



Informing a Data Revolution

COUNTRY REPORT ON BANGLADESH



Chapter 1: The National Statistical System

1.1 Statistics in national development policy in Bangladesh

Bangladesh did not inherit any effective official statistical system during its independence in 1971. Initially, the official statistics were collected by different agencies like the Bureau of Statistics; the Bureau Agricultural Statistics, the Agricultural Census Commission and the Population Census Commission. In order to streamline the data collection system of the country the Government established Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in August 1974 by merging these four agencies. In July 1975, the statistics division was created under the Ministry of Planning in order to provide policy guidance, coordinate and monitor the activities of the BBS by the government. Acknowledging the importance of statistics in economic monitoring and planning, the statistics division was headed by a secretary who was also the Director General of BBS. However, the statistics division was merged with the planning division of the Ministry of Planning as a Wing and the BBS was placed under the administrative control of that wing.

Acknowledging the importance statistics for evidence based planning, the Statistics Division was reinstated in April 2010, and in March 2012 it was renamed as Statistics and Informatics Division (SID). BBS is placed under the administrative control of SID. In a way, year 2010 was marked by a very favorable attitudinal change within the government towards statistical system of the country. Several measures are taken by the Government to enhance statistical capacity to produce more and quality data in existing as well as new areas.

This renewed effort to strengthen the statistical capacity was preceded by country's adoption of a new development vision and strategy. Desisting from the ad hocism in undertaking development activities, the country has adopted different long and medium term development plans. The development activities of the country are now being undertaken in the light of the "Perspective Plan of Bangladesh (2010-2021): Making Vision 2021 a Reality" - a strategic articulation of the development vision, mission, and goals of the Government in achieving a prosperous Bangladesh grounded in political and economic freedoms a reality in 2021.

In order to accomplish the long-term objective, the country organized its development priorities in 5 year plans. At the same time, different sectoral master plans are also adopted. Statistics are used both in preparing these plan documents and also monitoring the progress made over time. Along with international monitoring of Millennium Development Goal (MDGs), Government of Bangladesh also monitor them by using different statistics provided by BBS and other agencies. With renewed interest in new areas, importance of statistics has increased in Bangladesh in the recent years. It is now being used for measuring the social progress of the society, poverty reduction, food security and nutrition, social development, macroeconomic performances, climate change and environmental sustainability. Bangladesh has introduced medium term budgetary framework. Different statistics are used for effective implementation of this framework.

Bangladesh has been implementing different plans with specific milestones. At the same time, the country has a plural media environment that facilitates informed debate; help correct the natural asymmetry of information, and serves as a watchdog. The media provides a critical "return path"—that is, "voice" and commentary on economic outcomes whereby the "governed" respond to the "governors". This path works with the help of the statistics.

1.2 The status of the NSDS

The National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) has been prepared and approved by the government in order to strengthen the statistical capacity of the country so that growing demand for quality data can be met. The NSDS identified four priority areas as follows:

- A. **Improving the quality coverage and use of core statistics:** As a growing developing country, the type of data needed for national planning and economic management is rapidly changing. BBS will review the need for data from time to time and increase the coverage of core statistics as deemed appropriate. As part of this process, one important milestone is set to meet and subscribe to International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) by 2016.
- B. **Strengthening the professionalism of the NSS:** This will be accomplished through (a) increasing the skills and expertise of the workforce and increasing the proportion of the staff with professional qualifications; (b) providing strong professional leadership for the BBS and the statistical system as a whole, and (c) developing and strengthening internal procedures to make the statistical system more open and accountable and to build trust in statistical products. Key targets include putting in place a statement of statistical ethics and standard that all agencies of the national statistical system agree to follow and have a formal national quality assurance framework for Bangladesh.
- C. **Enhancing capacity to collect, compile, disseminate and use statistics at the local levels:** These objectives were linked with the ongoing initiatives of the government to build 'Digital Bangladesh'. The key target was to have a basic level of capacity in all upzillas by 2016.
- D. **Promoting and Strengthening of access to and the use of official statistics at all levels of society:** The main idea was to implement an 'open-data' strategy to provide wider as well as user-friendly access to data for all. Important intermediate targets include having a formal data dissemination policy for all data producing agencies, establishing a data archive and ensuring that all statistical activities are properly documented.

The estimated investment cost of implementation of the NSDS over the ten year period, from 2013 to 2023, was about US\$578 million. Because of the front-loaded nature of the strategic plan, about 51 percent of the total investment would be required during the first three years, from July 2013 to June 2016. The rest would be required for the period from July 2016 to June 2023. It was envisaged while preparing the NSDS that Government of Bangladesh would unlikely be able to fully finance the plan from its own resources necessitating support from different development partners. Therefore, it was decided that for full implementation of the NSDS, a consortium of interested development partners would be formed to finance different components of the plan. The World Bank would also be approached to support the implementation of the NSDS through their statistical capacity building programme (STATCAP).

It was also decided that the NSDS would be implemented through the existing structure of the BBS. All wings would be responsible independently for successful implementation of activities chalked out for a wing. A Technical Committee headed by the Director General of the BBS and comprised of all Directors

as member and representative of ministries/agencies would be formed to provide the managerial and technical advice for the successful completion of all activities under the NSDS.

Total 61 activities were identified for different wings to implement the NSDS. Out of these activities, 48 would start by 2014 and the rest in later years. However, the progress made so far lags behind the time line as originally set in the NSDS. About 50% of the activities originally planned to start by 2014 has been undertaken so far. To strengthen the overall statistical capacity of BBS, total number of additional staffs both at head as well as field offices to be employed in FY2013-14 has been identified (annex 1). However, these positions are yet to be created and filled.

