Proceeding of the national consultation on the proposed forest reference level of Bangladesh for REDD+

Bangladesh Forest Department
11 April 2018

UN-REDD
PROGRAMME

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations   UNDP   UN environment

The UN-REDD Programme, implemented by FAO, UNDP and UNEP, has two components: (i) assisting in developing countries to prepare and implement national REDD strategies and mechanisms; (ii) supporting the development of normative solutions and standardized approaches based on sound science for a REDD instrument linked with the UNFCCC. The programme helps empower countries to manage their REDD processes and will facilitate access to financial and technical assistance tailored to the specific needs of the countries.

The application of UNDP, UNEP and FAO rights-based and participatory approaches will also help ensure the rights of indigenous and forest-dwelling people are protected and the active involvement of local communities and relevant stakeholders and institutions in the design and implementation of REDD plans.

The programme is implemented through the UN Joint Programmes modalities, enabling rapid initiation of programme implementation and channelling of funds for REDD efforts, building on the in-country presence of UN agencies as a crucial support structure for countries. The UN-REDD Programme encourage coordinated and collaborative UN support to countries, thus maximizing efficiencies and effectiveness of the organizations' collective input, consistent with the "One UN" approach advocated by UN members.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 11 April 2018, a national consultation on the proposed forest reference level of Bangladesh for REDD+ was organised under the "UN-REDD Bangladesh National Programme" at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon, Dhaka. The consultation was organised with the technical support from the FAO. In total 76 participants from 30 organizations participated in the consultation. The objectives of this consultation were to (i) present and inform the proposed forest reference level to policy makers and national stakeholders, (ii) facilitate the discussion on the proposed forest reference level, and (iii) discuss the potentials linkages of the forest reference level with the upcoming forest-related activities and projects undertaken by the Bangladesh Forest Department.

Mr. Md. Rakibul Hasan Mukul and Ms. Marufa Akther presented the objectives, the context of the national forest reference level and the results obtained from the analysis of the historical data. The presentation was followed by the discussion session, which would support the finalization of the forest reference level. All the invited stakeholders appreciated the efforts of Measurement Reporting and Verification (MRV) working group and Forest Reference Level working group involved in the development of forest reference level. The consultation was chaired by Mr. Mohammed Shafiul Alam Chowdhury, Chief Conservator of Forests, Bangladesh Forest Department. Chief Guests were Mr. Abdullah Al Mohsin Chowdhury, Secretary in Charge, Ministry of Environment and Forest, Dr. Nurul Quadir, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forest, and Dr Sultan Ahmed, Director General (Additional Secretary), Department of Environment. The submission of the forest reference level will be a useful and a good opportunity for the country to identify the sinks and sources of the greenhouse gases from the forest-related activities and integrate climate change mitigation measures into the national planning.

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1. Introduction

In accordance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) decisions on REDD+, developing country Parties can voluntarily contribute to climate change mitigation actions by undertaking forest related activities that aim not only to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, but also enhance carbon stocks. REDD+ activities are one of the agreed mechanism to mitigate climate change impacts. The five REDD+ activities are: (a) reducing emissions from deforestation; (b) reducing emissions from forest degradation; (c) conservation of forest carbon stocks; (d) sustainable management of forests; and (e) enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

In UNFCCC conference at Warsaw (COP 19), a set of decisions were taken in relation to REDD+ (Warsaw REDD+ Framework). Developing countries Parties seeking to obtain and receive results-based finance from the implementation of REDD+ activities should have the following in place: (1) a national strategy or action plan; (2) an assessed forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level; (3) a national forest monitoring system and (4) a system for providing information on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected.

Forest Reference Emission Level/Forest reference level (FREL/FRL) are expressed as tonnes of CO_2 equivalent per year for a reference period against which the emissions and removals from a results period will be compared. Thus, reference levels serve as benchmarks for assessing each country's performance in implementing REDD+ activities. Submitting a national FRL to the UNFCCC is an involved process that requires understanding national circumstances that drive emissions and removals and the adoption of reliable and transparent procedures. In this context, a National Consultation on the proposed FRL organized by the Forest Department, Ministry of Environment and Forest under the UN-REDD Bangladesh National Programme.

