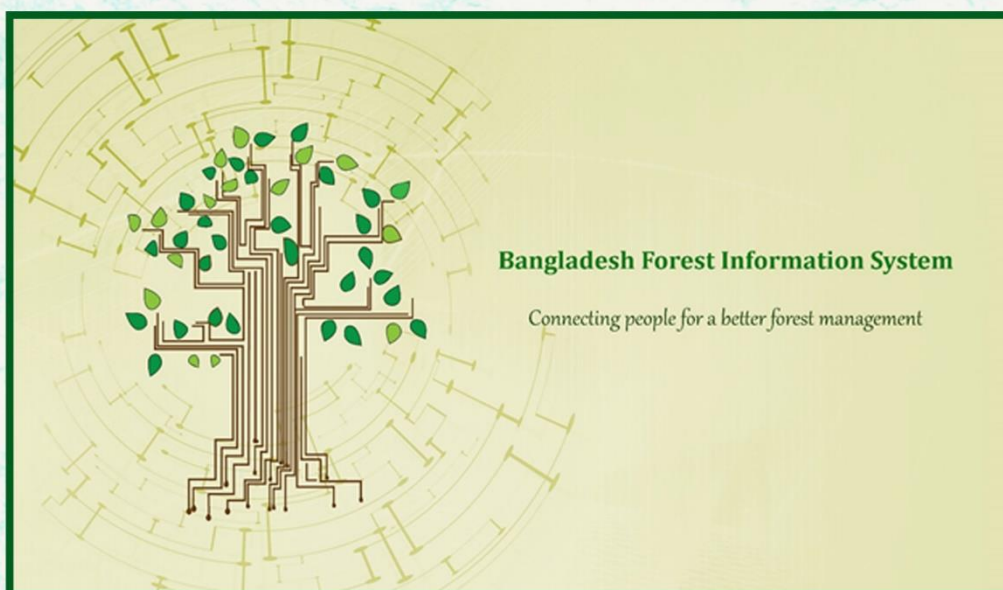# Proceeding of
Bangladesh Forest Information System launching

Bangladesh Forest Department
18 December 2018

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 channeling 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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Disclaimer

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Acronyms

BFIS- Bangladesh Forest Inventory System

BFD- Bangladesh Forest Department

MoEFCC- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

FAO- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

USAID- United States Agency for International Development

BNDA- Bangladesh National Digital Architecture

NDA- National Digital Architecture

BCC- Bangladesh Computer Council

A2i- Access to Information

SDG- Sustainable Development Goals

BAU- Bangladesh Agricultural University

SPARSO- Space Research and Remote Sensing Organization

GoB- Government of Bangladesh

SUST- Shahjalal University of Science and Technology

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

The official launching of Bangladesh Forest Information System (BFIS) was held at Hoimonti Auditorium of Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD) in Dhaka on 18 December 2018. The BFIS, managed by the Resources Information Management System unit of the BFD, is the national information system of the Bangladesh Forest Department under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) for assessing, monitoring, documenting, planning and implementing forest management and conservation activities. The BFIS was developed by the BFD with technical assistance from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and financial assistance from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and UN-REDD Bangladesh National Programme. The total number of participants was 108 and among all participants, 17 were female and 91 were male.

The inaugural session was chaired by Mr. Mohammed Shafiul Alam Chowdhury, Chief Conservator of Forests, Bangladesh Forest Department and the Honorable Additional Secretary, Dr. Md. Billal Hossain, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, was present as Chief Guest in the inauguration ceremony. In addition, Mr. Md. Rakibul Hasan Mukul, Conservator of Forests & PD, Bangladesh UN-REDD National Program, Bangladesh Forest Department, Dr. Mariam Akhter, Assistant Conservator of Forests, Bangladesh Forest Department, Mr. Tanimul Bari, NDA Team Leader, Bangladesh Computer Council, Rumana Sharmin, Results and Learning Management Expert-Access to Information (a2i) Programme, Mr. Robert D. Simpson, FAO Representative in Bangladesh were also present in the workshop as Special Guests and provided valuable presentations and speeches on BFIS. There was also a post discussion session where representatives from various governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations, universities provided their valuable comments and suggestions for BFIS and how to make the system more effective and sustainable.

