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|  | Technical Report On |
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| **Status of Environmental Safeguards in Bangladesh: Implications for REDD+** |
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|  | Submitted to |
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|  | **Programme Management Unit (PMU)****UN-REDD Bangladesh National Programme****Bangladesh Forest Department** |
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12 December 2017, Dhaka

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| **UN-REDD Bangladesh National Program** | The UN-REDD Bangladesh National Program is implemented by Bangladesh Forest Department under the leadership of Ministry of Environment and Forests. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) are the two implementing partners.  |
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| **Citation** | Chowdhury, R. M. 2017. Status of Environmental Safeguards in Bangladesh: Implications for REDD+. UN-REDD Bangladesh National Program, Bangladesh Forest Department. Technical Report, 12 December 2017, Dhaka.  |
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**12 December, 2017, Dhaka**

**Table of Contents**

[Acknowledgement 4](#_Toc502332297)

[Acronyms 5](#_Toc502332298)

[Executive Summary 6](#_Toc502332299)

[chapter 1: Introduction 7](#_Toc502332300)

[1.1. Background 7](#_Toc502332301)

[1.2. Objective of the study 7](#_Toc502332302)

[1.3. rationale of the study 7](#_Toc502332303)

[Chapter 2: Study Framework: environmental Safeguards IN Bangladesh 8](#_Toc502332304)

[2.1 Defining environmental safeguards in Bangladesh: goals and scopes 8](#_Toc502332305)

[2.2 Defining safeguards information systems: Design elements and approach 8](#_Toc502332306)

[2.3. Bangladesh REDD+ Safeguards and SIS Development Framework 10](#_Toc502332307)

[Chapter 3: REDD+ Environmental Safeguards under UNFCCC and in bangladesh 11](#_Toc502332308)

[3.1. REDD+ Environmental Safeguards under UNFCCC 11](#_Toc502332309)

[3.2. Status of Environmental Safeguards (PLRs) in bangladesh 11](#_Toc502332310)

[3.2.1. Environmental Safeguards: provisions and practices in relevant sectors 12](#_Toc502332311)

[3.2.2. Environmental Safeguards: provisions and practices in Development Organizations 19](#_Toc502332312)

[Chapter 4: safeguards information system 21](#_Toc502332313)

[4.1. Key SIS design elements 21](#_Toc502332314)

[4.2. Review of existing information: information, sources, systems 24](#_Toc502332315)

[4.3. institutional structure for bd-sis 25](#_Toc502332316)

[4.4. Action plan for operationalization of BD-SIS 26](#_Toc502332317)

[Chapter 5: conclusions 27](#_Toc502332318)

[references 28](#_Toc502332319)

# **Acknowledgement**

We highly appreciate the global initiative of UNFCCC for performance-based payments through REDD+ programme, whereby developing nations might have scopes for incentives to conserve natural forest and biodiversity for generations to come. Special thanks to the global contributors (experts from various technical fields, including safeguards) under UNFCCC for developing and sharing number of guidelines and experiences from other nations in REDD+ arena.

Highly indebted to all national experts from stakeholder groups and project management unit (PMU) for framing the thoughts of an effective Safeguards mechanism for Bangladesh. Gratefully acknowledge the inputs provided by Mr. Nasim Aziz and Mr. Shams Uddin from PMU during outlining and drafting the study findings. Special thank goes to the officials from various Government agencies for their valuable recommendations. Also acknowledge the excellent team work of UN-REDD Bangladesh National Programme consultants during the study.

# **Acronyms**

7FYP Seventh Five-Year Plan

ADA Annual Development Plan

BCCTF Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund

CAS Country Approach to Safeguards

CBD Convention on Biological Diversity

CBO Community-Based Organization

CIP Country Investment Plan

CSO Civil-Society Organization

EIA Environmental Impact Assessment

EFFC Environment, Forestry and Climate Change

ESMF Environmental and Social Management Framework

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FCPF Forest Carbon Partnership Facility

FGRM Feedback, Grievance and Redress Mechanism

GDP Gross Domestic Product

GHG Greenhouse Gas

GoB Government of Bangladesh

INDC Intended Nationally Determined Contribution

IUCN International Union for Conservation of Nature

MEA Multilateral Environmental Agreement

NAPA National Adaptation Programme of Action

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

NWFP Non-Wood Forest Product

PLRs Policies, Laws and Regulations

PSIMU Policy Support and Investment Monitoring Unit

RBPs Result Based Payments

RBM Result Based Management

REDD+ Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks, and the sustainable management of forests

REDD SES REDD Social and Environmental Standards

RIMS Resources Information Management Systems Unit of Forest Department

SDG Sustainable Development Goal

SESA Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment

SIS Safeguard Information System

UNCCD United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFCCC United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UN REDD United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation

UN REDD SEPC United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria

WB World Bank

# **Executive Summary**

The Government politically committed to ‘an integrated policy and plan to protect the country from the adverse effects of global. It also emphasizes sustainable forest resource management, protection of flora and fauna species, control of polluting chemicals in agricultural development, adoption of environmental protection in urbanization and above all in regional and global cooperation for protection of the environment and mitigation of climate changes. This commitment further echoed in 7th five-year plan (2016-2021, forestry sector master plan (2017-2031), forest policy (2016) as well as other relevant sectoral policies including land use, agriculture, environment etc.

Within the Cancun framework and its seven principles, the study made a vivid review of relevant PLRs and provisionally set the premise of environmental safeguards based on national contexts and existing systems. Forestry sector PLRs including, policy (2016), sector master plan (2017-2031), forest investment plan (2017) and concerned rules etc. are recent documents and well-appreciated REDD+ as an approach for sustainable forest management. These profoundly committed for environmental and social protection, which are being translated through projects and programs. Other relevant sectors including environment, agriculture, land, water, fisheries, coastal zone, CHT etc. also have many affirmative statements and commitments for both environmental and social safeguards. However, while land and natural ecosystems are critical resource in this high population and poverty-prone country, at implementation level a disconnect is prominently visible across the sectors. The presence of development partners in national growth is highly significant and their in-built support mechanisms have great influence in environmental and social protection. The study closely reviewed the environmental frameworks of World Bank, JICA, ADB, USAID and GIZ. Through implementation of series of project and program with this development partners, the country also made significant progress in adopting appropriate measures for environmental measures.

The country just initiated development of the safeguard information systems, an important requirement for REDD+ and Cancun safeguards. The study found that national initiatives e.g. national web portal for all Govt. sectors, rapid boost in ICTs and adoption of grievance redress systems already made some footing towards SIS. Data units in relevant sectors e.g. FD, DoE, SPARRSO, SOB, DLRS, MoL etc. are notably developed and progressively contributing concerned sectors. The architecture of sectoral information sharing to and from state and non-state actors are to be functionalized; such as statistic and information division (SID) of Ministry of planning, GoB.

REDD+ early movers (countries) demonstrated some best practices in safeguards aligning the Cancun safeguards; however, functionalizing SIS is still in progress with coordinated sectoral, national and global efforts. Bangladesh’s initiatives, in the pathway of development of NS/AP with environmental and social safeguards, for not just achieving REDD+ payments, rather potential sustainable management of forestry sector with equitable growth of forest dependent communities.