The investment as planned could not be made due to the financial inflexibility of the government. Yet, the government has neither formed the consortium of development partners nor approached to the World Bank for support from STATCAP. The technical committee to advise and oversee the implementation of the NSDS is yet to become fully functional.

1.3 The legal mandate of statistical activities

The current legal mandate of statistical activities has been provided through the enactment of Parishankhayan Ain (Statistics Act) 2013. This act was approved by the parliament in March 3, 2013, which becomes effectively immediately and supersede any existing rules and laws if there is any contradiction. With the enactment of this act, the National Statistics Council (NSC) formed on the basis of government order of August 13, 1977 is abolished. This act empowers BBS to carry out a wide range of statistical activities in 28 different areas, which are not limited to data production only rather include preparation of guidelines for statistics, national strategy for development of statistics, storing and preserving data with the help of modern technique etc.

As per the newly enacted Statistics Act, every citizen, organization, and institute is now legally bound to provide information whenever sought by BBS. Similarly, any authorized staff of BBS can seek access to any official records and documents of other organization in order to collect statistics.

The same act made it mandatory for all ministries, division and other offices to use the official statistics as source of information. According to this act, any organization or agencies that produce statistics in the areas overlapping with BBS must follow the methodology and guidelines followed by BBS. They will require approval from BBS to publish their own statistics.

1.4 Organization, coordination, and management of the NSS

BBS is at the center of national statistical system. With the enactment of Statistics Act, 2013 it has become the central hub of statistical activities in the country. The NSDS has identified 18 agencies that produce statistics (see annex 2). Before the enactment of the Statistics Act, 2013 all agencies including the BBS were independently mandated to produce statistics. But this act has mandated BBS as the prime agency for generating official statistics. Thus the vision and mission of BBS become synonymous to the vision and mission of national statistical system.

The vision of the NSS of Bangladesh is to become a world-class provider of authentic, relevant and timely data in a holistic and user-friendly manner. The mission of the NSS of Bangladesh is:

- To establish an integrated, professional, efficient and effective NSS, under the guidance and leadership of the BBS.
- To produce and publish official statistics that meet the current and growing needs of national and international users in a transparent and timely fashion using international standards and the best statistical practices.

The national statistical system has entered into a new era through the enactment of Statistics Act, 2013, where BBS is playing a dual role; one as a data producer and another as a provider of guidelines for other agencies that produce statistics. The BBS is led by a Director General assisted by a Deputy Director General, a number of Directors, Joint Directors, Deputy Directors, and others officers and staffs. Specific projects are usually managed by the Steering Committees chaired by the Secretary, Statistics and Informatics Division and comprising of senior officials from the line ministries and agencies, experts from Development Partners, universities and research organizations.

BBS has a country-wide network. Although the head-office located in Dhaka is the central hub of statistical activities, it has offices at all divisions, which are headed by joint director, at all districts, which is headed by deputy director and all upzillas which will eventually be headed by a first class (cadre) statistical officer.

The present strength of the BBS stands at 4129 and performs its function with eight functional wings of which five are subject matter wings and three service wings. The subject matter Wings are: (1) Census; (2) Industry and Labour; (3) Agriculture; (4) National Accounting; and (5) Demography and Health. The service Wings are: (1) Computer; (2) Finance, Administration and Management Information System (FA&MIS); and (3) the Statistical Staff Training Institute (SSTI). Each wing is headed by a director.

Census Wing

The Census Wing is responsible for conducting three decennial censuses: the Population and Housing Census, the Agriculture Census, and the Economic Census. The Census Wing also carries out some other large scale ad-hoc surveys, including, for example, the Literacy Assessment Survey (LAS), which compiles information about the educational level of the population of Bangladesh using competency test. A new initiative named Bangladesh Census of Slum Areas and Floating Population 2014 has recently been taken by this wing in order to fulfill data gaps regarding slum and floating population.

National Accounting Wing

The National Accounting Wing is responsible for the collection, compilation and dissemination of National Accounts Statistics. The activities include: the compilation of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and other National Accounts aggregates (GNI, Investments, Savings, Private Consumptions, Consumption by NPI, Government Expenditure, Per Capita Income, Growth Rate of GDP etc.); the generation of price and wage statistics (Consumer Price Index (CPI), Wage Rate Index (WRI), Building Material Price Index (BMPI), and House Rent Index (HRI); the compilation of the Quantum Index of Industrial Production (QIIP) and the Producer Price Index (PPI); and compilation of the Foreign Trade Statistics (FTS). The Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HEIS) has been placed under this Wing.

Industry and Labour Wing

The Industry and Labour wing is responsible for the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics relating to non-farm economic activities through some regular and some ad-hoc surveys. The main activities are to conduct the Survey of Manufacturing Industries (SMI), the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the Establishment and Institution Survey (EIS), the Child Labour Survey (CLS), the Hotel and Restaurant Survey (HRS), the Wholesale and Retail Trade Survey (WHRTS) and other surveys in the service sector.

Agriculture Wing

The major function of the Agriculture wing is to produce and disseminate statistics on agricultural sector in Bangladesh. One of the most important activities is to compile annual estimates of the acreage, production and yield rate of six major crops - Aus, Aman, Boro, Wheat, Jute and Potato and 118 minor crops including vegetables, fruits and flowers. This wing also compiles forestry and fishery statistics from administrative records kept by the Department of Forestry and the Department of Fisheries.

Demography and Health Wing

The Demography and Health wing is responsible for collecting, compiling and publishing statistics relating to the population of Bangladesh and its health, morbidity and demographic status. The main functions are to produce statistics on all demographic events such as fertility, mortality, nuptiality & migration, collected through the Monitoring the Situation of Vital Statistics of Bangladesh (MSVSB). Other activities of the Wing include carrying out Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS); compiling statistics on gender, violence against women etc.