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1. Introduction

The BFIS framework is designed to provide ready access to the most current, consistent, accurate and transparent information about forestry in Bangladesh through one web-based platform under the BFD. This web-based platform integrates databases, technical reports, manuals, scientific articles, maps and other documents and allows the users to freely access, update, enter and extract information related to the national forest resources of Bangladesh. The development of BFIS is part of contribution of BFD towards achieving the goal of Digital Bangladesh.

The official inauguration of BFIS took place at BFD on 18 December 2018, organized by Bangladesh Forest Department in close collaboration and initiative of FAO and financial support from USAID. The objective of this inauguration programme was to present the Bangladesh Forest Information System, demonstrate the application and usage of BFIS modules and collect feedbacks from participants for further advancement of the platform. Dr. Md. Billal Hossain, Honorable Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change attended the launching ceremony as Chief Guest.

The launching ceremony had two parts. The first part was inaugural session and presentation on BFIS platform and Bangladesh National Digital Architecture (BNDA) and second part was discussion session including all participants coming from various governmental and non-governmental organizations and universities.

2. Inaugural Session

Mr. Mohammed Shafiul Alam Chowdhury, Chief Conservator of Forests, Bangladesh Forest Department was the chair of BFIS launching ceremony and Dr. Md. Billal Hossain, Honorable Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change was present there as Chief Guest. The programme started after the guests took seat at 2 PM the program duly started through the introductory remarks by Mr. Md. Rakibul Hasan Mukul, Conservator of Forests & PD, Bangladesh UN-REDD National Program, Bangladesh Forest Department. Later a video presentation was shown on BFIS and after that Dr Md. Billal Hossain, the chief guest, officially

launched the BFIS. Among others, Dr. Mariam Akhter, Assistant Conservator of Forests, Bangladesh Forest Department, Mr. Tanimul Bari, NDA Team Leader, Bangladesh Computer Council, Rumana Sharmin, Results and Learning Management Expert-Access to Information (a2i) Programme, Mr. Robert D. Simpson, FAO Representative in Bangladesh were present as special guests and delivered their respective speech and presentation as seen in the pictures below. The inauguration session was followed by discussion session which was chaired by Mr. Mohammed Shafiul Alam Chowdhury, Chief Conservator of Forests, Bangladesh Forest Department.

2.1 Mr. Md. Rakibul Hasan Mukul, Conservator of Forests & PD, Bangladesh UN-REDD National Program, Bangladesh Forest Department

Mr. Rakibul started his opening remarks by welcoming everyone to the BFIS launching ceremony. He said that this day marks as a significant success for BFD and MoEFCC as it is a contribution from BFD towards achieving the national goal of Digital Bangladesh. Later he gave a quick overview on BFIS and stated that BFIS is an effort to collect all forestry related information in Bangladesh through which people who are engaged with forest management will be able to get all information from one single platform. This platform will be updated every year and managed by the Resources Information Management System unit of the BFD. He mentioned that the initiative of BFIS started under UN-REDD programme and thanks USAID and FAO on behalf of BFD for providing financial and technical support respectively. Mr. Rakibul hoped that after launching of BFIS, we will be able to see how much success we can get from it. Then he requested for feedbacks, comments and suggestions from users who will be using BFIS so that the areas of BFIS which need more development can be identified and improved. Mr. Rakibul concluded his remarks by requesting the chief guest to officially launch BFIS.

After official launching of BFIS by Dr. Md. Billal Hossain, Honorable Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, a video presentation of Dr. Matieu Henry, Chief Technical Advisor, FAO was shown.