# **chapter 1: Introduction**

## **Background**

In line with the decisions of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Conference of the Parties (COP) to encourage developing countries (like Bangladesh) to take climate change mitigation actions in forestry sector, forests play a very significant role in reducing emissions through educing deforestation and forest degradation, enhance conservation, sustainable management as well as enhancement of forest carbon stocks. As part of the country’s long-term strategy to reduce GHG emissions, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has prepared and endorsed its REDD+ Readiness Roadmap in 2012 (GoB 2012a). Consequently, the UN-REDD Bangladesh National Programme was approved in 2016 to provide technical capacity development assistance to the Government of Bangladesh in designing and implementing its National REDD+ Strategy and in meeting the international requirements to receive REDD+ results-based finance. The COP of UNFCCC, at their sixteenth session in Cancun in 2010, not only spelled out the five activities of REDD+ but also specifically decided on safeguards and how the principles should be addressed and respectd (COP Decision 1/CP.16).

The Government of Bangladesh through the Forest Department (BFD) of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), with the support of its key stakeholders has been developing its national safeguards (environmental and social) framework. The initiative is technically and financially supported by the Bangladesh National UN-REDD Programme. The study sets the premise for initial stock-taking of national as well as development partners’ current safeguards policies, law and regulations generally considered to be relevant for REDD+ safeguards.

## **Objective of the study**

As an important milestone of REDD+ in UNFCCC Warsaw Framework, the country (GoB) took an initiative to identify relevant Policies, Laws and Regulations (PLRs) in relation to environmental and social safeguard for REDD+ activities and establish Safeguard and Safeguard Information System (SIS). This sets the premise of the assignment and the key objectives are:

* Identify current status of environmental and social safeguard systems in the forestry and allied sectors in the country in the context of REDD+ preparedness, piloting and throughout the implementation.
* Identify the gaps and needs in the national PLRs to meet the Cancun safeguards.
* Design an environmental (and social) safeguard information system.

## **rationale of the study**

Developing a “*system for providing information on how … safeguards … are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of [REDD+] activities*” is a key requirement and a prerequisite for results-based payments from REDD+, under the UNFCCC. In addition, demonstrating that safeguards have been addressed and respected through an operational safeguards information system (SIS) also help countries ensure that the environmental and social performance of REDD+ is transparent, consistent, comprehensive and effective. In this context, while Bangladesh is progressing along the readiness, the study is a timely initiative which needs further consultation among the key institutions, coordination for information sharing and eventually a functionalize SIS for the country.

# **Chapter 2: Study Framework: environmental Safeguards IN Bangladesh**

## **2.1 Defining environmental safeguards in Bangladesh: goals and scopes**

Based on the unique national needs, development priorities and circumstances to enhance REDD+ environmental and social benefits as well as to reduce the risks, usually the first and foremost approach is defining safeguard for the country. Again, the country approach to safeguards include core elements e.g. PLRs, institutional mandates and national capacity to ensure safeguards. Within this context the goals and scopes for Bangladesh REDD+ environmental (and social) safeguards are identified as below, aligning development priorities for the nation (as a whole) and concerned sectors within the Cancun safeguard frameworks.

The vision 2021, in the perspective plan of Bangladesh (2010-2021), sets national development priority as ‘growth with equity and social justice remains the overarching goal of our development strategy and will be achieved on a sustainable basis without damaging the environment (GoB, 2012b). Forestry sector also aligned its strategy for raising national productive forest coverage to 15% from 13% by 2021, increase of tree coverage on 2.84 million hectares designated for forest, diversification of tree species to sustain ecological balance, increasing employment from forestry (particularly for women) under expanded social- and agro-forestry, prioritization to create a coastal green belt and increasing accountability and transparency in public forest management.

The scoping and desk review of key PLRs and stakeholder discussions revealed that the environmental safeguards in forestry sector of the country have significant ties with agriculture, land use, environment, water sectors and cross-cutting issues e.g. biodiversity conservation, climate change, engagement of IPs (Chittagong Hill Tracts) and women, often at national contexts and sometimes locally. At national context, the goal for environmental safeguards, aligned with National Forest Policy 2016 (draft), the Bangladesh National Conservation Strategy (2016-2031), the Environment Conservation Act, 1995, and the Environment Conservation Rules, 1995 sets to restore and maintain country’s environmental integrity. The study team, in consultation with PMU, initially considered environmental safeguards within forestry and allied sectors mentioned above. However, it is envisaged that the process of setting national safeguards goals and scopes might undergo further consultation with key stakeholders and sectoral agencies. A political commitment will be crucial for the safeguards (at sectoral PLRs and implementation level) to be addressed and respected which have been emphasized in Cancun framework throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities.

## **2.2 Defining safeguards information systems: Design elements and approach**

The Safeguards Information System (SIS), from a UNFCCC requirement perspective, refers to the institutional structure or information platform that will be responsible for aggregating, evaluating, and reporting information which is accessible to all relevant stakeholders to demonstrate that the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout REDD+ implementation. This scoping exercise have provisionally framed the objectives and functions of SIS in Bangladesh, based on PAMs identified and prescribing a formal institutional arrangement for information flows within the REDD+ preview.

To make the best use of the national existing processes and ensure sustainability, the SIS in Bangladesh have been developing with ‘*build upon existing systems*’. Additionally, the mandates and reporting responsibilities to international conventions, along with UNREDD, are also taken into consideration. This assignment made an initial assessment of information systems and sources as well as information gaps that might be resolved by modifying existing systems to accommodate new information (e.g. new indicators), or developing new ones. The overall design element of BD-SIS is framed as

* Defining BD-SIS Objectives;
* BD-SIS Functions [Information needs and structures]; and
* BD-SIS Institutional Arrangements.

***Objectives***

In line with the Right to Information Act, 2009 the country committed to ensure a free and timely information flow for the empowerment of the people through the transparency and accountability of all public, autonomous and statutory organizations and of other private institutions constituted or run by government or foreign financing. The Bangladesh National Portal – a web platform that provides all key information (from all GoB ministries and agencies) to people. The BD-SIS, a component of the national information system, aims to capture and share environmental and social information to the UNFCCC, donor agencies, markets, private sector partners, national and local stakeholders and REDD+ authorities. Specific objectives can be framed as to:

* Share information on the status of REDD+ readiness or implementation with the wider stakeholders;
* Update REDD+ safeguards in accordance with the Cancun principles and nationally set criteria and indicators; and
* Organize summary information on REDD+ safeguards implementation for UNFCCC.

***Functions***

An effective and functional SIS usually performs, as framed by the country, including identification of information needs for national and international requirements, collection, management, analysis and interpretation of information, quality assurance and validation, dissemination of information. Based on the (seven) Cancun principles and national contexts (of existing development priorities and information needs), designing and setting criteria and indicators are very crucial functions which needs a rigorous consultation amongst the stakeholders for efficient adaptation of national-level indicators to suit local contexts.

***Institutional Arrangements***

The existing PLR framework primarily defines the mandates and functions of existing public institutions that might contribute to the SIS. The institutional (financial, human, technological) capacities are the particular focus to improve SIS functioning. New institutional arrangements, such as information sharing arrangements, might be considered horizontally, across government line ministries and between departments, and also vertically up (and down) administrative hierarchies, to feed subnational information, from multiple localities, into a single national SIS. As required the role of non-government institutions should also be considered. For instance, current information sources will include national surveys and datasets from RIMS unit and REDD Cell (of FD), Survey of Bangladesh, Protected Area data, REDD+ projects, Forest Management Divisions and other primary data.