Computer Wing

The Computer wing provides all type of IT support to subject matter Wings of BBS. It is responsible for the data capture, processing and tabulation of different censuses and survey

Finance, Administration and Management Information System Wing

The FA & MIS wing is responsible for managing all the administrative and financial activities of the BBS.

Statistical Staff Training Institute (SSTI)

This wing now imparts training to all officials of BBS in statistics, administration, computer literacy, budgeting, project planning and development, public procurement etc. It regularly provides foundation training to newly recruited officials of BBS.

Chapter 2: Assessment of main data compiling agency

BBS is the main data compiling agency in Bangladesh which also guides and helps other line ministries and organization to collect quality data. The overall strength of the statistical system of the country depends on the strength of BBS. We assess the strength and weakness of BBS in different areas.

2.1 Human resources

One of the current strength of BBS lies in the area of sampling and conducting nationally representative surveys and census on different economic areas. It is the only organization in the country that has both the manpower and technical know-how to conduct any nation-wide survey and census. Both cadre and non-cadre officers are recruited through a competitive exam conducted by Bangladesh Public Service Commission - an independent authority to administer the recruitment of government employees in Bangladesh. They are selected from some selected relevant disciplines. The entry level officers are promoted over time based on their accumulated skills, knowledge and experience. In order to meet the need for any particular type of skills at different level, the current rule also has a provision to recruit 20% of the cadre officers through lateral entry. This arrangement provides an opportunity to recruit staffs with accumulated knowledge when own institutional supplies are not adequate.

It emerged from consultation with a number of stakeholders that BBS lacks competencies in a number of core areas like questionnaire design, data analysis and report writing. In many cases, BBS relies on external experts for these activities. But the participation of external experts in many cases is passive and casual, and therefore cannot be a substitute for in-house expertise. Before conducting any survey, one has to identify the pertinent key question to be answered through this survey, do some research to identify the key information to be collected to answer this, and then finally design the questionnaire. The in-house research capacity to carry out these background tasks is yet to be fully developed in BBS.

However, some opportunities are currently prevailing to build more human capital in BBS. In conducting the NSDS a thorough diagnosis was conducted and some specific recommendations have been made. The need of different Wings of BBS in regard to training and human resources has been identified. The NSDS provides a detail breakdown of different types of training needed to strengthen the statistical capacity of BBS (table 7.3, p-89). It means the initiatives to promote more human capital in BBS can be undertaken without requiring any stock-taking exercise.

The future human capital and skill of BBS would depend on the extent to which it can allure brilliant students at entry level and to what extent they can be retained. It emerged from consultation that the main determinant to allure the brilliant students to join BBS is a clear career path in place and the supporting arrangement to continually upgrade one's skill and competencies for a smooth stride along this path. Although some measures have been taken in the recent years, yet a lot needs to be done to create an environment where a staff can grow and contribute to the statistical strength of the country. A software based personal file management system to easily track the human capital accumulation of a particular staff not only to assign a task to the right person but also to identify the eligible candidates for promotion and posting is yet to be introduced.

2.2 Infrastructure and equipment

BBS has infrastructural set up to upzilla level with basic equipment and computer facilities. Most of the upzilla offices were provided with computer in 2009. The head office is located at its own building in Dhaka while the other offices at divisional, district and upzilla levels are located at rented buildings.

While the physical space has not been a serious problem yet, the ICT infrastructure is yet to be fully developed. The organization does have an intranet system which will be accessible internally only to its own staffs. An enterprise-wide email system, where each staff will have a unique email address is yet to be introduced. The hand-held gadget assisted data capturing has been introduced in a very limited extent, mainly for collecting price data. A lot needs to be done to mainstream the computer assisted data collection, both involving procurement of hardware, software and providing training to the staffs.

A video conferencing system for close interaction between head office and the regional offices would significantly improve the quality of work. It will also make interaction with the international statistical community easy. BBS aspires to set up a data warehouse but the required equipment for this is yet to be procured. BBS needs to carry out a professional assessment of its e-readiness to achieve the target set out in the NSDS.

Many observers see the lack of adequate ICT infrastructure as a missed opportunity to become a part of digital Bangladesh. The main problem, of course, is lack of adequate resources. However, restoration of Statistical and Information Division and current enhanced emphasis on use of data in designing result oriented milestone based development plans provide an opportunity to mobilize the required resources. Monitoring of post-2015 development framework will also provide an opportunity to strengthen BBS's current ICT infrastructure. Strengthening of ICT infrastructure of BBS is well-aligned with the national goal of building 'Digital Bangladesh', making it a strong candidate for public resources. For that, the first move must come from BBS.

2.3 Financial resources

As a public organization, BBS receives a budgetary allocation every year to meet its revenue expenditure and statistical activities. In addition, BBS also receives finances from different development partners to undertake different statistical activities. According to the revised budget, total finance received by BBS in FY13-14 was about BDT 1087 millions. Out of this amount, BDT 508 million was spent as non-development expenditure whereas the rest was spent as development expenditure. The non-development and development expenditures earmarked for FY14-15 are BDT 610 and BDT 2090 respectively. The surge in development expenditure is attributable to humongous increase in contribution from development partners, from BDT 172 million in FY13-14 to BDT 1691 in FY14-15.

Most of the expenses are made by the head office (annex 3). Branch offices incur only the non-development expenses while the all project expenses are made by the head office. In FY13-14, the head office incurs about 51 percent of the total expenses which is likely to increase to about 77 percent in FY14-15. Divisional offices incur less than 1 percent of total budget of BBS. Since they are larger in numbers, the upzilla offices incur more than the district officers.