The UN-REDD Bangladesh National Programme is a joint programme of UNDP and FAO designed to assist the government in her preparation for REDD+ readiness.

1.1   Forest reference level in the context of Bangladesh

Given the technical and procedural complexity involved in the implementation of REDD+ activities, Parties agreed that national REDD+ programme should be done in three phases (Figure 1). The choice of a starting phase, depends on the specific national circumstances, capacities and capabilities of each developing country Party and the level of support received. Bangladesh is currently in the readiness phase, and developing national REDD+ strategies or actions plans, policies and measures (PAMs), and built capacity to contribute to climate change mitigation through forest-related activities. The country is under the process of submitting a national FRL/FREL to the UNFCCC with the aim to assess the effectiveness of REDD+ activities and potentially be eligible for results based payments.
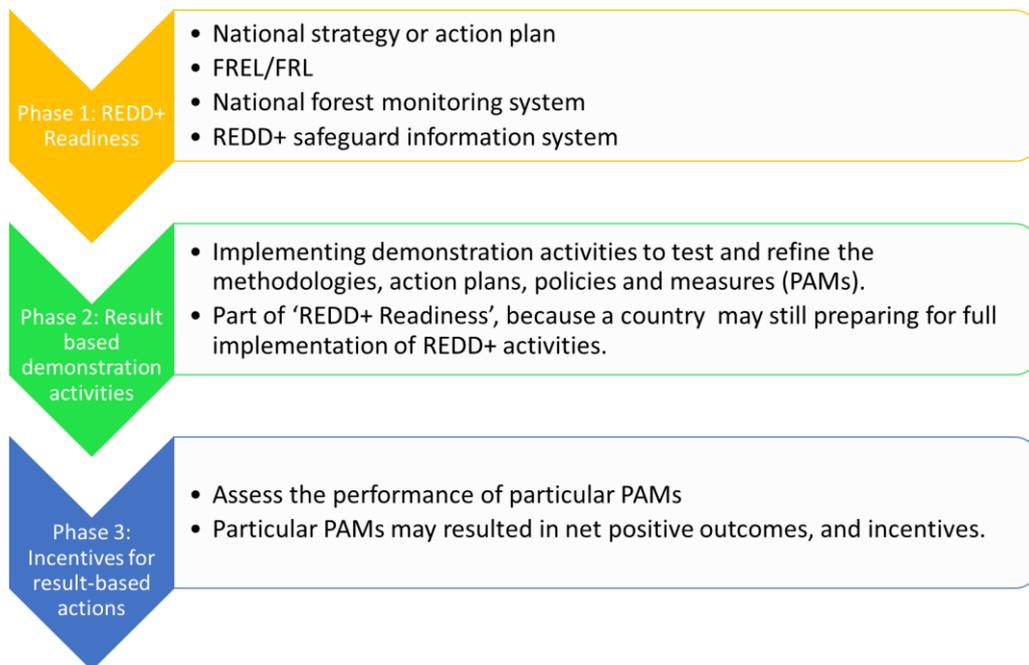
Figure 1: National REDD+ program in three phases.

To construct a national forest reference level, Bangladesh must reflect and make methodological choices on the following key elements: **scale, scope, forest definition, selection of historical data and analysis, stratification, selection of construction methodology, and reference period**. As a part of the capacity development activities related to the above-mentioned elements, the UN-REDD Bangladesh National Programme has organized several technical trainings and workshops (Figure 2).