## **2.3. Bangladesh REDD+ Safeguards and SIS Development Framework**

Alike other REDD+ implementing nations, Bangladesh also adopted the approach for national REDD+ Safeguard development framework UNEP, 2017 which, at the onset defines the goals and scopes of ‘Safeguards’ in line with national circumstances and Cancun framework. It also paved a pathway for vivid review of existing and relevant policy, laws and rules (PLRs) and framed implementation of REDD+ for effectively addressed and respected. Following schema is used while developing the REDD+ safeguards in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh REDD+ Safeguards Development Framework



Figure 1: Bangladesh REDD+ Safeguard development framework (adopted from UNEP, 2017)

# **Chapter 3: REDD+ Environmental Safeguards under UNFCCC and in bangladesh**

## **3.1. REDD+ Environmental Safeguards under UNFCCC**

Decision 1/CP.16, appendix I, paragraph 2 states:

1. [REDD+] actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programme and relevant international conventions and agreements;
2. Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty;
3. Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
4. The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities [in REDD+ PAMs];
5. [REDD+] actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that REDD+ actions are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits;
6. Actions to address the risks of reversals; and
7. Actions to reduce displacement of emissions.

## **3.2. Status of Environmental Safeguards (PLRs) in bangladesh**

Concerned PLRs of the country are reviewed, under this scoping exercise, through the lens of Cancun safeguards frameworks.

The constitution of the country affirms the environmental safeguards as “*The state shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to preserve and safeguard the natural resources, biodiversity, wetlands, forests and wildlife for the present and future citizens* (Article 18A)”. The vision 2021, in the perspective plan of Bangladesh (2010-2021), sets national development priority as ‘*growth with equity and social justice remains the overarching goal of our development strategy and will be achieved on a sustainable basis without damaging the environment*’ (GoB, 2012b).

Forestry sector also aligned its strategy for raising national productive forest coverage to 15% from 13% by 2021, increase of tree coverage on 2.84 million hectares designated for forest, diversification of tree species to sustain ecological balance, increasing employment from forestry (particularly for women) under expanded social- and agro-forestry, priority to the creation of a coastal green belt and increasing accountability and transparency in public forest management. The Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, Bangladesh 2012 (GoB 2012c) empowered the government to declare any area as sanctuary, community conservation area, safari park, eco- park, botanical garden, wildlife reproduction center, landscape zone, buffer zone, core zone in relation to wildlife and plant preservation, protection and their natural growth. The Social Forest Rules 2004, revised in 2011 (GoB 2011) emphasized to ensure peoples’ participation while also assigned the management committee to conserve and proper maintenance of the social forestry plantations. A recent gazette (01 Dec 2016) from MoEF declared ban on felling from reserved and natural forests till 31 Dec 2022 (GoB 2016). Similarly, the Environment Conservation Act, 1995 affirms prevention of any environmental degradation in forests, wetlands and ECAs; and empowered Department of Environment, MoEF for its enforcement. Subsequent amendments in 2000, 2002, 2010 further specified environmental concerns for effective implementation of the conservation act.

Following chapters outline the provisions and practices, of environmental (and social) safeguards, in few relevant sectors of the country as well as development partners active in the country.

### **3.2.1. Environmental Safeguards: provisions and practices in relevant sectors**

#### **Forestry Sector:**

The major PLRs reviewed in forestry sector of Bangladesh include Forest Act 1927, Forestry Sector Master Plan for 2017-2031 (drafted in 2016), Forest Policy 2016 (draft), Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, Bangladesh 2012, Forest Investment Plan 2017, a recent gazette to ban felling in natural forests through 2022, Social Forestry Rules 2004 (amended through 2011), Protected Area Management Rules, 2017 etc. In line with Cancun safeguards, forestry sector PLRs are described below, with 7 Cancun principles in parenthesis:

The first formal forest policy was declared in 1894 by the then British colonial government. The national forest policy of 1894 provided the basic guidelines for formulating acts and rules for the management of forests in the Indian sub-continent. The salient features of this policy were: i. state forests are to be administered for benefits to the public (+CP-d), ii. the rights and privileges of people living nearby may be regulated (+CP-d), iii. forests on hill slopes should be conserved (+CP-e), iv. valuable forests should be managed for generating revenue for the state, v. cultivable land within a forest may be kept under cultivation, vi. low-yielding forests may be opened for grazing livestock. This policy found to prefer agriculture over forestry (-CP-a).

Forest Act 1927 defined national forest lands, based on legal status, and framed its governance structure (+*Cancun principle-a*) and empowered forest officers for effective management. The act further provisioned to prohibit, restrict or require a permit for land clearing, use of pesticides, harvest on steep stopes, or other forest management activities on private land that may pose a threat to property, renewable natural resources or the productivity of land (+Cancun Principle-e). The act has guidance on “Shifting cultivation”, though not explicitly recognized the usufruct rights of indigenous people (IPs) over forest lands (-CP -d).

**Forest Act 1927:** *Reserved Forest (RF)* areas, whereby all operations are prohibited unless explicitly permitted, *Protected Forest* (PF) areas, whereby all operations are permitted unless explicitly prohibited, *Acquired or Vested Forest* areas which are not under GoB ownership, but where the ownership is under dispute or under process of settlement and have therefore been placed under the control of Forest Department staff for the purposes of environmental protection or security, and *Unclassed State Forest* (USF) areas where land is under Govt. ownership, but is administered by district-level government rather than directly by the Forest Department.

The Forest Policy 1955 emphasized that forestry sector should receive priority and increased allocations, forests should be classified on the basis of their utility. It affirmed to manage all government forests though an approved working plan and to ensure sound management of private forests. This policy committed to control adverse use of land and conservation of soil (+CP-e). However, the policy focused revenue earning as a major target, which resulted in continuation of general practice of clear-felling followed by artificial regeneration (-CP-f).

The National Forest Policy 1979 committed not to use Government forests for non-forestry purposes rather to be carefully preserved and scientifically managed and emphasized to update all relevant laws of the forestry sector (+CP-a); however, this policy was not implemented in its full spirit.

The forest policy 1994 made a breakthrough for scientific and people-oriented management of forests as well as committed to take all measures to bring i. 20% of the land under forests to maintain the ecological balance and ii. 10% of national forests declare as Protected Area to preserve the soil, water and biodiversity, the natural forests of the hilly areas and the catchments of the rivers within the country by the year 2015 (+CP-e). The policy further facilitated to identify and bring the denuded and encroached government forest lands under afforestation programs with the participation of the people with a benefit-sharing approach (+CP-g, +CP-d). The 1994 policy acknowledged an absence of clearly in defined land ownership of IPs (mentioned as *tribes*) and recommended for clearly delineated forest land to set aside for them through forest settlement operations, and the rest to bring under permanent forest management (+CP-d). This policy opened up an avenue of co-operation between NGOs and government agencies through social forestry; however, did not address the issue of the impact of climate change and did not furnish policy directives on safeguards issues e.g. risks from displacement of emissions and reversals.

Social Forestry Rules 2004 (amended through 2011) played a vital role in the expansion of forest cover in degraded forests benefiting thousands of poor people (+CP-d). Despite this success and high potentiality, social forestry in still suffers from various institutional deficiencies like legitimate usufruct rights, peoples' participation from policy to implementation, skilled manpower, and clear budgetary arrangements (Muhammed *et. al.* 2005).

The Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, Bangladesh 2012 (GoB 2012c) empowered the government to declare any area as sanctuary, community conservation area, safari park, eco- park, botanical garden, wildlife reproduction center, landscape zone, buffer zone, core zone in relation to wildlife and plant preservation, protection and their natural growth (+CP-e). This act paved the process for the Protected Area Management Rules 2017 which facilitated collaborative management (+CP-c) of PAs including wildlife sanctuaries and national parks of the country.