While government contribution shows a stable trend, contribution from development partners varies a lot from year to year. For example, total contribution of development partners accounted for about 16

percent of total budget of BBS in FY13-14. This is likely to be increase to about 63 percent according to proposed budget. BBS does not receive any budget for training and development of human capital. In most cases, trainings interlinked with projects, financed mostly by development partners. The irregular flow of project support also implies irregular workflow and human capital development.

2.4 The commitment to quality

BBS perceives quality of data in terms of a number of interrelated dimensions such as relevance, timeliness, accessibility, clarity and comparability. It exercises a quality assurance framework that includes the provision of a systematic mechanism for facilitating the identifications of quality problem and putting in place actions for their resolution. At the same time, it stimulates and maximizes interaction among staffs within the BBS. In addition, different technical committees by coopting subject experts and representatives from other ministries to provide advices as and when required. It also gives greater transparency to the processes of various areas such as survey design and implementation, dissemination etc.

One of the key requirements to ensure quality of data is to remain up to date and consistent on concepts and definitions used in a survey or across surveys over time. BBS acknowledges the importance of creating a research and development wing which will lead and coordinate the development, implementation, maintenance and use of statistical standard to ensure the quality of data. It will also be responsible for developing and maintaining agreed standards and methods for data collection, analysis and dissemination of integrated statistical information and methodological services for subject wings, especially in regard to sampling, seasonal adjustment, questionnaire design, and review of quality of data of the past surveys and census.

The commitment of BBS to ensure quality is also reflected in its effort to ensure active participation of data users and data providers, national and international organizations during the development and approval of statistical standard.

However, despite BBS's ongoing efforts to ensure quality of data it provides, many users are yet to be fully convinced about their reliability. It emerged from consultation with a number of stakeholders that BBS needs make visible as well as credible improvements in the following areas;

1. Timeliness of data: Many stakeholders perceive the data provided by BBS as 'too old'. In most cases, BBS provides annual data with few exceptions in the recent years. One exception which draws huge applause is the monthly price data. Some of the data are provided once in a couple of years.
2. Relevance of data: Most of the macroeconomic data are provided annually. But for any kind of research or planning, one needs quarterly data. The private entrepreneurs feel that BBS so far failed to produce the type of statistics that would be useful for them. However, at the same time they blame the lack of coordination between them and BBS rather than indifference or lack of capacity of the latter.
3. Lack of clarity: Many stakeholders complain that it is difficult to understand the survey or census data from their current format the way they are made available for public use. Sometimes, the definitions and concepts (metadata) are not available which makes it even more difficult to understand and use them.

2.5 Relation with data users

BBS is trying to improve its relation with data users. There is a serious lack of wide awareness about the statistical activities among many users. As a result, the local governments, independent researchers, development partners, and even the legislators do not have a very strong relation with BBS. The dividend of country's very vibrant media in terms of conducting campaign or advocacy in informing BBS's profile to the stakeholders is yet to be fully exploited. However, a renewed effort on BBS's part since the adoption of the NSDS is observed to promote coordination and dialogue with professionals, academia, policymakers, private sector, and NGOs to build a string relation with them.

One of the factors that many users identified as a major hindrance in developing and maintaining a close relation with BBS is the lack of clarity about the process of obtaining any data from it. There is no one-point customer service for users making it very difficult to know where to go for a particular set/type of data. Also whatever data is available, are not very user friendly or given in widely used format like Excel or SPSS etc.

Many stakeholders mentioned that despite a lot of work done by BBS, they are not widely publicized. The website of the organization is not fully functional and informative. No data can be collected from BBS without physical visit to the head office. Sometimes it requires more than one visits and runaround at different desks.

Access to metadata (concepts, definitions, classifications, basis of data recording, data sources, compilation method, and explanatory note etc.) is yet to be provided. As a result, data provided by BBS is not easily comprehensible to users.

Another factor identified as a contributor to the weak relation between BBS is the long time required to give the final estimates of any statistics, especially the macro economic variables.

2.6 Providing access to statistics and data

Statistical data produced by BBS are released for potential users in three versions: hardcopy, softcopy on CD and DVD, and digitally at BBS' website. However, the printed publications are placed in two different libraries of BBS located at Dhaka with full public access. Anybody can purchase it from there. Six major publications namely Statistical Yearbook, Statistical Pocketbook, Monthly Statistical Bulletin, and Yearbook of Agricultural Statistics, National Accounts Statistics, and Foreign Trade Statistics of Bangladesh are published to provide access to wider audience. One can also purchase the softcopy of these publications whenever they are ready and made available. However, only the summary statistics are posted on the website which can be accessed free of cost. An annual calendar to release reports and statistics is missing.

However, a number of factors are identified which limit public access to BBS statistics despite the above-mentioned initiatives.

1. **Incompleteness of shared statistics:** While providing access to statistics, some of the core components of documentation like concepts and definitions of a variable, basis of recording, source of data, compilation methods are included. As a result, sometimes these statistics are very difficult to comprehend and use for analytical purposes.

2. **Format and presentation of data:** Statistics are provided in tabular format, especially in printed reports, which are very difficult to understand. Presentation of data in tabular format precedes some level of preliminary analysis, cross-tabulation, and estimation. The exact nature of presentation depends on the main research question one is trying to address. In most cases, BBS presents the data without making reference to any research question. As a result, the estimation, definition and sequencing of data become difficult for one to understand.
3. **Poor navigability of BBS's website:** BBS has a website with the capacity of three terabyte. There is a drop-down menu to choose the desired statistics from a long list. In most cases, only the summary statistics are provided there in tabular format, chart and diagrams with any description (metadata) attached to them. As a result they are not useable for research and analytical purposes. The website does not provide any facility for online purchase of data. Most importantly, the website is not easily navigable and remains down very often. A frequently asked question (FAQ) is missing.