2.2 Dr. Matieu Henry, Chief Technical Advisor, FAO

A video presentation prepared by Dr. Matieu Henry was presented in the launching ceremony. In his presentation, Dr. Matieu mentioned that forests play a vital role in all cycles which make life possible on earth, therefore it is fundamental to life not only in Bangladesh but also on earth. So, it is important to organize and connect all forest related information together through a proper dedicated system which will help all stakeholders, in particular decision makers to support planning, implementation and monitoring of multi-objective forest management and conservation activities. Dr. Matieu also stressed on the fact that the number of information around us is infinite and there is a need to find ways to connect all forestry related information together and for this a proper dedicated system is required to manage and understand how to connect all this information. He stated that a national forest information system is an essential element of any country in the world and the larger information about forest are connected together, the more powerful the system is. Dr. Matieu concluded his presentation by thanking and welcoming everyone to the launch of the Bangladesh Forest Information system.

2.3 Dr. Mariam Akhter, Assistant Conservator of Forests, BFD

Dr. Mariam Akhter provided a brief overview on BFIS, explaining its modules, design and the future plan to make the system more effective and sustainable. She said that prior to BFIS, BFD had a small server similar to BFIS which only stored land related information, known as Forestry information system, consisting of few modules. However it could not develop into a bigger database system due to lack of capacity and proper maintenance. Dr. Mariam stated that Bangladesh Forest Information System (BFIS) is the first web-based information system of the BFD under the MoEFCC for forest management and conservation and it will support innovation in research, education and forestry, provide access to consistent and documented forest related information from a centralized and integrated web-based platform. She mentioned that there is a plan to collect all information from different field level offices of BFD and all collected Information will be disseminated through BFIS. Dr. Mariam explained primarily decided 20 modules for BFIS in her presentation and said that the number of modules will increase in future as all forestry related information of Bangladesh will be added to BFIS as modules. Therefore BFIS will provide access to all stakeholders of BFD not only from Bangladesh but also from other parts of the world from one single platform. These modules are designed in such a way so that it can contribute to REDD++ targets and SDG goals as well. Dr. Mariam hoped that BFD will develop a more user friendly and sustainable BFIS with support from Bangladesh Computer Council. She concluded her presentation hoping that it will help to enhance forestry related knowledge and all stakeholders will help BFD to make the BFIS more sustainable.

2.4 Tanimul Bari, NDA Team Leader, Bangladesh Computer Council

In his presentation, Mr. Tanimul Bari explained the importance of Bangladesh National Digital Architecture (BNDA) and described the components, progress and achievements. He said the BNDA is directly connected with the first two pillars of Vision 2021: Digital Bangladesh which views Communication and Technology (ICT) as a tool for the economically disadvantaged thereby focusing on poverty reduction and human resource development. Later he talked about e-governance development index (e-GDI) ranking which is published by United Nations in every

two years, depicts e governance capacity of each country. Mr. Bari said that Bangladesh is gradually making progress each year in e-GDI ranking and currently ranks at 115 and aims to be between 50 and 75 in the ranking by 2021. He also talked about NDA which is globally known as National Enterprise Architecture (NEA), being implemented in Bangladesh as NDA playing a crucial role in achieving the national goal of Digital Bangladesh.

Mr. Bari later presented a structure of effective NEA governance and reporting and discussed about BNDA, ICT Roadmap, Interoperability and various other tools and concepts to enhance e-governance capacity of Bangladesh for which, BCC is providing all kinds of support. He commented that in this era of digital Government, multiple ministries are dependent on each other for knowledge sharing and data exchange and hope that it will enhance collaboration and cooperation between ministries and organizations.

2.5 Rumana Sharmin, Results and Learning Management Expert-Access to Information (a2i) Programme

Ms. Rumana Sharmin gave a quick presentation on Access to Information (a2i) Programme. She explained the objectives of A2i and it's beneficiaries. She said that A2i aims to simplify, digitalize and decentralize public services and ensure access. A2i also works for physically handicapped people so that they can get digital service. Ms. Rumana also mentioned that there is a funding opportunity to support innovation up to BDT 25,00000 and currently the total number of projects that are getting benefitted by A2i is 12. She stated that A2i also contributing in education sector by simplifying services and also have special educational service for migrant workers. Ms. Rumana said that A2i has Collaboration with 12 countries to strengthen SDG tracker related activities and also working on digital financial inclusion for marginalized communities. She ended her presentation by sharing how A2i is getting global recognition for contributing for welfare for Bangladeshi citizens through achieving several awards.