The Nursery and Plantation Guidelines 2012 (GoB 2012d) addresses the risks associated with the site clearance of plantation, species selection, use of fertilizer/pesticides/herbicides in the plantation program, minor construction related disturbance and community level livelihood options. Related negative impacts are expected to be largely on-site and easily mitigated with proper planning and sound environmental practices. It has been agreed that no pesticides or herbicides will be used during plantation. Besides these the general practice of burning, while preparing the plantation sites will not be done while raising plantations (+CP-e).

The National Forest Policy 2016 explicitly addressed the emergence of environmental and socio-economic changes in the context of climate change and the extensive loss of forest cover in the country. The policy aimed to manage all existing forest, wildlife and other forestry resources, adhering to the principles of sustainable management and climate resilience (+CP-e); enrich degraded forest areas and enhance land areas under forest/tree cover (+CP-g); to produce a wide array of goods and ecosystem services for the benefit of Bangladesh’s current and future generations, through its 16 policy objectives. It also affirmed to arrest deforestation, and degradation of forest resources, enrich and extend areas under tree cover, through appropriate programs and projects, to ensure that at least 20% of the country comes under tree cover by 2035, with at least a canopy density of 50%.

The policy committed to ensure the Paris climate accord through INDC regarding land use, land change and forestry to guide the future forestry action in the country; enhancement of forestry carbon stocks and generation of benefits through mechanisms such as CDM and REDD+ in future forestry programs; it also affirmed to materialize a climate financing mechanism that will help the country take advantage of new and emerging climate change funds such as REDD+, FCPF, GCF, and other available sources and also, include innovative ways to fund climate change actions domestically through accessing Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund and support from other governmental allocations and other local sources (+CP-a).

A recent (01 Dec 2016) Gazette from MoEF declared ban on felling from reserved and natural forests till 31 Dec 2022 (GoB 2016). This milestone commitment of the Government is paves another affirmation aligned to REDD+ initiative and Cancun principle (e) for safeguards of natural forests and biodiversity.

The Forestry Sector Master Plan 2017-2031 (draft 2016) specifically endorsed REDD+ initiatives in Bangladesh to enhance forest carbon stocks and generation of benefits out of it. The FSM Plan also affirmed its commitment on social and environmental safeguards to be addressed and respected throughout the sectoral development programs (+CP-a,b,d,e,f,g) while national preparedness in REDD+ programme. This plan further emphasized on preventing change in land use to any non-forestry activities without approval of Hon’ble Prime Minister (+CP-e), in case of other national priority and consequent transfer of forest lands, an equal area will be handed over to the Forest Department, with the required funds for compensatory afforestation (+CP-g). Regarding the traditional rights of IPs, the plan mentioned that various ethnic-communities, living in and around state forest areas, will be prioritized on recognition with due respect to their forest-related cultural values and religious beliefs (+CP-c). And also affirmed that conservation initiatives related to forest, wildlife and biodiversity taken up by indigenous communities will be encouraged (+CP-d). Since the country abstained from signing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and does not recognize indigenous peoples as “indigenous”, rather the Small Ethnic Groups Cultural Institution Act 2010 (GoB 2010) uses the term “khudro nrigoshthhi” (small ethnic groups) to refer them, the Master Plan also termed IPs as ethnic communities (-CP-c). The Master plan also recognize the forest dependent communities, Nishorgo Co-Management Network (multi-stakeholder institutions for collaborative management of protected areas) and the participants of nationwide social forestry program are two major community-engagement approaches in the forestry sector (+CP-c).

The Forest Investment Plan 2017 (draft) appreciated REDD+ mechanism as a means for i. sustainable forest management and recommended for Improve the implementation of existing laws and policies, ii. coordination between FD and other government agencies, forest dependent communities, local government representatives, NGOs, CSOs, is needed to improve co-management of forests iii. Sustainable forest management through restoration of degraded and other marginal areas, and iv. Commitment to conserve forests as major strategies for the sector (+CP-a).

The Protected Area Management Rules, 2017 formulated under the Wildlife (Conservation and Safety) Act 2012 elaborated community engagement in PA management in a multi-stakeholder platform (+CP-c), guided the process of sharing “co-benefits” to grass-root co-management organizations from Government revenue. This rules further elaborated the structure of co-management and its functionality, and responsibilities of stakeholders. It also ensured engagement of forest dependent communities in general bodies and executive committees, including forest users and IPs. However, the Rules termed IPs as tribal minorities, alike other Government documents. One of the important feature of this Rules is creation of a central fund at FD headquarter whereby finance from international sources are provisioned to facilitate co-management of protected areas in the country, along with Govt. financing (+CP-b).

#### **Environment Sector:**

Exploitation (over) of environment and depletion of natural resource base, while economic growth is mounting, heavily impact life and well-being of the people in the country and hence, environmental problem is also considered as a developmental issue. The vision 2021, in the perspective plan of Bangladesh (2010-2021), sets national development priority as ‘*growth with equity and social justice remains the overarching goal of our development strategy and will be achieved on a sustainable basis without damaging the environment*’ (GoB, 2012b). In REDD+ environmental safeguards premise, the major PLRs in environment sector of the country reviewed, include the Environment Conservation Act 1995, Environment Conservation Rules 1997, Bangladesh climate-change strategy and action plan (BCCSAP) 2009, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for 2016-2021 (NBSAP, 2006), Nature Conservation Strategy for 2016-2031 (NCS, 2017).

The Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995 (amended through 2010), in the face of unprecedent environmental challenges from land degradation, water pollution, biodiversity loss, climate vulnerability and impacts, is the most comprehensive environmental legislation which provide legally binding direction for protection and conservation of the environment, improvement of environmental standards and control and mitigation of environmental pollution. It accentuates ‘*to provide for conservation of the environment, improvement of the environmental standards and control, and mitigation of environmental pollution*’. This act deliberates DoE the stewardship of the law and provide the legal frameworks for citizens’ environmental rights and obligations (+CP-e). This act prevents any activity, in particular industrial activities, may result in environmental degradation and pollution; guides environmental impact assessments for industrial installations. It also provisioned for declaration of any area as Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) through gazette to restore through special program (+CP-e).

The Environment Conservation Rules 1997 categorically emphasized forests, wildlife habitats, mangroves, national parks and wildlife sanctuary areas within the preview of ECAs (+CP-e). These rules provisioned for environmental clearance for any industries and projects; and mandated for the initial environmental examination (IEE), environmental impact assessment (EIA) and environmental management plan (EMP) as required, based on the categorization of industries and their impacts on environment. It also provisioned for public interest litigations in any degradation of natural environment of the country (+CP-c).

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for 2016-2021 (GoB, 2006) is a guiding document for ensuring conservation and sustainable use of the country’s Biodiversity, developed. in the light of CBD Strategic planning 2011-2020 (Aichi Biodiversity Targets) as well as SGD 15 (protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss) across all dimensions of sustainable development- economic development, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability, underpinned by good governance (+CP-b). The NBSAP contains important aspects like economic valuation of biodiversity, the national targets of biodiversity until 2021, capacity needs for implementation of the plan, monitoring its implementation. It analyzed and attempted to harmonize relevant 27 sectoral policies including forest policy, environmental and agricultural policy (+CP-a). It takes into consideration of the priority needs in terms of conservation, sustainable use of its components and equitable sharing of benefits (+CP-e). NBSAP further explicitly planned for implementation of land use policy and enforcement of relevant legislation for ensuring conservation of natural habitats (+CP-e) in its strategic goal-B.