2.7 Developing partnership

BBS has working relationship with a number of international organizations. But these relationships are not demand driven or systematic. BBS send its staffs to the statistical agencies of other countries for knowledge sharing. It takes the financial as well as technical assistance from international organizations in carrying out statistical activities. But there are two things to be noted: first, all these partnerships are based on ad-hoc needs and availability of funds. Second: BBS do not have much partnership with domestic academic institutions for capacity building. Whatever limited partnership they currently have with other organizations is mainly project based.

However, the adoption of the NSDS and the enactment of Statistics Act, 2013 provide an opportunity to build a systematic partnership with both local and international organizations. The Statistics Act 2013 not only created the grounds rather made it mandatory for BBS to lead the statistical activities of the country by coordinating with other data producing agencies. The NSDS was prepared using a participatory approach involving main development partners working in/on Bangladesh. More than one consultation was carried out in the preparation process. As a result, most of the development partners know the main statistical as well as capacity building activities to be carried out by BBS. This provides an opportunity to BBS to develop a well-coordinated partnership with different development partners as well as other ministries of Government of Bangladesh.

Similarly, based on the diagnostic analysis of needs and requirement for enhancing statistical capacity building, BBS can also develop partnership with local and international academic institutions.

Chapter 3: The management of statistical process

3.1 Relation with data providers

BBS collects data both from primary and secondary sources. In case of surveys, respondents chosen following a methodologically done sample design are the main data providers. Information is collected from them through a structured questionnaire under the direct supervision of responsible officers. In case of census, however, total population is the data providers.

Although there were a number of agencies working to provide statistics in different areas, with the enactment of Statistics Act 2013 and the adoption of the NSDS, it is now incumbent upon BBS to provide comprehensive, accurate, timely, and reliable data needed by the government to develop and support the economic, social, and environmental policy and planning of the country by amalgamating data from other agencies as well. There are a number of other national agencies such as Bangladesh Bank, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT), National Board of Revenue (NBR), Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information & Statistics (BANBEIS) etc. who used collect and publish data. But now they are in the process of bringing under the guidance of BBS. In some cases, BBS collects data from them and then publish it as official statistics. In other cases, they advise and help the respective agencies to comply with required coverage and quality of data before publishing it.

In case of some line ministries like Agriculture, who used to collect primary information, BBS now work with them in partnership. As a result, instead of publishing their own statistics, both BBS and the respective line ministry now publish one statistics on the basis of mutual consensus.

3.2 Managing data processes

Professional freedom and technical skill is the key to manage the data process – from collection to dissemination- without compromising with any kind pressure or bias. As a developing country, both professional freedom and technical skill are not easy to accomplish and exercise. Still, embolden by recent enactment of Statistics Act 2013, BBS leaves no stone unturned to remain independent in terms of: (a) development (activities setting up, strengthening and improving statistical methods, standards for the production and dissemination of statistics as well as designing new statistics and indicators), (b) production (selection of techniques, definitions, methodologies and sources relating to the collection, storage, processing and analysis necessary for compiling statistics, and (c) dissemination (what to be published and when to be published).

However, it should be mentioned that BBS is not an autonomous organization. It is controlled and regulated by the Statistics and Informatics Division (SID) under the Ministry of Planning. Hence it is directly accountable for its all activities to the SID. Various steering committees, chaired by the Secretary, SID and including representatives from different ministries are formed to provide advices on statistical activities. These committees make recommendations on how the activities will be managed, what methods and procedures will be followed and how standards will be maintained. Depending on the needs, different technical committees are also formed under the chairmanship of the Director General of BBS and coopting external experts and representatives from other public as well as private organizations for technical advices.

Another type of committees is formed at all administrative tiers, from national to union levels, during any census to coordinate the work efficiently. Thus any statistical activity conducted by BBS goes through a number of supervisory stages to ensure accountability. In case of censuses, BBS outsource the task of post enumeration check (PEC) to an independent think tank. Despite all these, there are still some questions among many stakeholders about the real independence of BBS as it is still an integral part of the government through Statistics and Informatics Division (SID).

3.3 Dissemination

BBS publishes statistics as and when they are ready. In case of some limited statistics it follows a regular time table. For example, price data are now published on monthly basis. However, one of the main limitations of current dissemination policy identified by many stakeholders is the incompleteness of the disseminated statistics.

Some limited description of concepts and definitions of the disseminated statistics are currently provided, but these are not adequate. There is no guideline or principle followed in providing metadata. Because of the inadequate ICT capacity, dissemination is still hardcopy dependent. There is no 'release calendar' followed in disseminating statistics. However, press is involved during the dissemination of any statistics in the recent years. As a result, any dissemination of statistics by BBS gets some media coverage. The website is yet to be made an effective platform for sharing and disseminating statistics.

3.4 Archiving and providing access to micro-data

BBS is using German technology base optical data archiving system. However, MICS data are archived in global format. However, some of the problems currently faced include lack of technical knowledge on data migration and preparation of metadata. A complete data set of all surveys and censuses in a Statistical Data Bank, which has been in the plan for quite some time, is yet to be developed.

At present BBS provides limited access to micro data. The full set of survey and a five percent random sample of census are made available for which one has to pay a fee. But this has some limitations. For example, the datasets together with methodology, questionnaire, and other related procedures are fully documented. BBS is yet to design and adopt a policy for providing access to micro data without breaching the confidentiality of the respondent.