Accordingly, a national consultation on the preparation and submission of forest reference level was held on 11 April 2018 involving 74 representatives (68 male and 6 female) from 30 key national organizations.
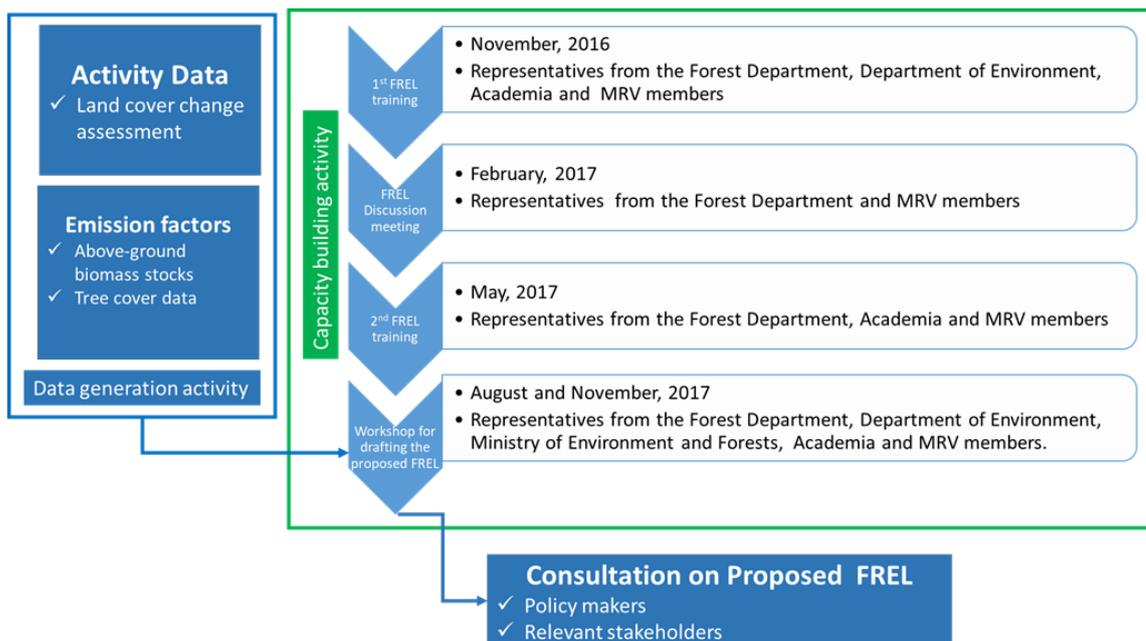

Figure 2: The development of FREL/FRL in the context of Bangladesh.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the National Consultation were to:

- Present the proposed reference level to policy level officials and other stakeholders;
- Share with policy makers and national stakeholders the methodology and data that were used to develop the forest reference level;
- Raise awareness about the development and submission of the national forest reference level to the UNFCCC
- Provide a forum for discussions and suggestions on the proposed forest reference level,
- Present the limitations and future improvements to enhance understanding of the forest reference level
- Discuss the potential linkages of the forest reference level with forest-related activities undertaken by the Forest Department

3. Presentations

This session comprised two presentations. First presentation highlighted the context of the UN-REDD programme, requirements and guidelines under the UNFCCC and the importance of the development forest reference level for the country and definition/explanation of common terminologies / abbreviations used in the second presentation (i.e., FREL/REL, Activity Data, definition of Forest, deforestation, degradation, afforestation/reforestation, enhancement of carbon stock, conservation of carbon stock, sustainable management etc).