Bangladesh climate-change strategy and action plan (BCCSAP) 2009, is part of the overall development strategy of the country and aligned with the perspective plan and vision 2021. The climate change constraints and opportunities are integrated into the six (6) pillars including plans and programs thereof, involving all sectors and process of economic and social development. The 5th pillar prioritized to evolve *mitigation and low carbon development* (+CP-g) as the country’s economic growths over the coming decades and the 6th pillar focused in *capacity building and institutional strengthening* (+CP-b) to enhance the capacity of government ministries and agencies, civil society and private sectors to meet the challenge of climate change and mainstream them as part of development actions.

The Bangladesh biodiversity Act 2017, regulates the Biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of its resources, biota and the fair and equitable share of the benefits derived from their use of and other matters (+CP-e). The Act explicitly focused on the functions of national to local technical committees on biological diversity and sets a premise for sustainable conservation of natural forests of the country.

The Nature Conservation Strategy for 2016-2031 (MoEF, 2017) is developed with some key objectives related to forestry sector, within the premise of climate change, SDGs and overall sustainable management of forests of the country. Key forestry strategies include, i. Increase forest covered area through massive afforestation of designated forests, fallow lands, feeder roads, highways, railways and embankment, and newly accreted char land (+CP-f), ii. Achieve biodiversity protection and conservation through strict enforcement of laws and community based participatory forest management (+CP-e), iii. ‘Coastal greenbelt’ as a program is to be continued through afforestation of newly accreted char lands and participatory co-management of coastal mangrove forests to be initiated (+CP-f), iv. Under forestry programs AIGAs should be provided to forest dependent people residing outside forests through cooperatives (+CP-e), and v. All encroachments in hill forests are to be recovered by strict enforcement of existing laws; shifting cultivation in reserved forests of the Hill Tracts to be stopped by vigilance and rehabilitation.

#### **Agriculture sector:**

While the country is predominantly agriculture based, 45% of population are engaged in farming activities, contributing to 14.75% to the national GDP and made a significant progress in last four decades, competition over land is very intense in the country. Reddy et al, 2016 observed that during 1975 to 2014 (40-years), 25% of deforested area was converted to agriculture and during 2006 to 2014, forests to agricultural conversion is 34%. This indicates that agricultural expansion (conversion) is one of the major drivers of deforestation in the country. In REDD+, and particularly safeguards contexts, National Agricultural Policy 2017 and the National Agricultural Extension Policy, 1997 are reviewed below.

The National Agricultural Policy 2017 sets its goal to ensure a profitable and sustainable agricultural production system in the country while preservation and development of agri-land productivity are set as key objectives. The policy also promotes ensuring environmental protection as well as 'environment friendly sustainable agriculture' through increased use of organic manure and strengthening of the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program (+CP-e). The policy further establishes ‘agriculture’ as a diversified and sustainable income generating sector through strengthening of 'Farming System' based agricultural production and agro-forestry program (+CP-g). The inclusion of agro-forestry in the agricultural policy opens the window for developing synergy with the forestry sector. The policy also provides that ‘*maximum utilization of land will be ensured through promotion of inter-cropping with the main crops*’ which provides potential for another link with the forestry sector through intercropping with forestry species.

The National Agricultural Extension Policy, 1997 promotes sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural practices (+CP-f); ensure coordination of agricultural extension services with other similar services provided by other agencies; provide advice and information to farmers on integrated farming systems; and strengthen the linkages between extension and research to ensure delivery of effective services to farmers. The policy further highlights on working with farmer groups to promote comprehensive of sharing of limited extension resources, exchange of knowledge and experience and creation of an environment for participatory decision making (+CP-d). This policy also advocates the promotion of agro-forestry and inter-cropping, and hence potential to contribute in reducing agricultural expansion, consequent deforestation and the risks of reversals (+CP-f).

#### **Other sectors (land, water, and CHT): (laws, procedures and systems)**

Unilateral formulation of various sectoral policies within the Government, with biased focus primarily on specific sectors, results in some incompatible implementation mechanisms, with some exceptions as well. This outcome is true even consultations, often symbolic, take place in most cases single sector-led, however same cabinet endorses most of these legislations.

The National Land Use policy 2001 is very critical for conservation and development of forests in the country, since it has very limited land resources and high population density always puts a burgeoning pressure on public forest lands. The policy has laid ample emphasis on the zoning and has suggested formulation of ‘*Zoning Laws*’. It has the guidance for intensive agriculture (+CP-g) even if emphasized on the protection of cultivable lands; and expansion of fisheries, at the same time it has pronounced that forestry can play a significant role in poverty alleviation (+CP-a). The policy also suggested controlling fragmentation of land to a limit of ‘logical unit’ and sets targets for a ‘functional green belt’ along the coast. It also promotes a certification of Land Ownership Scheme to combat illegal occupation of government land (+CP-e). Overall, the land use policy has several progressive features, such as zoning laws, austerity in land use, preservation of existing forests and promotion of afforestation and functional green belt. However, did not address two important forestry-related issues, i. the proportion of land to be kept under forests to preserve the balance, and ii. minimization of the conversion of forest land to other uses

The National Water Policy, 1997 sets a premise to address issues related to harnessing and development of all forms of surface and ground water and to manage these resources in an efficient and equitable manner. This policy acknowledges the environmental problems e.g. excessive soil erosion and sedimentation, groundwater depletion, watershed degradation and deforestation, reduction of biodiversity, wetland loss, saltwater intrusion, and coastal zone habitat loss etc. and recommended for water resources management actions to take care of and avoid or minimize environmental damages (+CP-e). A focus to broad public participation, gender equity (poor and women), social justice, and private sector (+CP-d) in water management made this policy unique. However, the policy did not identify vital water-forest interactions (-CP-e), although many other connections, including the water-fisheries-wildlife and water-environment connections, have been discussed. Afforestation is suggested in areas with declining water tables. Similarly, the policy states that the development and management of the nation’s water resources should include protection, restoration and preservation of the environment and its biodiversity, including wetlands, mangroves and other national forests, endangered species and the water quality. Accordingly, EIA is recommended when development projects are to be taken up in order to avoid or reduce environmental damage (+CP-e). Climate change has, over time, emerged as an important socio-environmental concern that needs to be integrated keeping in view strong climate-water interactions.

The National Fisheries Policy, 1992 was put in place to capitalize the fishery resources as the main source of protein and employment in the country. Though the main focuses of the policy are set as enhancement of the production of fisheries, poverty alleviation, economic growth, it also commits maintaining ecological balance and conserving biodiversity (+CP-e). Since many wildlife species e.g. crocodiles, turtles and dolphins etc. share the same habitats with fishes, their conservation depends upon proper management of aquatic ecosystems. Again, the Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, 2012 defines fishes as wildlife and hence there is a scope for synergy and cooperation between Fishery and Forest Departments, in particular for Sundarbans reserved forest and its waterbodies.