Chapter 4: Interaction with the international statistical community

4.1 Managing assistance from donors

Since statistics are also required by donors to assess the impact of their intervention and set their follow-up strategy, BBS has a historical relationship with development partners. Many projects are financed by them. The assistance comes in a composite package that contains technical and financial assistance. Different donors finance projects in the area commensurate with their own priority. BBS receives assistance from almost all multilateral donors working in Bangladesh which include the World Bank, ILO, UNDP, EU, and ADB.

However, no donor provides any standalone assistance for human capital development or capacity building. Usually, every statistical activity financed by donor has some provision for study tours to gather knowledge by visiting national statistical organization of other countries, short training, both at home and abroad, but not any degree awarding courses like Masters and/or Ph.D.

BBS has a good track record of managing donors' support efficiently. In most cases, donor's assistances are managed jointly by BBS and the donor itself. BBS provides the office and appoints a project director. He is supported by some other support staffs. All of them carry out their responsibility in addition to their usual office work. Depending on the nature of the work, both local and international consultants are recruited. All hiring and procurement of goods and services are conducted with the concurrence of the donor. It means in managing donor assistance, a project director has to go through and comply with the processes both at BBS and donor organization. Sometimes this is a huge amount of work, which s/he has to perform in addition to his usual office duty. This is one reason why in many cases donor's assistance is perceived as an additional pressure and workload.

Donor's assistance varies from year to year implying a variation of workflow as well. Since donor's assistance cannot be taken into consideration unless the negotiation is complete and the agreement has been signed, sometimes it is not possible to incorporate them in yearly work plan. As mentioned above, donor assistance also includes some provision for training and study tours. But for the same reason, these capacity building activities cannot be carried out in a systematic way. In most cases the resources earmarked for training and study tours are spent without obtaining the best possible outcomes.

4.2 Participating in the international statistical system

The participation of BBS in international statistical system is very limited. BBS has subscribed to General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) managed by International Monetary Fund (IMF). It is planning to subscribe to the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) by 2016. Other participations in international statistical system include participation in different international workshop, seminar and symposium on statistics as and when invited by the organizers.

Chapter 5: Development of the NSO over next five years

The NSDS carried out through a series of diagnostic consultations with different stakeholders to identify the priority areas. This chapter takes full cognizance of these identified priority areas and progress made so far in this regard.

5.1 Priorities for new statistical activities

Most of the stakeholders acknowledged that BBS has escalated its activities very recently following the adoption of the NSDS. E-capturing of data has been introduced in a very limited way, main in case of price data, which is now regularly published on monthly basis. Revision and rebasing of GDP has been done. Partnership has been developed with Department of Agricultural Extension for improving agricultural crop estimation and forecast system. Compilation of cost of production of different important crops has been done. Different important censuses like population census, economic census, slum-dwellers census have been conducted. Preparation of business and population register is underway. A number of important surveys like use of remittance, rural credit situation, food security and nutritional status have been conducted.

Despite this escalated effort, the implementation of NSDS is lagging behind from the set schedule. There are still unmet demands for statistics. Users of statistics would like to see the following activities being carried out by BBS over next 5 years or so.

1. National Accounting Wing

There is a huge demand for quarterly macroeconomic statistics. In particular, quarterly GDP estimates and timely estimation of quantum index of production is highly demanded by the researchers, policy makers and development partners. The compilation of supply and use table (SUT) and implementation of SNA 2008 are also identified as a priority. As climate change and environmental issues are assuming pivotal attention of the policymakers, the importance of compilation of green GDP (System of Environmental Accounting) was highlighted by many stakeholders. Similarly, a regular updating of environmental and climate change statistics has also been identified a priority for next 5 years.

2. Agricultural Wing

Along with statistical activities, stakeholders also emphasized on the updating of the methodologies and technique used to carry out these activities. Use of ICT like remote sensing to estimate the crop production has been emphasized. An update of rural agricultural statistics like landholdings, type of tenancy, mechanization of agriculture, access to credit and agricultural inputs etc. has been identified as another priority area for next 5 years. Similarly, the importance of nationally representative statistics of non-crop sector like livestock, fisheries and forest has been highlighted. There is a strong demand for statistics that would help to understand and quantify the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on farm activities.

3. Demography and Health Wing

There is a strong demand for more health and demographic statistics. The incidence of hunger has significantly decreased in recent years. Even the number of pockets of seasonal hunger has also declined

over time. This change has created a renewed interest in malnutrition and health status, especially of child and mother. Another change that has been taking place in Bangladesh is the feminization of labor force. But due to lack of national representative statistics, it is not possible to know the actual extent of it, let alone its occupational structure. Government has taken a number of measures to help the women entrepreneurs. But there is no reliable data available on their number and sector of concentration. This gap has been identified as a priority for next five years.

4. Census Wing

A number of important censuses have been carried out by BBS during last few years. Some other important works like developing a national population register, preparing data base of poor population and coverage of social safety net programs, preparation of business register are under process. Acknowledging the importance of education, many stakeholders emphasized the importance of education and literacy survey that BBS should conduct in the coming years. It has been a while since government has started different initiatives to build 'Digital Bangladesh'. As an effort of current stock-taking, many stakeholders proposed that BBS should carry out a census or survey to assess the use and accessibility to e-resources by the citizen of the country.

5. Industry and Labor Wing

Employment statistics is identified as one of the weakest areas in Bangladesh. Quarterly estimates of employment data and other labor market variables have been pointed out as one of the most important things for BBS. Very limited information is available about the informal sector of Bangladesh, although their share in GDP is ostensibly significant and growing. A nationally representative survey to collect information on the sectoral composition, characteristics, and size of the informal sector was emphasized by many stakeholders.