2.6 Tarique M Barkatullah, Director (CA Operation & Security) & Director (Data Center), BCC

In his speech, Mr. Tarique appreciated and thanked BFD for taking initiative to store all forestry related information in a single platform. He said that the implementation of Digital Bangladesh which started in 2009, paved the way for increased collaboration and cooperation among all ministries, departments and agencies in Bangladesh and keeping this goal in mind, BCC will continue providing all kinds of technical support that is required. He also mentioned that in order to help GoB with increasing digital content, BCC has created NDA/NEA and has also established Software quality testing center to test the quality of applications created by departments and agencies. Additionally, BCC has computer incidence response team to protect dataset preserved in data center of BCC and identify vulnerabilities and notify immediately. He ended his speech by thanking everyone for having trust and relying on BCC.

2.7 Robert D. Simpson, FAO Representative in Bangladesh

Mr. Robert D. Simpson began his speech by greeting the Chairperson, the chief guest and the others presented in the launching ceremony and welcomed the audiences. Mr. Simpson acknowledged and appreciated the great relation between BFD and FAO which started in 1968 through the development of forest management research within BFD. He said that there was a strong partnership involved in developing BFIS and appreciated the continuous support of USAID through UNREDD programme and the government of Norway for developing BFIS. He stated that BFIS is very important to help assess, monitor, document and plan forest management strategies and provide a guideline on how to implement forestry in conservation activities nationally.

He urged for coming up with new strategies and policies and said that it is important to share forestry related knowledge and information with people who works in other fields as well. Mr. Simpson indicated that this information can be used in a very powerful way if we step outside of forestry sector and share with wider range of people. It is also important not only share this data nationally but also at a global scale with global decision makers thereby helping to create global database and help future generation to address climate change phenomena. Mr. Simpson ended his speech by congratulating BFD for launching BFIS and looking forward to continue strong collaboration for many years with BFD in refining BFIS.

2.8 Chief Guest: Dr. Md. Billal Hossain, Additional Secretary, MoEFCC

In his speech, Dr. Billal Hossain described how the announcement of Digital Bangladesh and enactment of ICT policy led to an enhanced collaboration and cooperation among ministries, departments and agencies through involvement in action plans designed to achieve Digital Bangladesh goal. He said that BFIS will contribute as one step forward towards achieving Digital Bangladesh goal, however, the success of such information system will depend on it's usage. Dr. Billal emphasized on proper management and transparency of data and said that MoEFCC always appreciates such initiative.

He stated that the true success of BFIS will be achieved only when the whole country, the forestry department, environment gets the full benefit of using BFIS. Later he thanked everyone as well as BCC for collaborating and supporting this initiative and hoped that they will continue this support for upgrading not only BFD but also for other sectors in BD.

2.9 Chair Person: Mr. Mohammed Shafiul Alam Chowdhury, Chief Conservator of Forests, BFD

Mr. Mohammed Shafiul Alam Chowdhury, CCF, BFD concluded the launching ceremony of BFIS saying that BFIS will help to preserve and maintain all scattered information in one place and through launching of BFIS, BFD has played it's crucial role in contributing towards the goal of Digital Bangladesh. He said that all stakeholders will be benefited through BFIS and informed that modules will be increased if required and database will be updated on regular basis. He also ensured GoB fund will be managed for BFIS maintenance and sustainability. Finally, Mr. Chowdhury wrapped up the launching ceremony by requesting for suggestions and cooperation from researchers, universities and other stakeholders for data collection to enrich and improve BFIS.

