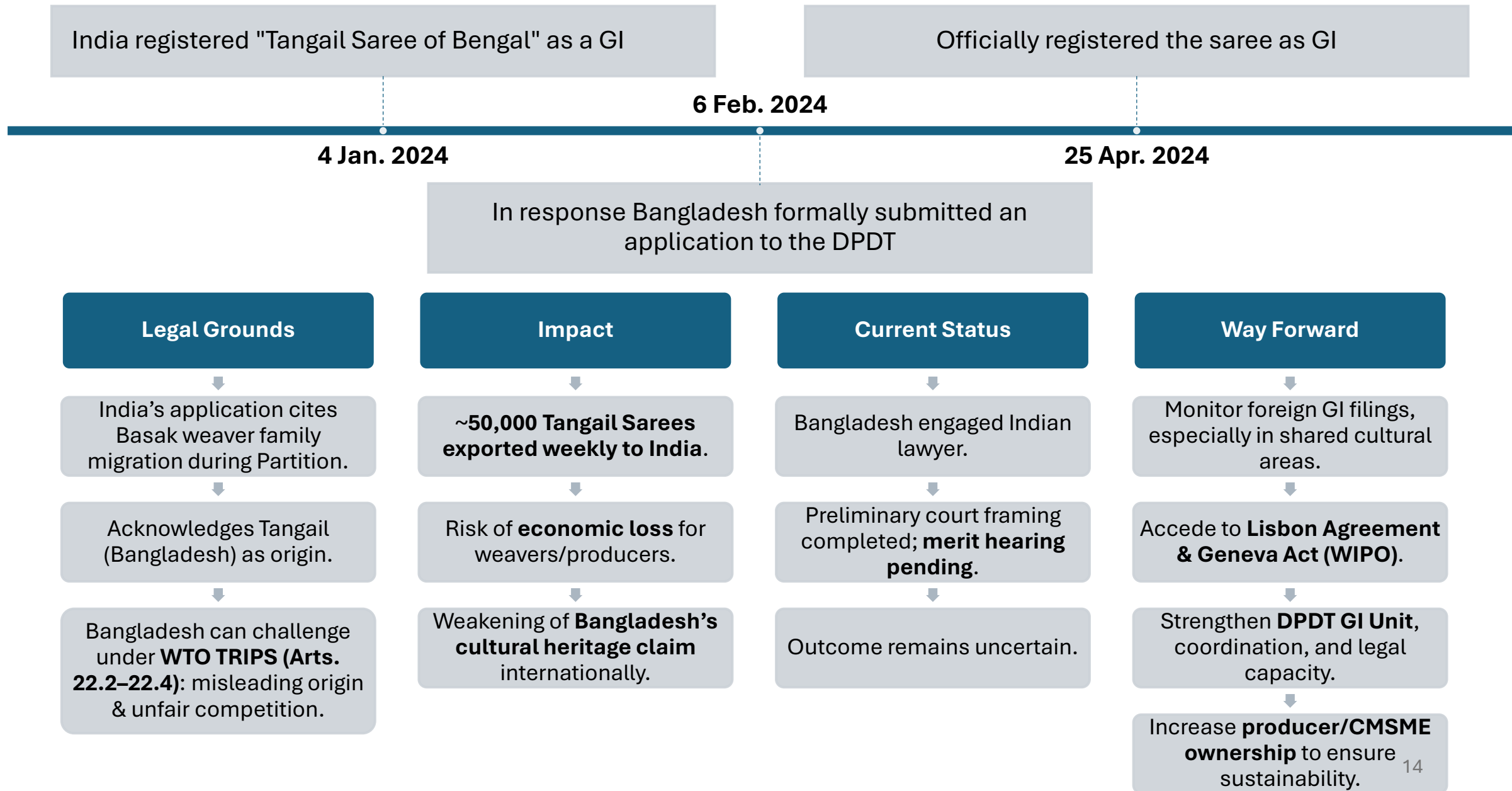
Market Threat: The local market is being flooded with **cheaper, machine-made Indian Jamdani**, a direct result of weak enforcement.

3. The Untapped Potential

Past data shows that targeted support works; a **25% cash incentive** in 1997 helped boost exports to **\$19.694 million**.

Key Takeaway: The Jamdani case shows that a GI recognition alone is not enough; it requires a comprehensive commercialization strategy to be monetized.

Tangail Saree: A Case of Transborder GI Conflict



GIs and Rural Development – Empowering Communities

Handloom Sector (Bangladesh Handloom Board)

- **Products:** Kumar Khali Bed Sheet, Sirajganj Lungi, Comilla Khadi, Mirpur Katan Saree, Sylhet Manipuri Saree, Sirajganj Gamcha, Dhakai Muslin, etc.
- **Scale:** 1,374 registered *tanti* weavers; about 7 lakh *tanti* families.
- **Impact:** Around 35 lakh people (direct + indirect) involved, with markets reaching 3 crore consumers.
- **Contribution:** Sustains traditional weaving skills, creates large-scale rural employment, and supports women-led household-based weaving.

Agarwood & Attar (Bangladesh Agar & Attar Manufacturers & Exporters Association)

- **Context:** Bangladesh is a signatory to **CITES**, with the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change as custodian.
- **Regulation:** Agarwood (*Aquilaria* genus) and derivatives like attar require **CITES clearance** for export.
- **Opportunities:** Potential for premium global markets in natural perfumes and incense.
- **Challenges:** Recent restrictions due to broader CITES enforcement (e.g., bird imports) could disrupt legal exports. Strengthened compliance and negotiation with CITES needed to safeguard livelihoods and exports.