The Coastal Zone Policy, 2005 is has a special focus along the coastal frontiers facing the Bay of Bengal including 19 coastal districts and islands thereof. This made a unique attempt to coordinate all relevant ministries (+CP-a) led by the Ministry of Water Resources to achieve the objectives of poverty reduction through enhancing economic growth in the coastal zone. It also ensured conservation and enhancement of critical ecosystems through implementation of measures to conserve and develop aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems (+CP-e). Further, the policy promoted sustainable management of marine and shrimp fisheries and inland fisheries, mangrove and other forests, land, livestock resources etc. of the coastal region. However, the policy has not been effectively implemented because no specific ministry has been identified for the responsibility of implementing (-CP-a) the Coastal Zone Policy, 2005 whereas the policy has incorporated items that are of interest to many sectors operating in the coastal areas. Any process of implementation of this policy essentially requires good co-operation between many of the ministries of the government, which is often difficult to achieve.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council Act, 1998 enacted to improve the political, social, cultural, and economic rights of all people of Chittagong Hill Tracts including the tribal people of the region, and expedite the process of their socio-economic development. It made provisions for the establishment of the Chittagong Hill Tracts District Councils -as statutory body having its permanent continuity, and ensured representation of all indigenous communities in all layers of the local government through district councils (+CP-c). In the hill districts, apart from the notified forest in the custody of the Forest Department, there are nearly 695,000 ha of un-classed state forest (USF) in the CHT, which is mostly degraded due to shifting cultivation and other factors. Regarding the disputes about community rights in the CHT forests, Forestry Sector Master Plan recommended to resolve by recognizing traditional rights through an appropriate mechanism.

### **3.2.2. Environmental Safeguards: provisions and practices in Development Organizations**

There are several multilateral REDD+ support mechanisms to help countries develop national strategies. Each has its provisions for addressing safeguards, as defined by its mandate. Among these mechanisms, the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) has been the first to adopt the same set of safeguard principles as that of the World Bank and ADB. These REDD+ support mechanisms are in few pilot countries, where national REDD+ strategies are being developed with relatively robust attention to public participation engagement and adequate environmental and social safeguards.

The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), a global partnership focused on REDD+, complements the UNFCCC negotiations on REDD+ by demonstrating how REDD+ can be applied at the country level and by learning lessons. Comprised of both the Readiness Fund and the Carbon Fund, the FCPF works with a number of developing countries to prepare and then implement REDD+ projects. The Readiness Fund helps countries to develop the necessary policies and systems including identifying reference emission levels (levels before REDD so that progress can be measured); designing measuring, reporting and verification systems (to ensure forest degradation and protection is measured accurately); and ensuring environmental and social safeguards are in place. Five pilot countries that have completed the Readiness phase will then receive funding via the Carbon Fund to implement REDD projects. The FCPF has been heavily criticized for failing to comply with its own safeguard mechanisms regarding the participation and consultation with indigenous peoples and forest-dependent communities. Because the FCPF focuses primarily on preparing countries for REDD+, rather than REDD+ projects themselves, traditional safeguards were adapted to address concerns associated with REDD+. In some cases, however, indigenous peoples had little input in identifying how REDD+ might harm their livelihoods and rights. Earlier confusion over which safeguards apply to the FCPF’s different “delivery partners” (World Bank, ADB, UNDP, FAO, UNEP etc.) was partly overcome in 2011 through the FCPF adoption of a “Common Approach” to safeguards, though progress in implementation remains weak in 2013. At the same time, government application of the FCPF’s Strategic Social and Environmental Assessment (SESA) tool is also at an early stage in most countries and the added value of this instrument is yet to be proven.

The World Bank’s Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) aims to protect people and the environment from potential adverse impacts that could arise from Bank-financed projects, and promote sustainable development. It provides broad coverage, including important advances on transparency, non-discrimination, social inclusion, public participation and accountability. The Bank’s environmental and social safeguard policies are a cornerstone of its support to sustainable poverty reduction. The objective of these policies is to prevent and mitigate undue harm to people and their environment in the development process. Out of 10 environmental and social standards of the Bank, *ESS6*: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources; *ESS10*. Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure, *ESS1*. assessment and management of environmental and social risks and impact, *ESS7:* Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities, *ESS3:* Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management, *ESS5*: Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement, are relevant to REDD+ safeguards (World Bank, 2017).

The Asian Development Bank’s environmental safeguards aim to ensure the environmental soundness and sustainability of projects, and to support the integration of environmental considerations into the project decision-making process. The Safeguard Policy Statement (SPS) requires borrowers to identify project impacts and assess their significance; examine alternatives; and prepare, implement, and monitor environmental management plans. The SPS requires borrowers to consult people likely to be affected by the project and disclose relevant information in a timely manner and in a form and in languages understandable to those being consulted. The ADB SPS sets out the policy objectives, scope, triggers, principles and requirements for three key safeguard areas: environmental safeguards, Indigenous Peoples safeguards and involuntary resettlement safeguards.

The JICA provides support for examinations of environmental and social considerations in projects that contribute to the protection of the global environment, such as attempts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In accordance with JICA Guidelines for Environmental and Social Considerations (2004), it encourages the host country governments to implement the appropriate measures for environmental and social considerations when engaging in cooperation activities.

USAID’s forest sector environmental guideline (2015) developed under the AID’s Global Environmental Management Support Program, supports environmentally sound design and management (ESDM) of common USAID sectoral development activities. USAID’s Forestry Sector Environmental Guideline provides guidelines to reduce the typical, potential adverse impacts of activities in forestry sector, including impacts related to climate change. It gives a broad overview of forestry activities with a particular focus on environmental and social impacts, mitigation measures, and environmentally sound design and management (ESDM) best practice for USAID projects. USAID’s mandatory life-of-project environmental procedures require that the potential adverse impacts of USAID-funded and managed activities be assessed prior to implementation via the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. The procedures are USAID’s principal mechanism to assure ESDM of USAID-funded Activities—and thus to protect environmental resources, ecosystems, and the health and livelihoods of beneficiaries and other groups. USAID’s Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plans (EMMPs) are mandatory for all USAID-financed activities to provide a basis for systematic implementation of IEE and EA conditions: In addition to establishing responsibilities and schedules, EMMPs are a vehicle for translating IEE conditions (which are often very general) into specific, implementable, verifiable actions.

GIZ’s Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Guideline (2011) – a governance tool for sustainable development. The SA consists of a range of tools enabling planners and decision-makers to foresee the effects of their policies, plans and programs on environment and to evaluate the inter-linkages with the economy and society. GIZ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has contributed to advancing environmental integration by promoting SEA. UNREDD also recommends for the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) as a tool for a range of analytical and participatory approaches to integrate environmental and social considerations into policies, plans and programs and evaluates the potential risks of REDD+ interventions and other mitigation options. In applied part, the GIZ’s REDD Early Movers (REM) program supports REDD pioneers in forest conservation, climate change mitigation performance and promotes sustainable development for the benefit of small-scale farmers as well as forest-dependent and indigenous communities through fair benefit sharing. REM works in accordance with international social and environmental safeguards, in particular the Cancun Safeguards and international standards for measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) of CO2 emissions. It provides bridging finance until a REDD finance mechanism is agreed upon within the United Nations negotiation process.

# **Chapter 4: safeguards information system**

A progressive development and implementation of safeguards is a key determinant of REDD+ to ensure that REDD+ actions do not cause negative social or environmental impacts and cover a range of issues, including respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, transparent national forest governance structures, effective participation of stakeholders, and the conservation of natural forests and biodiversity. An important element of REDD+ safeguards, which is being negotiated under the UNFCCC, is systems for providing information on how safeguards are addressed and respected. Effective systems to share information will help promote transparency, guard against unintended social and environmental harms, and provide information on the impact of REDD+ actions. The 17th COP (Durban, 2011) agreed on broad provisions for guidance, including that SIS to “build upon existing systems, as appropriate”. This scoping exercise have provisionally framed the objectives and functions of SIS in Bangladesh, based on PAMs identified and prescribing a formal institutional arrangement for information flows within the REDD+ preview.