5.2 Priorities for strengthening statistical capacity

Given the growing importance of statistics and renewed interest in result-based planning, strengthening of the statistical capacity of the country through BBS has been highlighted by all stakeholders. With the increase in donors' funding, the statistical activities have notably increased in the current year. At the same time, with the growing decentralization, many staffs are sent to field offices. If this pattern continues, BBS needs to revisit its staffing policy to meet future challenges. In particular, the upzilla office cannot be fully functional unless manpower is increased from 4 to 7 as planned in the NSDS. Each union also two enumerators, one male and one female, to collect economic and social data to meet the growing demand.

The service wings of BBS also need to be strengthened. Some of the specific recommendations that emerged from the consultations with different stakeholders for different service wings are as follows.

1. Computer Wing

The current ICT infrastructure of BBS is not up to the standard yet for e-management of statistics, neither does the current human skill of the DDS staffs. A number of activities have been identified in the NSDS to meet this deficit. But most of them are yet to be implemented. It emerged from the discussion with BBS staffs that for successful implementation of the e-governance and e-management of statistics, the planned activities should be carried out without any delay. Some of them are (i) setting up a

decentralized intranet system, (ii) set up programming, coding and analysis units with the computer units, (iii) development of efficient data management system and maintenance, (iv) introduce web-based application of software for all wings including statistical data and metadata exchange (SDMX) software, (v) build data warehouse, data archive and networking system, and (vi) introduce cloud computing system.

2. FA and MIS Wing

Expedite the establishment and strengthening of division, district and upzilla offices. Introduce automation of all section of MIS by establishing LAN connecting through DG offices with other section of MIS. Another area that has been as a priority is the strengthening of local level data collection providing necessary manpower and equipment up to upzilla level. Introduce a cloud computing system- the integration of many servers- which will allow using same software in many PCs simultaneously. Establish a National data Resource center with e-access given to the users. Introduce soft-ware based personal file management which will help to assess the strength of a particular staff as well as the organization as a whole, thus can lead to administrative efficiency.

3. Statistical Staff Training Institute

The importance of a statistical training academy has been highlighted both by data producers and users. To attract and retain the best trainers in this academy, many stakeholders proposed a different pay structure comparable to private universities for its faculties. BBS should have a yearly budget for sending its staffs abroad in different relevant courses. It should have arrangement with national and international universities.

5.3 Making use of innovation

BBS has started using e-technology, like capturing of data by using hand-held gadgets or laptops to collect data on experimental basis. It is planning to use online data collection in one of its upcoming project. GPS is being used to identify location of various establishments. Despite these changes in the process of data collection, innovation is still a peripheral issue in BBS. The traditional method is still playing the pivotal role. Innovation in other activities like data management and dissemination is neither exercised nor foreseen. The idea of using administrative and real time big data to reduce the burden on the respondents is not even well-conceived. Lack of knowledge and required skill is mainly responsible for it.

The most important thing to use innovation in statistics in Bangladesh in the coming years is the partnerships across development organizations, government and private sectors to mobilize skills and capabilities required for implementation.

5.4 Priorities for financial aid for statistics

While there has been a renewed interest in statistics, there has been no visible increase in budgetary allocation. The observed escalated efforts to undertake more statistical activities in the current year are attributable to the increase of financial aid from donors. Availability of financial aid will continue to remain as a main determinant of statistical activities in Bangladesh.

It is also acknowledged in the NSDS that government of Bangladesh is unlikely to be able to finance the implementation of the plan. The estimated cost of the investment in the first phase of the implementation of the NSDS, i.e., 2013 to 2016, is about 24000 million Bangladeshi Taka. With the current trend of budgetary allocation by government, the financing gap is estimated at about 17743 million BDT, which is about 219 million US dollar.

So far the financial aid came in the form of project to implement a particular census or survey. Although almost all projects have a training component to finance study tours and training, there has been no stand-alone support provided for capacity building. Similarly, most of the projects provide some funds to procure goods, but not a single project has ever designed exclusively for procurement of equipment, hardware and/or software.

It has emerged from the consultation with stakeholders that while the project based aid to support different statistical activities should continue, the capacity building activities like to introduce a well-designed training program, and introduction of e-administration system, establishment of a statistical training academy should also receive financial aid. It was suggested by some stakeholders that financial aid should be utilized as a tool to promote use of innovation in statistics.

5.5 Priorities for technical assistance

As of now, the technical assistance is provided a part of project based financial aid. A change of this current modality is also recommended by the stakeholders. One of the areas that have been identified for technical assistance is to help BBS to generate high frequency macroeconomic data like quarterly estimates. Along with providing technical assistance to sampling and data collection, technical assistance should also be provided in data analysis and report writing. These are identified the weakest areas of BBS by many stakeholders.

According to some data users, international community should also provide technical assistance in data archiving and retrieval, dissemination. BBS also needs assistance in complying with international statistical standards by fully understanding and using the international statistical concepts and methodology.

Chapter 6: Participating in the data revolution

The idea of the data revolution emerged from the lessons learnt from the process of monitoring of MDGs. The main objectives and some core component of the proposed data revolution were presented in a national workshop in Dhaka, held in August 2014. The participants overwhelmingly endorse the view that to effectively monitor the goals set in the post-2015 development framework, Bangladesh like any other developing country, must participate in the data revolution.

6.1 How can the country contribute?

To effectively contribute to the data revolution, first and foremost, the national statistical organization, BBS has to fully appreciate the importance of the additional capacity required to generate additional and quality data to monitor the SDGs. The policy makers at the highest level have to realize the importance of SDGs monitoring and the need for new type of data required for that. Data use should not lead to ‘business as usual’ any more.