Second presentation was on the estimation mechanism and result of Forest Reference Level proposed for Bangladesh. It showed the detailed and technical aspects considered for the development of FRL at national level. The FREL used the forest definition as "Land spanning **more than 0.5 hectares** with trees **higher than 5 meters** (exception for *Ceriops decandra* with height of 2 meters) and a canopy cover of **more than 10 percent (%),** or trees able to reach these thresholds in situ. It does not include land that is predominantly under rural settlement, agricultural, or urban land use; trees within such areas are considered as non-forest trees." Above group biomass, below ground biomass and carbon-d- oxide were considered for five Bangladesh forest inventory zones for the calculation of FRL. **Deforestation, Forest degradation** and **Enhancement of forest carbon stocks from afforestation and forest restoration** are the REDD+ activities considered for preparation of FRL. Land cover map 2000, 2015 and tree cover change map 2000-2014 were used for the identification of REDD+ activities (figure 3).
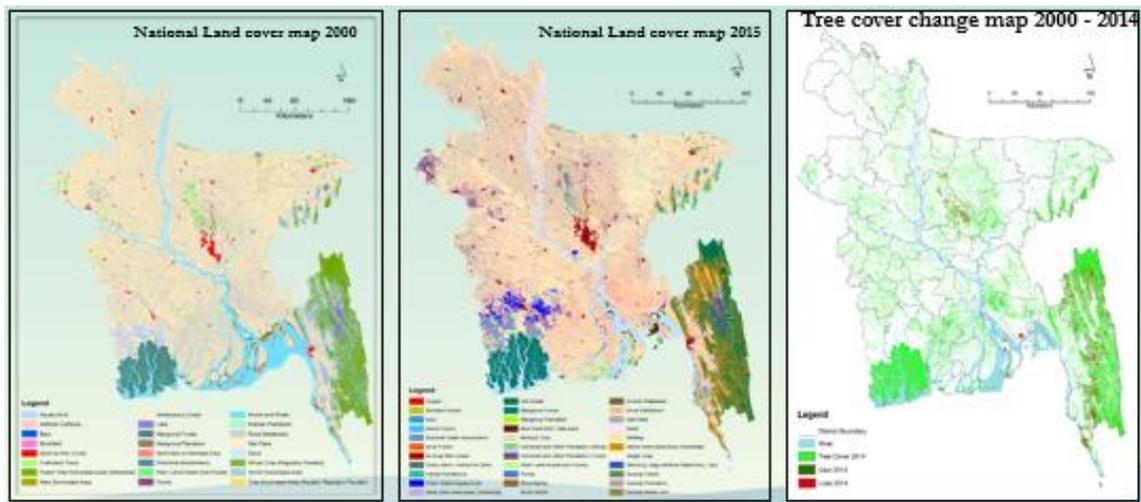
Figure 3: Activity data for the development of FRL

Bangladesh-specific aboveground biomass stocks obtained from previous forest inventories from 1997, 2001, 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2014 were used for the calculation of removal and emission by the REDD+ activities.

All five Bangladesh Forest Inventory (BFI) zones (Coastal, Hill, Sal, Sundarban and Village) showed the removal and emission in the country. Emission in hill zone is significantly higher followed by Sal zone in comparison to the other zones. Removal is more than the emission in Sundaraban and Coastal zone. Major removal is the trees outside forests of the country during the period in Village zone.

The presenters were:

- Mr. Md. Rakibul Hasan Mukul, Conservator of Forest, Central Circle and NPD, UN-REDD Bangladesh National Programme: Presented the first presentation;
- Ms. Marufa Akther, Conservator of Forest, Social Forestry Circle, & member of FREL/FRL working group

Members who provided additional information and answers against queries in addition to above two members were:

- Dr. Mariam Akhter, Assistant Conservator of Forests, RIMS Unit and member of FREL/FRL & MRV working group
- Mr. K M Nazmul Islam Noyon, Assistant Professor, Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences, University of Chittagong and member of FREL/FRL & MRV working group
- Professor Dr. Golam Rakkibu, Khulna University, Khulna and MRV Working Group member
- Mr. Zaheer Iqbal, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Forest Department and member of FREL/FRL & MRV working group

4. Discussion on the presentations:

Representatives of different organisations and universities attended the discussion with their comments, concerns or questions on the presentations (figure 4). MRV and FRL working group members actively participated in the discussion. Followings are the discussion points:

Discussion on Data and methodology:

Available data used for the development of FRL following the tier 2 approach of IPCC and UNFCCC guidelines was mentioned. Methodology for identification of REDD+ activities i.e. deforestation, degradation (low and high) and enhancement (restoration and reforestation) and the matrix on separation of forest and non-forest areas were discussed. Above ground biomass and CO_2 was considered for the FRL development as this data is consistently available; data on below ground biomass is not available. Discussion also took place on not considering the other GHGs apart from CO_2 to calculate the emission – as there was no sufficient data. It was stressed that consideration of data for FRL development depends on the availability of data; there are future scope for improvement and monitoring the FRL.

Discussion on Scope of including the Tree outside of Forests in REDD+:

In the context of increasing trends of tree resources outside the forest areas in comparison to forested areas, it was stressed that, Bangladesh Forest Department is responsible for management forestland in Bangladesh. Emission or removal from managed forestlands can be controlled by the implementation of REDD+ activities by the department. The department has no jurisdiction over forest/tree resources outside the forestland. Trees outside forests (ToF), also do not falls under the definition of forest. Despite, the stakeholders stressed that ToF appeared as potential removal source of carbon-di-oxide equivalent in the country and means to represent this contribution and/or to take this into consideration needs to be discussed at higher level.

Discussion on capacity development:

Policy/strategy development for the implementation REDD+ activities and the current capacity of forest department for the implementation of REDD+ activities and monitoring the FRL were discussed in detail. National Project Director informed the audience about the on-going and up-coming activities under the project for the development of national strategy, policies and measures considering the FRL, Divers of Deforestation and Forest Degradation (D&D) report and Policies and Measures (PAMs) study. Audience suggested to consider the existing plans and goals such as SDG, Forestry Master Plan (draft), Country Investment Plan, 7th Five Year Plan etc. for monitoring their performance in FRL calculation. Capacity building is a continuous process that has started since 2012 with the joining of Bangladesh in UN-REDD programme in 2011 under targeted support and continuing under UN-REDD Bangladesh National Programme (2015-2018) in the readiness phase, which is Phase One of the REDD+ capacity building. Along with BFD officials, other stakeholder from the government, academia and MRV working group members are considered in the capacity development process for the implementation of REDD+.

Discussion on Transparency:

Developing a robust and transparent National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) to conduct MRV is a major activity in the REDD+ readiness and implementation phases. Timely data collection

related to REDD+ implementation should be transparent therefore, operationalization of a NFMS is crucial. Audience opined to make available the activity data and emission factors through the NFMS that was used for FRL development for knowledge sharing. The Bangladesh Forest Information System (BFIS) GEOPORTAL is under development, which will host all the data related to forests, and serves as NFMS was informed at the discussion. The limitation on data availability and the scope of future improvement of the FRL was also discussed.

Discussion on technical assessment of FREL

Each submission of a proposed reference level, in the context of results-based payments, shall be subject to a technical assessment. FRL will be technically assessed by an assessment team in accordance with the procedures and time frames established by the Conference of the Parties (COP). Representative from the Ministry of Environment and Forests was reminded to the FREL team to be prepared in advance to address the questions that could be raised by the assessment team.

Figure 4: Speech by Mr. Mohammed Shafiul Alam Chowdhury, CCF, Forest Department

Some notes from the speech of special guest, Mr. Dr. Nurul Quadir, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forest:

- FRL Document is well constructed and captured the context as reflected from the discussion
- MoEF works for improvement of environment, forest and climate to address the vulnerability to climate change. FRL has the role in benefiting the people of the country through the implementation of REDD+
- Bangladesh submitted NDC voluntarily and not only working for adaption also working for mitigation to the climate change
- Country like Bangladesh, Trees outside forests (ToF) can be considered in the negotiations to bring under the result based payment
- Consistency of the data and methodology should be ensured
- Bangladesh can play a role model in field of development where development not without environment through contribution in reduction of global emissions
- Transparency and MRV will be ensured

Some notes from the speech of special guest, Mr. Dr. Sultan Ahmed, Director General of Department of Environment:

- National Environment Plan 2018 should be considered
- Following the Prime minister's directives Department of Environment providing the clearance for the investments where the tree plantation is one of the precondition for the establishment of the industry
- Tree movement of the country can be considered the aspiration of the result based payment
- Forest department has got the turning point by the development of FRL

Some notes from the speech of the chief Guest, Mr. Abdullah Al Mohsin Chowdhury Secretary, Ministry of Environment of Forest:

- Bangladesh is not yet reporting for forestry sector in NDC
- GHG reporting from forestry sector through Third national communication and FRL should be consistent
- Capacity building for the REDD+ implementation need to be ensured and
- FRL document is prepared by the nationals of the country which is very good and therefore very limited questions will be raised on the FRL document during technical assessment
- Data reference and reports should be well documented for sharing with the technical assessment team
- Forest land should be demarcated and projects are considering this issue
- All audience are requested to read and provide suggestion for the improvement of the FRL document

Some notes from the speech of the Chair, Mr. Mohammed Shafiul Alam Chowdhury, Chief Conservator of Forests, Bangladesh Forest Department:

- With the reduction of collection of fuelwood from the forest for brick field will improve the deforestation scenario
- All the research has limitation and it is the scope for future improvement. The FRL team will continue working for the improvement of the FRL document.
- Forest land will be demarcated with the availability of fund and support of the government
- Whether the country will receive the result based payment or not, but capacity will be strengthened in terms of consistent monitoring the forests and country will be benefited
- FRL team is confident to answer all the questions of the technical assessment team

5. FUTURE IMPROVEMENT AND NEXT STEPS

Further steps were identified for the improvement of the FREL/FRL in future as below:

Future improvement

- ✓ Follow up to receive the review comments
- ✓ Provide training to FRL and RIMS team
- ✓ Country-specific emission factors for soil, deadwood and litter
- ✓ Forest boundary delineation
- ✓ Capacity building program on forest monitoring and assessment
- ✓ Establishing separate REDD+ unit in Bangladesh Forest Department

Next steps

- ✓ Bangladesh FRL will be submitted to and endorsed by the UNFCCC
  - This necessitates launching new forestry programs aiming at carbon stock improvement
  - Improve forests both in coverage and quality
- ✓ Meanwhile
  - Identified the Drivers of Deforestation and Forest Degradation
  - Conducted focused research – e.g., governance, land tenure, gender
  - Analyzed the drivers and working to develop Policies and Measures (PAMs)
- ✓ BFD to work in improving the forestry sector to:
  - Enhance forest carbon stock – afforestation, reforestation, regeneration
    - ❑ Working with the partners of new carbon-responsive initiatives – SUFAL, SUROKKHA, and Coastal afforestation project.
  - Conserve forest carbon stock

    - ❑ Strengthening Protected Areas system management
  - Strengthening the sustainable forest management
  - Future negotiation for the inclusion of Tree outside forest (TOF) at the UNFCCC
  - More community engagement
- ✓ Policy Implications
  - More investments needed in the forestry sector
  - Strengthen stakeholders' capacity for protection and management of forests

APPENDIX 1.   AGENDA

Time	Topic
10.00 – 10.30	Registration and Tea
10.30 – 10.40	Introduction to National Consultation, Objectives and expected outcomes **Mr. Rakibul Hasan Mukul**, Conservator of Forests & Project Director of UN-REDD Bangladesh National Programme
10.40-11.20	Presentation on the submission of Bangladesh's Forest Reference Level for REDD+ under the UNFCCC **Mr. Rakibul Hasan Mukul**, Conservator of Forests & Project Director of UN-REDD Bangladesh National Programme **Ms. Marufa Akther,** Conservator of Forests , Social Forest Circle, Dhaka
11.20 – 12.30	Discussion session Facilitator: **Dr. Mariam Akhter**, Assistant Conservator of Forests, Forest Department
12.30 – 13.00	Speech by **Dr. Sultan Ahmed**, Additional Secretary and Director General, DoE
	Speech by **Mr. Nurul Quadir**, Additional Secretary, MoEF
	Speech by **Mr. Mohammed Shafiul Alam** Chowdhury, CCF, Forest Department
13.00 – 14.00	Closing and Lunch

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APPENDIX 3.   EVALUATION RESULTS

L1_	1	Male	6	86%
L1_	2	Female	1	14%
		How often do you participate in training related to forest monitoring?		
Q1_	1	First time	6	86%
Q1_	2	1-3 every year	1	14%
Q1_	3	More than 3 per year	0	0%
Q1_	4	Regularly (approximately one per month)	0	0%
		I would describe my self as?		
Q2_	1	A professor/academic	2	29%
Q2_	2	A student	0	0%
Q2_	3	Forest Department staff	3	43%
Q2_	4	Government staff (outside Forest Department)	2	29%
Q2_	5	NGO staff	0	0%
Q2_	6	Private consultant	0	0%
Q2_	99	Other	0	0%
				0%
		My professional background relates most closely to:		
			TRUE	
Q3_1	1	Forester	5	71%
Q3_2	2	GIS/RS	0	0%
Q3_3	3	Statistics	0	0%
Q3_4	4	Social survey/assessment	0	0%
Q3_5	5	Economics	0	0%
Q3_6	6	Natural Resource Management	1	14%
Q3_7	7	Ecology	0	0%
Q3_99	99	other	1	14%
		My years of relevant experience is:		
Q4_	1	1-2 years	1	14%
Q4_	2	3-5 years	1	14%
Q4_	3	5-7 years	0	0%
Q4_	4	8-10 years	2	29%
Q4_	5	More than 10 years	3	43%
		The training was relevant to my daily work		
Q5_	1	Strongly agree	1	14%
Q5_	2	Agree	5	71%
Q5_	3	Neutral	0	0%

Q5_	4	Disagree	1	14%
Q5_	5	Strongly disagree	0	0%
		I had enough previous knowledge to understand the content of the event		
Q6_	1	Strongly agree	2	29%
Q6_	2	Agree	3	43%
Q6_	3	Neutral	1	14%
Q6_	4	Disagree	1	14%
Q6_	5	Strongly disagree	0	0%
		The training met my expectations in terms of the content and learning outcomes		
Q7_	1	Strongly agree	3	43%
Q7_	2	Agree	4	57%
Q7_	3	Neutral	0	0%
Q7_	4	Disagree	0	0%
Q7_	5	Strongly disagree	0	0%
		The learning resources provided were adequate and useful		
Q8_	1	Strongly agree	5	71%
Q8_	2	Agree	2	29%
Q8_	3	Neutral	0	0%
Q8_	4	Disagree	0	0%
Q8_	5	Strongly disagree	0	0%
		The resource person presented information in a way that i could understand and was easy to follow		
Q9_	1	Strongly agree	4	57%
Q9_	2	Agree	3	43%
Q9_	3	Neutral	0	0%
Q9_	4	Disagree	0	0%
Q9_	5	Strongly disagree	0	0%
		I feel confident to be able to carry out the tasks described in the training without supervision.		
Q10_	1	Strongly agree	0	0%
Q10_	2	Agree	5	71%
Q10_	3	Neutral	0	0%
Q10_	4	Disagree	2	29%
Q10_	5	Strongly disagree	0	0%
		I was pleased with the venue/meeting room/snacks etc		
Q11_	1	Strongly agree	1	14%
Q11_	2	Agree	6	86%
Q11_	3	Neutral	0	0%

Q11_	4	Disagree	0	0%
Q11_	5	Strongly disagree	0	0%
Q12		Are there other people/agencies/organisations that you think should have been included in the training?		
		Faculties, forestry disciplines of universities BFRI SPARRSO Survey of Bangladesh Department of Environment Ministry of land Department of Agriculture		
		sensitization of stakeholders		
		advance level training (uncertainty analysis, Calculation etc) for FD officials		
Q13		Any other comments?		
		It is a benchmark of forestry sector. It is the current scenario of forestry sector of Bangladesh and in future where Bangladesh will need to improve in forestry sector. It can be used as carbon stocking and in carbon trading in future.		