## **4.1. Key SIS design elements**

The Safeguards Information System (SIS), from a UNFCCC requirement perspective, refers to the institutional structure or information platform that will be responsible for aggregating, evaluating, and reporting information which is accessible to all relevant stakeholders to demonstrate that the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout REDD+ implementation. To make the best use of the national existing processes and ensure sustainability, the SIS in Bangladesh have been developing with ‘*build upon existing systems*’. Additionally, the mandates and reporting responsibilities to international conventions (GFRA, CBD, INDC, Ramsar etc.) along with UNREDD, are also taken into consideration. This assignment made an initial assessment of information systems and sources as well as information gaps that might be resolved by modifying existing systems to accommodate new information (e.g. new indicators), or developing new ones.

The overall design element of BD-SIS is framed as

* Defining BD-SIS Objectives;
* BD-SIS Functions [Information needs and structures]; and
* BD-SIS Institutional Arrangements.

**Procedures**

Decision 12/CP.17 states that parties undertaking REDD+ activities *“…should provide a summary of information on how the safeguards in 1/CP.16 appendix I, are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of the activities*.” This summary of information, also known as the Safeguard Information System (SIS) “…should take into account national circumstances, recognize national legislation and relevant international obligations and agreements, respect gender considerations, and:

1. Be consistent with the guidance identified in decision 1/CP.16, appendix I
2. Provide transparent and consistent information that is accessible by all relevant stakeholders and updated on a regular basis;
3. Be transparent and flexible to allow for improvements over time;
4. Provide information on how all of the safeguards are being addressed and respected;
5. Be country-driven and implemented at the national level;
6. Build upon existing systems, as appropriate.

Durban decision 12/CP.17: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2011/cop17/eng/09a02.pdf#page=16>

**Objectives**

The UNFCCC Durban outcome states that an SIS should provide information on how all Cancun safeguards are addressed and respected. SIS should be country-driven, implemented at a national level, and built on existing systems, as appropriate. It was also agreed that reporting of summary information would take place periodically in national communications to the UNFCCC.

In line with the Right to Information Act, 2009 the country committed to ensure a free and timely information flow for the empowerment of the people through the transparency and accountability of all public, autonomous and statutory organizations and of other private institutions constituted or run by government or foreign financing. It is envisaged that a comprehensive information system, available to mass people, will increase good governance and reduce corruption. The Bangladesh National Portal – a web platform that provides all key information (from all GoB ministries and agencies) to people. The BD-SIS, a component of the national information system, will capture environmental and social safeguard information from concerned GoB agencies and other stakeholders including national surveys and datasets from RIMS unit and REDD Cell (of FD), Survey of Bangladesh, Protected Area data, REDD+ projects, Forest Management Divisions and other primary data; as well as share these information to national REDD stakeholders as well as the UNFCCC, donor agencies, markets, private sector partners, national and local stakeholders and REDD+ authorities.

Hence the core objective of the BD-SIS is set as accumulating REDD+ related safeguards information from key GoB agencies and non-state stakeholder institutions, harmonizing (by the BFD and MoEF) the existing platforms and portals, and sharing as well as international (UNFCCC and other) reporting.

**Functions**

In generic term, an effective and operational SIS should perform one or more of the following key functions, as decided by the country: collection, management, analysis, interpretation, quality assurance and validation, dissemination of information. A vivid review of earlier mentioned safeguards-relevant PLRs will further specify and determine which government (and possibly non-government) institutions are mandated and capacitated to carry out the desired functions of the SIS (and prepare the summary of information on safeguards). The role of non-state actors – civil society, indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as the private sector – in complementing state institutional mandates and capacities, will also be considered as an element of consideration in the process of assigning functional responsibilities within the SIS.

In Bangladesh REDD+ contexts, the main functions of BD-SIS may include:

***Information collection and management:*** primarily concerned with determining what information is to be included in the SIS, where this information will come from and how it will be brought together. Also includes identification or selection of information collection and management methods, in addition to assessing the advantages and disadvantages of modifying existing systems to include new information and methods of collection and management;

***Information analysis and interpretation:*** making sense of the information, particularly important if primary/secondary data are to populate the SIS. Different analyses and interpretations will serve the different objectives of the SIS, including the preparation of a summary of information for submission to the UNFCCC, as well as other domestic information products for different stakeholders at national, subnational and local levels;

***Information quality control and assurance*** - two functions can be considered as information verification (at the point of collection – making sure information is accurate) and validation (post-analysis – making sure interpretation is accurate) are entirely optional SIS functions. It should be noted, however, that the quality of the SIS, and the robustness of its information can be significantly improved with inclusion of quality control and/or assurance functions14; and

***Information dissemination and use:*** once analyzed and interpreted, information should be communicated to, and may be used by, the different target audiences – both international (e.g. donors) and domestic (e.g. local communities) - indicated in the SIS objectives. Information dissemination may involve exploration of technological solutions (such as existing and novel web portals), which provide access to information to different users.

***The role of non-state actors*** (including the civil society, indigenous peoples and local communities, and private sectors) in complementing government institutional mandates and capacities, could be considered during the process of assigning functional responsibilities within the SIS, e.g. private forest, together with indigenous peoples, social forestry groups, PA co-management organizations and other local communities could contribute or validate information on outcomes of implementation of REDD+ actions and information on whether the safeguards are being respected; etc.

**SIS Institutional Arrangements**

The institutional arrangements for an effective REDD+ implementation in general and SIS in particular, is crucial while in PLRs review it revealed that often less connected or little complementarity amongst the sectoral development priority as well as policy statements. Still further review of REDD+ PLRs is required to define the mandates and functions of existing GoB institutions that might contribute to the SIS. Consideration should be given to how those mandates and functions operate in practice to see the institutional (financial, human, technological) capacities could be strengthened to improve SIS functioning. This will be particularly relevant when attempting to demonstrate how the safeguards have been respected, which ultimately may necessitate information on outcomes of REDD+ piloting.

This institutional arrangement, e.g. information sharing arrangements, might be considered horizontally, across government line ministries and between departments, and also vertically up (and down) administrative hierarchies down to forest range level and Upazilla administration, to feed subnational information, from multiple localities, into a single national SIS. Forest Department (FD) and Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) might lead in developing MoUs and Data sharing agreements with concerned agencies e.g. Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Ministry of Land (MoL), Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA), Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), and other agencies identified as information sources. Lastly, the role of non-state institutions also to be considered including customary norms of indigenous peoples and local communities (Social Forestry and PA Co-management), could contribute to SIS functions as well as sources of information. Where the assessment of existing information sources or systems has highlighted that some information requirements cannot be met on the basis of what is already available, suitable arrangements may need to be found for closing those gaps. This may involve building the capacity of relevant institutions to implement PLRs, as well as expanding, changing or creating mandates and protocols for information collection and management.

## **4.2. Review of existing information: information, sources, systems**

Since Cancun safeguards for REDD+ were agreed, no country has yet put a fully operational SIS in place and Bangladesh is still in a preparatory phase. The dream of digital Bangladesh paved appropriate policies (e.g. RTI etc.) and program (e.g. A2i etc.), supplemented by realistic strategies (e.g. vision 2021 etc.) and simultaneous rapid improvement in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have brought significant development in better access to information, enhanced public services, efficient governance and diversification of economic opportunities in the country. In various GoB sectors, a number of information systems are active, with particular focus; few relevant systems are as below:

| **Information Sources** | **Information / Systems** | **Focused areas, alignment with SIS** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| RIMS, Forest Department | Resources Information Management System (RIMS) and GIS mapping | Forestry information and mapping – national to forest range level and international reporting (GFRA, CBD, CITES etc.); REDD Cell including National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS) will be hosted in RIMS. |
| Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) | Population and Housing Census, Agriculture Census, and Economic Census | As national mapping organization, generate important statistics required by national, regional and international users on a regular basis through various surveys and censuses. |
| Statics and Information Division (SID), Ministry of Planning | Bangladesh Geographical Information System Platform (BGISP) | Collect, process, analyze and publish statistical information for the development of the country and welfare of the people. One core mandate is “*Assess the information needs of the country according to international standards: establish a data bank and electronic data processing system; disseminate relevant statistical data and analysis to different users based on their needs*” |
| Survey of Bangladesh (SOB) | Topographic mapping, frontier mapping, boundary mapping, networks of Geodetic control points all over the country | The national mapping organization of Bangladesh; supports other government, non-government agencies and private sectors of the country in national development planning. Recently SOB has transformed all its mapping processes into digital system. |
| Space Research and Remote Sensing Organization (SPARRSO) | Archives of satellite imageries from various sensors. | As national Remote Sensing Organization, applying space and remote sensing technology, in the field of Agriculture, Forestry, Water Resources, Land use, Weather, Environment, Geography etc. |
| Land Use Information and Management Systems (LUIMS)  | LUIMS of Ministry of Land and Land records management through DLRS  | Ministry of Land mandated to ensure the best possible use of land and provide pro-people land services through efficient, modern, and sustainable land management, the LUIMS initiative is a way forward with efficient and transparent land management system. |
| Agriculture Information Service (AIS) | AIS facilitates communicating advanced technology and information to the farmers | Information on agricultural resources (land/soil, water, climate), inputs (capital, labour, seed, fertilizer, pesticides/insecticides, equipment, etc.) and outputs, technologies for production, management, processing and research findings. |
| Right to Information (RTI) | A policy backstopping to ensure access to information from GoB and non-state institutions | Ensures the right to information of the people, and transparency and accountability of all public, autonomous and statutory organizations and of other private institutions constituted or run by government or foreign financing. |
| Grievance Redress System (GRS) | Directives for GRS from the Cabinet Division; The websites of Ministry /Department have information about GRS and the contact details of the focal point. | GRS provide a way to reduce risk for public service delivery, provide an effective avenue for expressing concerns and achieving remedies for public, and promote a mutually constructive relationship. It’s an institutionalized and organized processes consisting of specified roles, rules, and procedures for systematically resolving complaints, grievances, disputes, or conflicts. |
| Access to Information (a2i) | By harnessing ICTs, a2i focuses primarily on bringing information and services to citizens’ doorsteps and increasingly within the palms of their hands. | A Prime Minister’s initiative for improving transparency, governance and public services and reducing inefficiencies in their delivery in terms of ‘TCV’ – the time (T), cost (C) and number of visits (V) associated with obtaining government services for underserved communities in Bangladesh.  |
| National and sectoral web portals | Unique design and contents of all public web sites with required resources, information including GRS. | The National Web Portal of Bangladesh - a single window of all information and services, citizens and other stakeholders can find all initiatives, achievements, investments, trade and business, policies, announcements, publications, statistics and other facts. |

## **4.3. institutional structure for bd-sis**

Bangladesh REDD+ readiness roadmap (2012) outlined national strategy with three main elements including a robust forest information system (FIS) which provides all the data required to accurately monitor changes in forest cover and condition through improved Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) tools. As nodal ministry, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and as executive agency Forest Department is expected to lead REDD piloting and subsequent implementation. Forest Department will be responsible to host and manage the BD-SIS as well as coordinate other information sources and agencies. The REDD+ Steering Committee (RSC) will facilitate formalizing coordination and data sharing through MoUs between MoEF and concerned ministries and agencies, REDD+ Stakeholders Forum (RSF), and REDD+ Technical Working Groups (TWGs). RIMS Unit and REDD Cell will provide technical supports and ensure web-based data management from various sources and produce reports for stakeholder agencies and non-state stakeholders as well as international (UNFCCC) reporting.

## **4.4. Action plan for operationalization of BD-SIS**

| **Sl.** | **Key actions** | **Timeline recommended** |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Establishment of REDD+ Secretariat | Mid/2018 |
|  | Functionalize REDD Cell in FD/MoEF | Mid/2018 |
|  | Operationalize Technical Working Group (Safeguards) | Mid/2018 |
|  | Review existing policies, laws and regulations (PLRs) and identify gaps (further review) | 3 months |
|  | Detailed study on Policy and Measures (PAM): identification of gaps and mitigation measures. | 6 months |
|  | Consultation and agreement on REDD+ Social and Environmental Principles, Criteria and Indicators for BGD. | 3 months |
|  | Institutional consultation/ commitments/ recommendations: review and incorporation | 3 months |
|  | Institutional commitments/arrangements on information sharing: defining key info and focal persons | Mid/2018 |
|  | Develop and piloting sub-national SIS | End/2018 |
|  | (Re)iterate the process and refine the SIS | - |
|  | Development of National SIS for REDD+ | - |

# **Chapter 5: conclusions**

In REDD+ premise, the ‘*country safeguard systems’* refers to the legal and institutional framework of a country and it consists of national, local and sectoral implementing institutions and relevant laws, regulations; and procedures that ensures avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts of biologically significant ecosystems, social costs to stakeholders including IPs and marginalized vulnerable groups.

Along with UNREDD initiatives in Bangladesh, recent policy progress in Forestry sector, particularly forest policy, forestry master plan and forest investment plans appreciated REDD+ as a development approach which are again aligned with the national development priority as mentioned in the 7th five-year plan (perspective plan/ as vision 2021) and sustainable development goal. Review of few relevant PLRs revealed that sectoral policies and priorities are either seldom aligned or faces conflicting implementation approaches. While REDD+ is to adopt nationally as a development pathway, it should not be considered only as a forestry program and requires a firm political commitment as well, in the face of a very land hungry with burgeoning population of the country.

Regarding safeguards, in environmental dimensions, most of the natural resource base sectors affirmed for conservation with sustainable usages. Similarly, the efforts from development partners and their commitments also promote environmental integrity in projects and programs. The coordinated efforts, though loudly mentioned, in practice it is found to be rather segmented. Engagement of stakeholders and FPIC are also greatly appreciated however it is still in symbolic participation or consultation stage both in policy making and during implementation level. More efforts are required at national context to ensure seven Cancun safeguard principles to be addressed and respected while the country is progressing for results-based payments in REDD+.

This scoping study made an initial review for defining a safeguard information system (SIS) based on existing sectoral (few relevant ones) information systems as well as national initiatives through single window of all information and services for citizens from public and non-state actors. Recent advancement in ICT also have a potential area to contribute in SIS development.

It is highly recommended that per national priority for environmental conservation from the constitution, current (7th) five-year plan and sectoral commitments, Forest Department and the Ministry of Environment and Forests, as REDD+ focal agencies, will harness national political commitments for coordinated efforts during preparatory (National Strategy and Action Plan), piloting and full implementation phases.

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