3. Open Discussion chaired by Chief Conservator of Forest

During open discussion session, there was query about number of modules of BFIS. Dr. Md Al Amin from Chittagong University asked about the possibility of adding another module for "education and research". Dr. Mariam Akhter assured that in existing modules, there are information which can be used for education and research purpose and if needed more thesis

documents will be integrated. Mr. Mohammed Shafiul Alam Chowdhury, CCF, Bangladesh Forest Department suggested that only those papers should be included in BFIS which are resourceful. Mr. Mahmud from A2i programme asked whether there is any updated information available in BFIS that address a specific indicator and target, which, if given to A2i, can help to see the update of SDG from the SDG tracker. Dr Abul Naim Baker Bhuiya from Bangladesh Agricultural University added that thesis documents of BAU can be added in BFIS and suggested to add a section for management and conservation of plants and pathogenic where different diseases of the plants can be included. Dr. Mariam thanks them for their kind suggestions and said that their suggestions will be considered and hoped to work forward with you in future to enriching BFIS website.

Representatives from Arannyak Foundation and SPARSO well appreciated the initiative of developing BFIS saying it will be very useful for those who are working for forest conservation as anyone will be able to access the information from home as well as from abroad. They hoped that other departments, agencies and sectors of GoB will develop similar type of system.

Professor Manzoor Rashid from Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) suggested only to keep the updated information for making it easier for users to access the latest and accurate information. Regarding this issue, the CCF, BFD stated that it would be possible to always keep updated information in BFIS with help of all relevant stakeholders.

Dr. Md. Billal Hossain, honorable Additional Secretary, MoEFCC added saying that BFIS is a one step closer to the Digital Bangladesh framework, but the effort of developing and launching BFIS will go in vain if the stockholders do not use BFIS. He commented that the system needs to be transparent and it should be designed in such an easy way so that people can easily access the information and get what they are want. An effective, transparent and sustainable BFIS will not only benefit forestry practitioners, but also the people of Bangladesh as well as environment.

Mr. Mohammed Shafiul Alam Chowdhury, CCF, BFD concluded the open discussion session saying that BFD will work on the suggested modules and update it on regular basis. He requested all to provide their assistance to BFD for further development of BFIS.

Appendix I Programme Agenda

**Bangladesh Forest Information System
launch**

Tuesday, 18 December 2018
Hoimonti Auditorium, Bana Bhaban, Agargaon, Dhaka

13.00 – 14.00	**Registration & Lunch**
14.00 – 14.05	Opening remarks by **Mr. Md. Rakibul Hasan Mukul** Conservator of Forests & PD, Bangladesh UN-REDD National Program, Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD)
14.05 – 14.10	**Video**: Bangladesh Forest Information System
14.10 – 14.20	Presentation on the national forest information systems **Dr. Matieu Henry**, Chief Technical Advisor, FAO
14.20 – 14.35	Presentation on the Bangladesh Forest Information System **Dr. Mariam Akhter**, Asst. Conservator of Forests, BFD
14.35 – 14.50	Presentation on Bangladesh National Digital Architecture (BNDA); Components of National Digital Architecture and e-GIF **Tanimul Bari,** NDA Team Leader, Bangladesh Computer Council
14.50 – 15.05	Presentation on access to information (a2i) **Ramiz Uddin, PhD,** Head of Results Management and Data a2i Programme, Bangladesh.
15.05 – 15.40	**Discussion**
15.40 – 15.45	Remarks by **Engr. Tarique M Barkatullah** Director (CA Operation & Security) & Director (Data Center), BCC
15.45 – 15.50	Remarks by **Mr. Zahir Uddin Ahmed** Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests, Planning Wing & Project Director, *Sustainable* Forests and Livelihoods *(SUFAL)* Project, BFD
15.50 – 15.55	Remarks by **Mr. Robert D. Simpson**, FAO Representative in Bangladesh
15.55 – 16.00	Remarks by Chief Guest: **Dr. Md. Billal Hossain** Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
16.00 – 16.05	Remarks by Chair Person: **Mr. Mohammed Shafiul Alam Chowdhury** Chief Conservator of Forests, BFD
16.00 – 16.30	**Tea and Closing**

Appendix 2: List of participants

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