Netrokona Balish Sweet

- **Heritage:** A century-old tradition, first made by Gayanath Ghosh in Netrokona district.
- **Features:** Distinctive taste, oversized format (up to 2.5 kg), and cultural value as gift-worthy sweets.
- **GI Status:** Application filed by the District Commissioner.
- **Challenge:** Despite GI recognition, producers lack capacity for branding, packaging, and marketing. Communities have yet to secure premium prices, limiting rural income growth.



Key Takeaway:

- GIs have strong potential to **empower rural communities** by preserving heritage, creating jobs, and opening premium markets.
- **Handloom** shows scale and employment impact, **Agarwood** highlights regulatory challenges in global trade, and **Balish Sweet** reveals gaps in converting GI recognition into community-level economic benefits.

Key Findings

Economic Value & Potential in Bangladesh

- Bangladesh's key GI products (Hilsa, Jamdani, mangoes, silk, jute, shrimp) have an export value of approximately \$1 billion.
- There is a significant potential to double this value with enhanced commercialization and enforcement efforts.

Global Comparative Gap

Bangladesh's GI system, like many countries, relies mainly on government registrations but lags in delivering broad economic benefits and operational scale.

Country	Number of GIs	Employment	Economic Benefits & Context
Bangladesh	60	4.5 million	Export value is less despite similarities to other systems.
India	605	51,000 (only Darjeeling Tea)	GI promotion through Embassies.
Vietnam	1,869	33% of workforce	GIs contribute 12% of GDP.
Japan	169	~47,000 people (2021)	Contributed \$321.05 million; a key factor in rural economic revitalization.
Italy	6,330	890,000 people	Contributes \$19.79 billion (2019), with \$11.23 billion in export.
China	2,523 (Sui generis) + 7,385 (Trademark)	~20 million people (2020)	Contributed \$134.54 billion in 2023.
Switzerland	4,954	~17,000 people	GIs account for 60% of national export.

Key Findings

Trans-border Issues

- **Issue:** Trans-border conflicts over 8 GIs (e.g., Jamdani, Muslin, Tangail Saree, Sundarbans Honey) with India.
- **Risk:** Potential for conflicts and the development of "**semi-generic**" status, which devalues the products and invites unfair competition.
- **Systemic Problem:** The Sui Generis system for national protection proves limiting in resolving homonymous or shared GIs.

Domestic Constraints & Producer Concerns

- **Institutional Weaknesses:** The current GI Act lacks strong enforcement, and there is a need for specialized units within the DPDT, better inter-ministerial coordination, and an official advisory council. A comprehensive national survey of potential GIs has not been conducted.
- **Producer-Related Constraints:** Producers face significant challenges, including a lack of access to proper **labs and testing facilities** for quality standardization.
- **Over-reliance on Incentives:** Producers, such as those in the Agar & Atar sector, are highly dependent on **cash incentives (reduced from 20% to 8%)**. There is a risk that if these incentives are discontinued, official exports will drop while informal exports increase.
- **Lack of Lab Facilities:** A significant barrier to quality standardization and international market access is the **absence of proper labs and testing facilities** in Bangladesh.

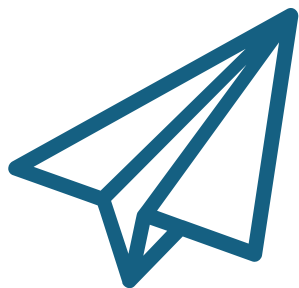
Sustainability & Market Impact

- **Limited Producer Ownership:** **90%** of GIs are registered by **government organizations**, while the private sector's involvement is minimal and weak (only 10%). This top-down approach raises concerns about long-term sustainability and market penetration.
- **Low Market Impact:** Weak producer participation and the absence of strong associations undermine the market impact of GIs. Without producer ownership, the GI label risks losing credibility and failing to translate into tangible market benefits.

Recommendations

1. Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enact a comprehensive national GI policy with long-term goals and strategic priorities. Establish an official advisory council to guide GI initiatives.• Incorporate Collective Trademarks and Certification Marks into the Trademark Act to strengthen GI protection and utilization.• Approve a GI tag on an urgent basis and introduce a GI Tag User Policy alongside a sector-specific strategy to strengthen branding, expand market access, and maximize policy benefits for GI products.
2. Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a National Commercialization and Marketing Strategy to promote GI products.• Organize regional GI fairs and create official documentation to support local branding and sales.• Launch branding initiatives with support for lab and testing facilities, quality control, and R&D.
3. Export Diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategically select 5–10 GI products with high export potential and set specific export targets.• Implement robust certification and traceability systems to meet international standards.
4. Cross-Border Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proactively engage in diplomatic efforts to negotiate specific GI protection agreements with key trading partners and neighboring countries.• Establish a legal framework (bilateral agreement/FTA/PTA) for the management of trans-border GIs to prevent conflicts and the risk of products becoming "semi-generic."
5. R&D	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct a national survey to identify and prioritize potential GI products across all sectors.• Prioritize R&D support to improve product quality and enhance the uniqueness of GI products.
6. Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extend the CMSME Refinancing Scheme 2025 of Bangladesh Bank to agro-based GI products to provide low-cost financing specially to Women Entrepreneurs.
7. Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Launch comprehensive awareness campaigns to educate producers, consumers, and officials about the benefits and importance of GIs.• Enforce the use of the official GI tag with improved packaging to establish it as a mark of authenticity.

Thank You!



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