Despite the recent improvements of statistical capacity, Bangladesh have not succeeded to mobilize resources and build capability to implement the full capacity building plan. To combat this, the country must invest heavily in the infrastructure and institutional frameworks necessary for the data revolution to take effect. Institutions must be capable of receiving, reviewing and processing data in a timely and effective manner. They must also be able to ensure the accessibility of this data to all who may need it. The enactment of Statistics Act 2013 has resolved the legal and regulatory impediments that impinge upon access to information. Now the country should build upon it.

BBS must also be willing to receive and process various forms of information from various stakeholders, including data beyond financial flows. For example, data from civil society, think tanks, and development partners on different social and economic issues, for example, corruptions, violations of human rights and abuse cases, domestic and sexual violence against women also need to be accommodated in the new data revolution. While more autonomy of BBS will be very useful, which is not the offing or foreseen, it should make the best use of the power already given to it by not compromising with any kind of external influence.

Looking towards the expanded post-2015 agenda, the local level data will be a priority for the international community as much as it is for the national government to pursue the objective of “leaves no one behind”. Bangladesh has to build capacity at local offices to generate statistics. Some efforts are already underway to achieve this. This process needs to be strengthened and completed as soon as possible.

Commensurate with country’s mantra of building ‘Digital Bangladesh’ the government should take measures to digitize the data collection and management process, and venturing into non-traditional sources of data which are automatically generated with the growing penetration of internet and e-technology in the country. However, given infrastructure, energy and connectivity constraints, particularly at the rural level, a major change will not be possible overnight. Therefore, a combined approach, making use of traditional and technological advances where appropriate would be the right measure for government to undertake. For example, at the rural level, both traditional and technological methods (paper and tablets) should be used to collect data. In urban areas, e-technology should be used.

6.2 What does it need?

The country would require help in two fronts, both technical and financial, to successfully implement data revolution. A partnership with international community will be crucially important to fully grasp the needful to be done and eventually getting them done.

Whatever new statistical capacity was generated and new statistical activities were undertaken so far, they mostly pertain to the monitoring of MDGs. Sustainable development perspectives such as energy, equality and governance were inadequately incorporated into the MDGs. BBS does not have readily available technical know-how to fully understand the relevant issues, design questionnaire and collect statistics in these areas. It will require technical help from the international community to administer statistical activities required for monitoring of the SDGs.

In addition to the technical help, Bangladesh will also need financial help to implement the data revolution. Faced with resource constrained, Bangladesh has to sequence the statistical activities according to their perceived importance. There is no reason to think that government's priority would match the requirement of SDGs monitoring. Therefore, financial aid would be required to implement the data revolution without compromising with government's own priority. Since, the data revolution will also involve use of electronic gadgets; it may always not be possible for the government to finance their procurement without financial aid.

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Annex 1: Summary of New Staff Posts to be Created

	National Accounts Wing	I&L Wing	Ag. Wing	D&H Wing	Census Wing	Computer Wing	FA & MIS Wing	SSTI	Total
Year-2013-2014									
Professional posts in statistics	20	6	20	40	-	-	8	4	98
Professional posts in other topics	2	3	5	5	-	-	12	4	31
Support staff at headquarters	-	3	-	10	-	10	4	8	35
Field staff	-	-	-	-	-	-	10500	-	10500
Temporary Staff	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub-Total	22	12	25	55	-	10	10524	16	10664

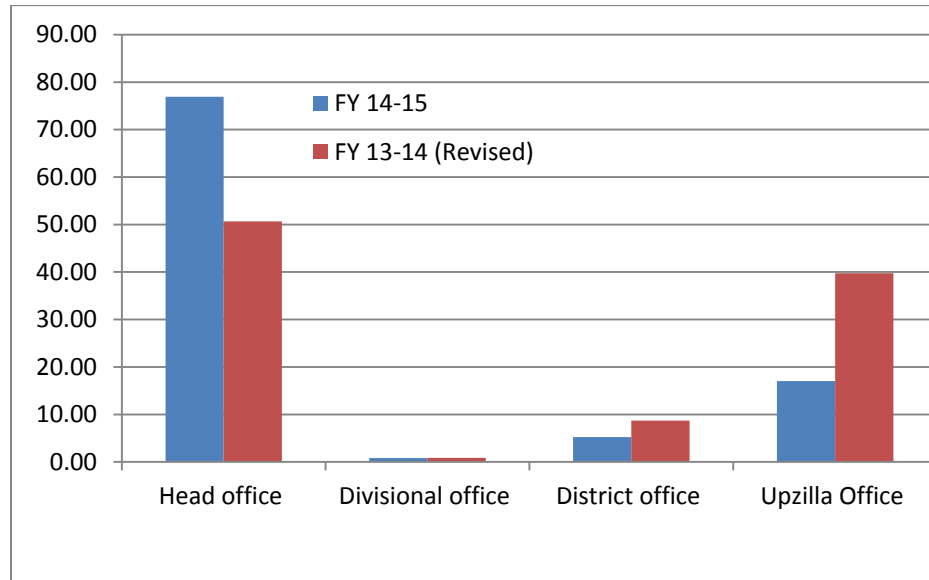
Source: NSDS

Annex 2: List of data producing agencies/organization in Bangladesh along with BBS

1. Bangladesh Bank
2. Ministry of Finance
3. Ministry of Agriculture
4. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
5. Ministry of Education
6. Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
7. Ministry of Social Welfare
8. Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
9. Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives
10. Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
11. Ministry of Labour and Employment
12. Ministry of Food
13. Ministry of Environment and Forests
14. Ministry of Public Administration
15. Ministry of Communication
16. Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment and
17. Ministry of Commerce
18. Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Source: NSDS

Annex 3: Share of head and regional offices in total budget of BBS during FY13-14 and FY14-15



Source: Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh