



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR ADVANCING STATISTICAL EXCELLENCE

Role of the Research and Development (R&D) Cell
at Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)

SEPTEMBER 2025

BANGLADESH BUREAU OF STATISTICS

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Abstract

The establishment of a Research and Development (R&D) Cell at Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) aimed at modernizing the national statistical system and strengthening evidence-based policymaking. The R&D cell as a center of excellence will help underscore its strategic role in ensuring data integrity, methodological rigor, and innovation, aligning BBS with global standards. This paper explores the rationale, objectives, and guideline for statistical excellence, with an emphasis on setting clear and achievable priorities. Drawing on international best practices and the evolving data needs of Bangladesh, the study identifies key priority areas including methodological innovation, integration of emerging technologies, capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and production of high-quality, policy-relevant research. It also examines institutional challenges and proposes phased goals, short-term, medium-term, and long-term, to guide the Cell's development. The paper concludes with actionable recommendations to position the R&D Cell as a hub of statistical excellence, ensuring that BBS remains responsive, innovative, and aligned with global standards.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION



1.1 Background:

Statistics serves as the backbone of effective policymaking, planning, and governance. It enables evidence-based decisions, supports efficient resource allocation, and guides strategic policy formulation. As a foundational tool for national development, statistics empower governments and societies to make informed, equitable, and sustainable choices. Strengthening statistical systems is therefore essential for achieving long-term development goals (OECD, 2019).

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) plays a central role in supporting effective policy making and planning in Bangladesh. As the national statistical organization, BBS collects, compiles, analyzes, and disseminates official statistics, providing a reliable foundation for decision-making at all levels of governance. Through its statistical insights, BBS helps shape policies in poverty alleviation, education, healthcare, employment, industrial growth, and sustainable development, ensuring that governance is data-driven and impactful (UNDP, 2024).

Nowadays the statistical community is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by advances in technology, the explosion of data, and evolving societal needs (Bachmann et al., 2022). Today, the global statistical landscape is undergoing rapid transformation, propelled by technological advancements, an explosion of data sources, and shifting societal needs (Bachmann et al., 2022). Recognizing the need to enhance innovation, knowledge sharing, and evidence-based policymaking in official statistics, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) has initiated the establishment of a dedicated Research and Development (R&D) Cell. This initiative aligns with the vision to transform BBS into a future-ready national statistical office, as endorsed through two strategic workshops held in April and May 2025 with participation from government, academia, private sector, and development partners.

The creation of an R&D Cell is both timely and necessary. As demand for accurate, timely, and disaggregated statistics continues to rise, traditional data production methods face increasing limitations. To remain responsive and relevant, BBS must adopt innovative approaches that leverage emerging technologies and advanced methodologies. The R&D Cell will serve as a hub for innovation and applied research within BBS. It will explore new tools and techniques, enhance data quality, and support the modernization of statistical practices. By fostering collaboration, promoting knowledge exchange, and building long-term partnerships, the Cell will strengthen the capacity of BBS to meet evolving data needs.

This guideline aims to provide a structured framework for the effective operation of the R&D Cell. It outlines the Cell's objectives, functions, and governance mechanisms, ensuring that it supports internal innovation, aligns with national priorities, and contributes meaningfully to national development and international statistical commitments.

1.2 Objectives:

The R&D Cell will function as a dynamic center for statistical innovation, research, and capacity development, focusing on the following key objectives:

- **Ensure data integrity and quality assurance:** Strengthen frameworks for data validation, consistency, and reliability, adhering to international standards and best practices to enhance trustworthiness of official statistics.
- **Innovate data collection and integration methods:** Develop and implement cutting-edge methodologies, including big data analytics, AI-driven surveys, geospatial technologies, remote sensing, and image recognition, to diversify and modernize data sources.
- **Advance statistical modeling and analytics:** Enhance techniques for analyzing complex datasets such as census and survey data, employing forecasting, nowcasting, and backcasting methods to support timely and evidence-based policy decisions.

- Address emerging data gaps: Identify and fill critical information voids in priority areas like climate change, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), digital economy, socio-economic transformations, bioeconomy, circular economy, and value chains, ensuring relevance to national and global development agendas.
- Foster multi-sectoral collaboration: Build and sustain partnerships with academic institutions, research organizations, government agencies, and international bodies to promote knowledge exchange, joint research, and innovation dissemination.
- Strengthen institutional capacity: Design and deliver targeted training programs, workshops, and knowledge-sharing platforms to enhance the research skills and technical expertise of BBS staff, cultivating a culture of continuous learning and innovation.
- Produce diverse research outputs: Generate and disseminate a range of high-quality papers including research articles, policy briefs, technical guidelines, and experimental reports that contribute to methodological advancement, evidence-based policymaking, and the broader statistical community.
- Address emerging data gaps: Identify and fill critical information voids in priority areas like climate change, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), digital economy, socio-economic transformations, bioeconomy, circular economy, and value chains, ensuring relevance to national and global development agendas.
- Enhance user engagement and communication: Develop strategies to improve accessibility and usability of statistical information, including visualization tools and user-friendly dissemination platforms, to meet the evolving needs of data users across sectors.

Objectives of R&D Cell



CHAPTER 2:

RATIONALE FOR ESTABLISHING AN R&D CELL AT BBS



2.1 Responding to Emerging Challenges in Official Statistics

Modern statistical systems are evolving rapidly, driven by technological advances, growing data complexity, and emerging policy needs. Innovative data sources such as big data, administrative records, remote sensing, and IoT offer opportunities to enhance the quality, frequency, and granularity of official statistics. These changes necessitate a shift from traditional data collection methods to more dynamic, real-time, and integrated approaches (Bachmann et al., 2022).

In this context, the R&D Cell at the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) is envisioned as a central platform to pioneer innovation, address methodological challenges, and promote adoption of advanced tools and technologies. It will serve as a catalyst for modernizing statistical processes through computational statistics, high-dimensional data analysis, and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and geospatial analytics.

2.2 The Role of Big Data and Disruptive Innovation

Big data is increasingly recognized as a vital resource for enhancing the timeliness, cost-efficiency, and depth of statistical insights (Braaksma & Zeelenberg, 2020). However, integrating big data into official statistics also poses methodological, ethical, and quality assurance challenges (Kitchen, 2015). In the Bangladeshi context where traditional data collection can be resource-intensive and slow the R&D Cell will provide the institutional capacity to test, validate, and mainstream new data sources as viable complements to official data systems.

2.3 Strategic Alignment and Institutional Mandate

The establishment of the R&D Cell aligns with key national strategies. The Statistical Act 2013 mandates BBS to lead the development of a harmonized national statistical system following international standards. Similarly, the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) has explicitly identified the creation of an R&D wing as a priority to enhance methodological rigor and data innovation within BBS.

2.4 Addressing Emerging and Cross-Cutting Data Needs

As Bangladesh navigates new areas of policy concern such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), bioeconomy, circular economy, digital transformation, private sector growth, energy and mining, and external debt traditional data systems are increasingly inadequate. The R&D Cell will play a pivotal role in:

- Identifying evolving data needs.
- Developing frameworks for new thematic areas.
- Piloting innovative data collection tools and techniques.

This forward-looking role is essential for BBS to remain relevant, responsive, and policy-driven.

2.5 Building a Culture of Research Innovation and Capacity

The R&D Cell will promote a vibrant research culture within BBS. It will:

- Encourage interdisciplinary research.
- Strengthen statistical innovation.
- Support ethical data governance.
- Develop robust quality assurance frameworks.

It will also actively engage BBS officials in hands-on research, fostering professional growth and institutional learning.

2.6 Supporting SDG Monitoring and International Alignment

A key function of the R&D Cell will be to support **SDG monitoring and reporting** by addressing data gaps using innovative statistical approaches. Through the use of big data, remote sensing, mobile surveys, and disaggregated analysis, the Cell will enhance data coverage for marginalized regions and underrepresented groups. This will not only improve national SDG tracking but also align BBS with global statistical standards such as the **UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics**.

2.7 Driving Real-Time, Data-Driven Governance

By building the capacity to manage and analyze large, complex datasets, the R&D Cell will enhance BBS's ability to provide real-time, policy-relevant statistics. It will also facilitate partnerships with academia, the private sector, and development partners—unlocking new avenues for growth, innovation, and sustainable development.

CHAPTER 3:

GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES



The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) has established a dedicated unit for Research and Development (R&D), which plays a critical role in the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data related to R&D activities. This data is essential for monitoring progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and achieving broader international statistical objectives. By tracking investments and developments in R&D, the UNSD supports evidence-based policymaking and the global advancement of innovation-driven development. R&D services encompass scientific advancements across various fields of natural and social sciences, and are categorized into three key areas: basic research, applied research, and experimental development. These services are further classified into groups, classes, and subclasses based on the specific scientific domains to which they pertain (UNSD, 2025). In addition, the UNSD actively supports countries in strengthening their national statistical systems, including the development and enhancement of systems related to R&D statistics.

The Research and Innovation Cell works in close collaboration with Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, to strengthen the development and dissemination of high-quality data related to research, development, and innovation. This partnership supports the advancement of evidence-based policymaking, particularly in areas linked to science, technology, and the knowledge economy. Through joint initiatives, methodological improvements, and data harmonization efforts, the two entities aim to ensure that statistics on R&D and innovation are accurate, comparable, and aligned with European and international standards.

The Center for Statistical Research and Methodology (CSRM) in the U.S. Census Bureau is primarily responsible for Research and Development (R&D) in statistical methods and innovations. The Key responsibilities of CSRM is Developing and applying advanced statistical and methodological research and Improving data collection techniques, estimation methods, and data analysis. Furthermore CSRM conducts research in areas like survey methodology, data privacy, machine learning, small area estimation, and record linkage.

At the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), several key offices are responsible for overseeing Research and Development (R&D) activities, particularly in the areas of statistical methods, innovation, and capability development. These include: 1. Methodology and Data Management Division – Focuses on enhancing the quality and efficiency of statistical outputs through survey and sampling design, statistical modelling, data integration, and privacy-preserving techniques. 2. Centre of Excellence for Statistics in Evidence-Based Policy (CoES) – Supports collaborative research initiatives involving ABS, academic institutions, and government agencies, promoting the use of statistics in policy development and evaluation. 3. Data Futures and Innovation Division – Drives strategic innovation by exploring emerging technologies and methodologies, including big data, machine learning and AI, and new data sources to modernize ABS capabilities. 4. Business Statistics and Methodology Division – Specifically responsible for producing official statistics on Research and Experimental Development (R&D) in Australia, in accordance with international standards such as the OECD's Frascati Manual.

At Malaysia's Department of Statistics (DOSM), the Methodology and Research Division is responsible for a range of critical functions that support high-quality statistical production. These include the development and maintenance of census and survey frames, designing sampling methods, and selecting appropriate samples. The division also develops research instruments, standard codes and classifications, and applies appropriate methodologies and statistical techniques for data collection and analysis through ongoing research activities. Additionally, it provides technical advisory services to other divisions within DOSM as well as to other government agencies, supporting evidence-based decision-making across the public sector.

In most countries, national statistical organizations have established dedicated Research and Development (R&D) divisions to strengthen their capacity for methodological innovation, data quality improvement, and adaptation to emerging statistical challenges. These R&D units play a vital role in developing new survey techniques, enhancing statistical frameworks, integrating modern technologies such as big data and AI, and aligning national practices with international standards. In this context, it is essential for the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) to establish a dedicated R&D Cell. Such a unit would support the continuous improvement of statistical processes, foster innovation, and ensure that BBS can respond effectively to the growing demand for reliable, timely, and internationally comparable data. The creation of an R&D cell would not only enhance internal efficiency but also strengthen Bangladesh's national statistical system in line with global best practices.

All National Statistical Offices (NSOs) must navigate ongoing change as they transition from their current state toward a more advanced and future-ready position. In today's data-driven environment, the growing demands on statistical offices require them to implement continuous improvements in order to remain relevant and effective. Change management offers a structured approach to managing these transformations, which may involve shifts in strategic direction, operational processes, and the adoption of new technologies. It encompasses a set of formal procedures designed to plan, manage, and support change—while helping staff adapt to new roles, tools, and expectations. Crucially, an effective change management strategy must address the human dimension of change, focusing on behavior, engagement, and organizational culture (UN, 2022).

In this context, the R&D Cell of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) will serve as a catalyst for statistical innovation and change management. By promoting new methodologies, embracing emerging technologies, and fostering a culture of learning and adaptability, the R&D Cell will lead the transformation of BBS into a more modern, agile, and future-ready statistical institution.



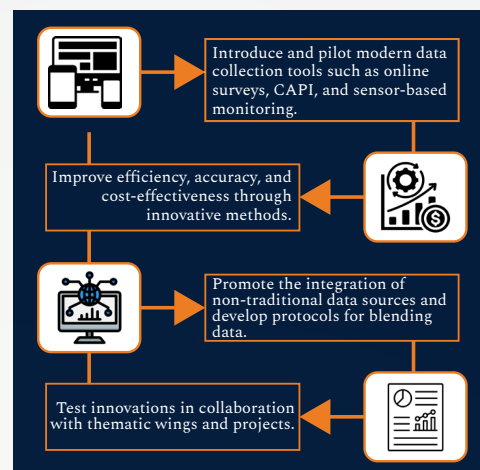
CHAPTER 4:

PROPOSED STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

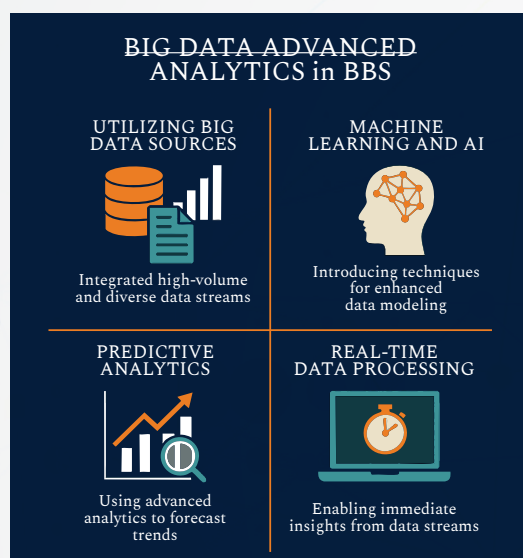


4.1 Modernizing Data Collection and Analysis

The R&D Cell will introduce and pilot modern data collection tools such as online and mobile-based surveys, and sensor-based monitoring systems to improve efficiency, accuracy, and cost-effectiveness. These innovations will be tested in collaboration with thematic wings and projects, ensuring institutional learning and replication across BBS. The Cell will also promote the integration of non-traditional data sources and develop protocols for blending survey data with administrative records and alternative datasets.



4.2 Big Data and Advanced Analytics



The R&D Cell will introduce and pilot modern data collection tools such as online and mobile-based surveys, and sensor-based monitoring systems to improve efficiency, accuracy, and cost-effectiveness. These innovations will be tested in collaboration with thematic wings and projects, ensuring institutional learning and replication across BBS. The Cell will also promote the integration of non-traditional data sources and develop protocols for blending survey data with administrative records and alternative datasets.

4.3 Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing

The Research and Development (R&D) Cell of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) acknowledges the growing need for continuous learning and skill development among its statistical staff, especially in light of evolving methodologies and technological advancements. Similar to the transformation undertaken by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), which faced increased demands for new skills and approaches, BBS also recognizes the importance of systematically identifying and addressing training needs.

As part of this effort, the R&D Cell will train staff in emerging statistical methodologies, including advanced data analytics, machine learning, and innovative survey techniques, to ensure they are equipped to handle complex and dynamic data environments. Establish partnerships with academic institutions, research centers, and international organizations to promote collaborative research, knowledge exchange, and access to cutting-edge developments in the field of statistics.

4.4 Ensuring Data Quality and Integrity

The R&D Cell of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) will prioritize the enhancement of data quality through the development and implementation of robust quality assurance frameworks. These frameworks will ensure consistency, reliability, and credibility across all stages of the statistical process. In support of this goal, the R&D Cell will also utilize advanced validation and imputation techniques to effectively manage missing, inconsistent, or erroneous data, thereby improving the overall accuracy and integrity of statistical outputs. By institutionalizing these practices, the R&D Cell will play a vital role in strengthening the quality and reliability of official statistics produced by BBS.

4.5 Policy-Oriented Research

As the major producer of official statistics, the NSO is the backbone of official statistics in a country. Official statistics are the core business for this organization, with notably NSO should ensure quality and efficiency of the production and dissemination processes, based on using the best-suited methods and equipment, and carrying out research to enhance quality and effectiveness (UN, 2022).

The Cell will initiate research aligned with national development priorities such as climate resilience, social protection, the digital economy, and the informal sector by collaborating with ministries, academia, and think tanks. These research outputs will inform policymaking and help identify new statistical indicators and frameworks relevant to Bangladesh's evolving development landscape. The Cell will also provide methodological support for impact evaluation, spatial analytics, and forecasting.

4.6 Technological Infrastructure Development

The United Nations has emphasized the importance of understanding emerging technological developments that significantly impact data collection, processing, and dissemination. Innovations such as speech synthesis and natural language recognition, when integrated with Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems, have already been tested for collecting information from respondents via telephone—particularly in simple and recurring surveys. As these technologies advance, it is anticipated that even more complex surveys may soon be conducted through fully automated, telephone-assisted interviews.

In alignment with these global trends, the Research and Development (R&D) Cell of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) should Invest in state-of-the-art software and hardware to enhance the efficiency and accuracy of statistical processing; Propose and implement secure, scalable data storage solutions that ensure the integrity, confidentiality, and accessibility of large volumes of statistical data.

4.7 Strengthening Dissemination and User Engagement

In the era of digital transformation, engaging meaningfully with data users has become increasingly complex. Today's "digital natives" individuals who have grown up with digital technology possess strong data literacy and high expectations for intuitive, user-friendly interfaces (UN, 2022). They demand that statistical information be easily accessible, visually engaging, and readily available across platforms. To meet these rising expectations, National Statistical Offices (NSOs) must adopt comprehensive strategies to enhance user engagement and ensure broader access to data.

In this context, the R&D Cell of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) will play a crucial role by enhancing the accessibility of statistical outputs through the development of interactive dashboards, mobile applications, and user-centered digital platforms; promoting open data initiatives to improve transparency, encourage public participation, and foster inclusivity in the use of official statistics.

CHAPTER 5:

FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION



5.1 Supervisory Framework

The Research and Development (R&D) Cell of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) will function under the direct supervision of the Director General of BBS, ensuring alignment with the Bureau's strategic direction and national priorities. In its initial phase, four BBS officials will be deputed to the Cell to support its foundational operations and provide essential technical and administrative capacity.

Advisory Committee:

To ensure strategic leadership and promote a culture of research and innovation, an Advisory Committee will be established. This committee will be chaired by the Director General of BBS and will include:

- Distinguished academic experts with proven expertise in research, statistical development, and public policy, and
- Senior officials from BBS and the Statistics and Informatics Division (SID).

The Advisory Committee will provide high-level guidance, facilitate academic collaboration, and support the strategic positioning of the R&D Cell within the national statistical system.

Working Committee:

A seven-member Working Committee will also be formed to support the implementation of the Cell's activities. This committee will be responsible for:

- Assisting in the design and rollout of research initiatives,
- Coordinating with relevant internal and external stakeholders, and
- Ensuring the smooth and timely execution of the Cell's operational functions.

The Working Committee will serve as the key operational mechanism to translate strategic inputs into actionable outcomes.

5.2 Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is vital for the effective functioning of the R&D Cell of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). It ensures that research activities are relevant, practical, and aligned with the data needs of policymakers, academics, and the broader community. Active involvement of stakeholders also helps to build trust, encourage collaboration, and enhance the overall credibility and impact of the R&D Cell's work.

Key Stakeholders for the R&D Cell of BBS:

1. Government Ministries and Agencies

- Planning Commission
- Statistics and Informatics Division (SID)
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Science and Technology
- Ministry of Agriculture
- National Board of Revenue
- Bangladesh Bank
- Other line ministries that rely on sector-specific data

2. Academic and Research Institutions

- Public and private universities
- National and international research organizations
- Think tanks working on social, economic, and environmental issues

3. Development Partners and International Organizations

- UN agencies (e.g., UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA)
- World Bank, IMF, Asian Development Bank, IGC
- OECD and other global bodies involved in R&D and statistical capacity development

4. Private Sector and Industry Bodies

- Chambers of commerce and business associations
- Companies in ICT, agriculture, health, and manufacturing sectors that rely on data for planning and innovation

5. Civil Society and NGOs

- Organizations working in education, health, gender, climate, and rural development
- Groups that can help ensure the inclusiveness and equity of data and research

6. Media and Data Users

- Journalists, data storytellers, and policy analysts who use and disseminate statistical insights
- Public users and citizen data groups interested in transparency and accountability

7. Internal Stakeholders

- Divisions within BBS (survey teams, data processing, dissemination units)
- Field offices for pilot studies and data collection innovations

5.3 Stakeholder Mapping:

Stakeholder Group	Key Entities	Roles & Interests	Engagement Strategy
1. Government Ministries and Agencies	Planning Commission, SID, Ministry of Finance, Education, Science & Tech, Agriculture, NBR, Bangladesh Bank, line ministries	Policy formulation, data demand, funding, regulatory alignment	High-level coordination, inter-ministerial working groups, data-sharing protocols
2. Academic & Research Institutions	Public/private universities, national/international research orgs, think tanks	Applied research, methodological innovation, peer review, capacity development	Joint research projects, fellowships, advisory inputs, internships
3. Development Partners & International Organizations	UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank, IMF, ADB, IGC, OECD	Technical assistance, funding, global frameworks, capacity building	MOUs, joint initiatives, project-based collaboration, technical advisory support

Stakeholder Group	Key Entities	Roles & Interests	Engagement Strategy
4. Private Sector & Industry Bodies	Chambers of commerce, business associations, companies (ICT, health, manufacturing, agriculture)	Data use for innovation, market research, public-private policy dialogue	PPP models, business data partnerships, innovation pilots
5. Civil Society & NGOs	NGOs in education, health, gender, climate, rural dev; citizen groups	Ground-level data validation, inclusiveness, SDG alignment, accountability	Participatory research, consultations, data access support
6. Media & Data Users	Journalists, policy analysts, civic tech actors	Data dissemination, public awareness, transparency, storytelling	Data visualization, open-data tools, media briefings, capacity training
7. Internal Stakeholders	BBS divisions (survey, processing, dissemination), field offices	Operational delivery, data innovation, institutional integration	Internal coordination mechanisms, pilot studies, internal capacity building

CHAPTER 6:

PHASED GOALS OF THE R&D CELL

Goal: Establish a fully institutionalized, innovative, and policy-relevant R&D Wing within BBS by 2028.



Phase 1: Institutionalization and Foundations (July 2025 – June 2026)

Objective: Formally establish the R&D Cell within BBS's organogram, define its mandate, and launch core operations.

Key Activities:

- ➔ **Establish the R&D Cell** with a clear operational structure, including defined roles, governance framework, and coordination mechanisms with BBS divisions.
- ➔ Appoint initial **core staff** (minimum 6–10 members with technical/research capacity).
- ➔ **Conduct a comprehensive training needs assessment** using tools like the STAT Tool to identify gaps in statistical skills, research capacity, and innovation readiness.
- ➔ Establish a **dedicated R&D budget line** in BBS annual financial planning.
- ➔ Develop a **foundational work plan** based on the workshop recommendations.
- ➔ Launch **baseline capacity assessment** (skills, infrastructure, tools).
- ➔ Form a **High-Level Advisory Group** (with academia, UNDP, experts).
- ➔ Initiate the **working paper** dissemination and stakeholder feedback process.
- ➔ Set up a **dedicated R&D webpage/portal** on the BBS website.
- ➔ **Launch pilot initiatives** in key domains such as informal sector measurement, geospatial integration, and climate-related statistics.
- ➔ **Form technical working groups** with representation from academia, government, and private sector to guide thematic research priorities.
- ➔ **Document and curate best practices** from national and international NSOs, especially in areas of digital innovation, R&D governance, and data modernization.

Deliverables:

➔ Approved R&D mandate and structure ➔ Appointment of Core R&D Staff Team ➔ Training Needs Assessment Report (using STAT Tool or equivalent) ➔ Baseline Capacity and Infrastructure Assessment Report	➔ Policy brief or diagnostic report ➔ Advisory Council and working group constituted ➔ R&D Webpage/Portal Launched on BBS Website ➔ Pilot Research Initiatives Launched (e.g., Informal Sector, Geospatial, Climate Statistics)
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Phase 2: Capacity Building and Quick Wins (July 2026 – June 2027)

Objective: Build technical and institutional capacity, pilot innovation projects, and generate early outputs to demonstrate relevance.

Key Activities:

- Conduct intensive capacity building in R, Python, research methods, AI, data science
- Launch pilot projects on:
 - ▶ Sampling innovation
 - ▶ Methodological enhancement (e.g., adaptive survey design)
 - ▶ Administrative data integration
- Initiate partnerships with BIDS, universities, NSOs, and think tanks
- Publish 2–3 research papers, rapid diagnostics, or experimental stats
- Host internal knowledge-sharing events (e.g., “Data Dialogues”)
- Organize a research on Datathoon or open innovation challenge
- Collect core infrastructure (data servers, licenses, secure storage)

Deliverables:

- **Completed Training Programs** in R, Python, AI, data science, and research methods
- At least 3 joint research initiatives
- 3 policy/diagnostic products
- **Formalized MoUs or Collaboration Agreements** with BIDS, universities, and think tanks
- Staff trained in at least 3 emerging tools or methodologies
- **National Datathoon or Open Innovation Challenge** conducted
- **Core ICT Infrastructure** for the R&D Cell procured and deployed

Phase 3: Institutional Embedding and Scale-Up (July 2027 – June 2028)

Objective: Fully integrate the R&D Wing into BBS systems, scale operations, and deepen national and international collaboration.

Key Activities:

- **Develop, test, and institutionalize innovative methodologies** for data collection (e.g., mobile surveys, AI-assisted surveys, image recognition), analysis, and imputation.
 - Institutionalize **annual publication cycles** (e.g., Research Bulletin, Working Papers)
 - Mainstream use of advanced methods (AI, web scraping, machine learning) in national surveys
 - Launch a **national data innovation lab** (in partnership with universities)
 - Secure **long-term funding mechanisms** (e.g., research grants, government allocation)
 - Adopt KPIs to monitor:
 - ▶ Publication frequency
 - ▶ Stakeholder use of research
 - ▶ Staff development progress
 - ▶ Policy impact
 - Strengthen regional and global networks (e.g., UN ESCAP, PARIS21, UNStats)
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Deliverables:

- **Annual Publication Series Launched** (e.g., Research Bulletin, Working Papers)
- **Advanced Methods (AI, ML, Web Scraping) Integrated into National Survey Operations**
- **National Data Innovation Lab Established** in collaboration with academic institutions
- **R&D Performance Monitoring Framework with KPIs Implemented and Reported Annually**
- 5+ policy papers/year
- 1 regional collaboration or award

Phase 4: Center of Excellence and Sustainability (Late 2028 onward)

Objective: Establish the R&D Wing as a national and regional Center of Excellence in statistical innovation and policy-relevant research.

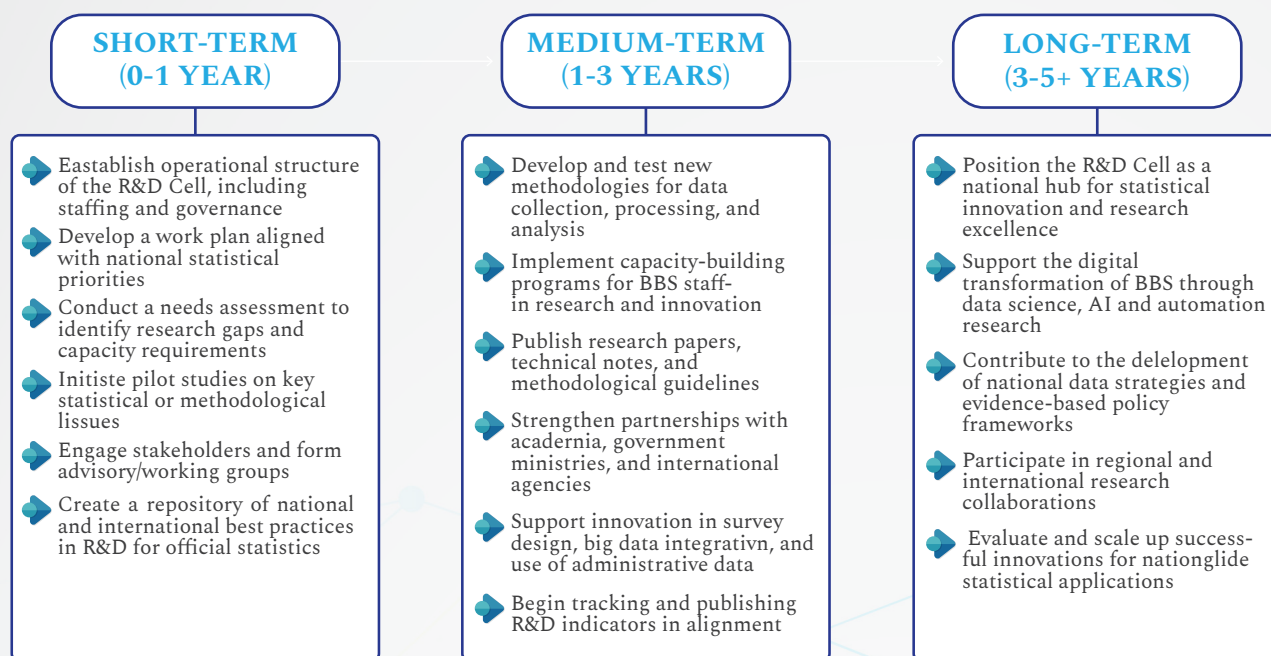
Key Activities:

- Launch branding campaign: **“BBS R&D: A Center of Excellence”**
- Develop a **knowledge hub** for sharing methodologies, tools, and research
- Introduce institutional **performance reviews** and rewards for research contributions
- Offer **certification programs** in applied statistics and data science
- Lead national research initiatives on emerging domains (e.g., digital economy, climate statistics)
- Formalize **mentorship and internship programs** with academic institutions
- Host annual **National Data Research Conference**
- Embed the R&D Cell as a permanent **Wing in BBS organogram**

Deliverables:

- Recognized as a national Center of Excellence
 - 10+ annual outputs (papers, diagnostics, briefs)
 - Multiple training/certification partnerships
 - Sustainable multi-source funding
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Phased Goals of the R&D Cell



5.2 Funding and Resource Mobilization Strategy for BBS R&D Cell (2025–2028+)

Source of Funding	Funding Type	Purpose / Use	Implementation Timeline	Examples / Partners
1. Government Budget Allocation	Core (Recurrent)	Salaries, office operations, basic infrastructure, portal maintenance	Phase 1 onward (2025–)	Ministry of Finance, BBS Annual Budget
2. Development Partner Support	Project-Based / Technical	Capacity building, innovation pilots, partnerships, R&D working paper development	Phase 1–3 (2025–2028)	UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank, ADB, GIZ, USAID
3. Research Grants / Competitive Calls	Competitive / Thematic	Thematic research, innovation projects, global collaboration	Phase 2–4 (2026 onward)	IDRC, EU Horizon, PARIS21, SDSN, Gates Foundation
4. Academic & Private Sector Partnerships	Co-financing / In-kind	Infrastructure sharing, technical expertise, joint training/events	Phase 2 onward (2026)	BIDS, Universities, Data Science Institutes, ICT firms

Source of Funding	Funding Type	Purpose / Use	Implementation Timeline	Examples / Partners
5. Revenue-Generating Activities	Cost Recovery / Internal	Training fees, data services, customized research support	Phase 3-4 (2027 onward)	Paid short courses, customized analytics for ministries
6. Institutional Grants / Special Funds	Strategic Development	Innovation lab, data center upgrades, AI integration in surveys	Phase 3 (2027-2028)	Global Innovation Funds, Smart Bangladesh Initiatives
7. Fellowship and Internship Support	Talent Development	Attracting and retaining technical talent, supporting mentorship	Phase 2-4 (2026 onward)	Universities, UN Volunteer Program, national talent funds

CHAPTER 6:

CHALLENGES AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES



1. Limited Technical Capacity and Specialized Skills

Challenge:

Many BBS staff currently lack advanced skills in areas such as big data analytics, machine learning, AI, and modern research methodologies. This limits the Cell's ability to innovate and adopt global best practices.

Mitigation Strategy:

- Conduct regular capacity-building programs and training workshops in collaboration with academic institutions and international development partners.
- Introduce the **STAT Training Needs Assessment Tool** to systematically identify gaps and design targeted learning pathways.
- Promote internal knowledge exchange through mentorship, peer-learning, and thematic research groups.

2. Inadequate Institutional Framework and Resource Allocation

Challenge:

The absence of a formalized operational structure, clear mandates, and dedicated resources can delay the R&D Cell's effectiveness.

Mitigation Strategy:

- Finalize and implement a structured **organizational framework** with defined roles, governance protocols, and budget provisions.
- Seek high-level endorsement from SID and the Ministry of Planning to ensure institutional backing.
- Mobilize external support (e.g., UNDP, development partners) for initial technical and financial assistance.

3. Weak Research Culture within BBS

Challenge:

Historically, BBS has focused more on operational statistics than on forward-looking research. There is a lack of institutional incentives for engaging in research.

Mitigation Strategy:

- Establish a **research incentive scheme**, including recognition, publishing support, and performance-based rewards.
- Encourage collaboration with universities and think tanks to co-author studies and technical papers.
- Create an **annual R&D dissemination forum** to showcase research and promote a culture of inquiry.

4. Resistance to Change and Innovation

Challenge:

Introducing new systems, tools, or approaches may face resistance from staff accustomed to traditional methods.

Mitigation Strategy:

- Promote a **change management strategy**, starting with awareness sessions and showcasing successful case studies (e.g., from Ghana, Maldives).

- Involve senior officials and line managers as champions of change.
- Pilot innovations at a small scale to demonstrate value before full rollout.

5. Data Access and Integration Constraints

Challenge:

Limited access to administrative data, big data sources, and inter-agency collaboration hinders comprehensive research.

Mitigation Strategy:

- Negotiate **data-sharing agreements** with relevant ministries, agencies, and private sector actors.
- Advocate for a legal framework that facilitates secure and ethical data access for research purposes.
- Build a **centralized data repository** within the R&D Cell for integrated analysis.

6. Limited Engagement with External Stakeholders

Challenge:

The R&D Cell needs to be connected to global knowledge ecosystems but currently lacks structured channels of collaboration.

Mitigation Strategy:

- Establish partnerships with **national universities, UN agencies, global NSOs,** and research networks.
- Participate in international conferences, working groups, and peer-learning platforms.
- Invite external experts as advisors and reviewers for R&D outputs.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



7.1 Conclusion

The establishment and institutional strengthening of the R&D Cell at BBS represent a timely and strategic response to the evolving demands on national statistical systems. The insights gathered from the two strategic workshops—one with internal stakeholders and another with external partners—reaffirm the necessity of an agile, well-resourced, and visionary R&D Cell to ensure BBS's sustained relevance and leadership in the national and global data ecosystem.

The workshops highlighted that the R&D Cell should not only address internal methodological and capacity challenges but also actively engage with academia, the private sector, and development partners to foster statistical innovation, experimentation, and cross-sector collaboration. As Bangladesh navigates the Fourth Industrial Revolution, climate change, and new data frontiers, the R&D Cell will serve as the nucleus for modernizing data ecosystems, integrating big data, piloting new approaches, and promoting a culture of research and learning within BBS.

7.2 Recommendations

1. Institutionalization and Governance

- Finalize and formalize the organizational structure of the R&D Cell within BBS with a clear mandate, reporting lines, and decision-making authority.
- Establish advisory committees and expert panels to guide research priorities and ensure alignment with national strategies.

2. Prioritized and Phased Implementation

- Follow a phased roadmap aligned with short-, medium-, and long-term objectives to ensure strategic continuity and resource optimization.
- Start with low-risk, high-impact pilot projects that demonstrate the value of the Cell to the organization.

3. Capacity and Resources

- Allocate dedicated budget, infrastructure, and skilled personnel to support the Cell's operations and research activities.
- Introduce structured capacity-building programs and utilize tools like the STAT Tool to assess and fill skill gaps.

4. Collaboration and Partnerships

- Forge partnerships with universities, think tanks, private sector actors, and international organizations to foster joint research and access cutting-edge knowledge.
- Explore mechanisms for regular stakeholder consultations to ensure that research outputs meet the needs of data users.

5. Monitoring, Learning, and Innovation

- Set up a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism to assess the performance and relevance of R&D initiatives.
- Institutionalize a feedback loop from BBS departments and external stakeholders to continuously refine priorities and practices.

6. Policy Support and Advocacy

- Advocate for policy recognition of the R&D Cell's role in enabling evidence-based decision-making and modern governance.
 - Develop communication strategies to disseminate the R&D Cell's findings and promote a data-driven culture.
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CHAPTER 8:

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ANNEXURE: Workshop Report on Strengthening BBS R&D Cell – April 2025

Strengthening the BBS R&D Cell: Priorities for Excellence in Data and Research

21st April 2025 | 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Venue: Hotel Amari, Dhaka

Introduction:

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) is the country's central authority for producing reliable and high-quality data to drive evidence-based policymaking. To enhance its research capacity, methodological rigor, and data integrity, BBS has established a Research & Development (R&D) Cell. However, the Cell is not yet fully operational. Recognizing the critical role of R&D Cell in advancing National Statistical Offices (NSOs) the Strengthening Institutions, Policies, and Services (SIPS) project of UNDP Bangladesh is supporting BBS to transform the R&D Cell into a fully functional and effective wing to address challenges in data integrity, institutional capacity, and stakeholder engagement.

As a first step toward this goal, a high-level internal consultation workshop titled "Strengthening the BBS R&D Cell: Priorities for Excellence in Data and Research" was held on 21 April 2025. This workshop marks the beginning of a participatory process to identify strategic priorities, institutional expectations, and feasible pathways for transforming the R&D Cell into a center of excellence.

2. Objectives of the Workshop:

The workshop was designed to achieve three key objectives

i. Institutional Co-Design: To facilitate a consultative platform for BBS leadership and technical officials to collectively define the strategic vision, roles, and responsibilities of the R&D Cell.

ii. Enhancing Research Impact and Relevance: To reflect on current gaps and opportunities in BBS's research ecosystem and determine how the R&D Cell can enhance methodological quality, policy engagement, and innovation.

iii. Shaping a Roadmap for Operationalization: To generate a set of institutional priorities and actionable recommendations that will feed into a working paper and subsequent stakeholder workshop.

3. Participants

The workshop convened around 50 participants, primarily senior officials from different BBS departments. The event was chaired by the Director General of BBS, Mr. Mohammed Mizanur Rahman. Participants included Directors, Joint Directors, Deputy Directors, and Statistical Officers from BBS, all of whom contributed actively to the group sessions.

4. Session Highlights

Opening Session: Welcome Remarks

Mr. Lizen Shah Nayem, Deputy Director of BBS, commenced the workshop by extending a warm welcome to all participants and emphasizing the strategic imperative of embedding research and innovation as core pillars within the institutional framework of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. He noted that in 2024, BBS had identified the establishment and operationalization of the R&D Cell as a key institutional priority, with a clear ambition to transition it into a fully-fledged R&D Wing by 2025.

He further underscored that the deliberations and recommendations emerging from the workshop would be meticulously compiled and synthesized into a comprehensive working paper. This document will be disseminated across academic circles, policy think tanks, civil society actors, and private sector stakeholders to encourage broader engagement. In setting the tone for the day's discussions, he introduced the central theme of the workshop fostering collective reflection and co-creation to guide the strategic evolution of the R&D Cell.

Chief Guest's Remarks:

Mr. Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, Director General of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), formally inaugurated the workshop by articulating an ambitious and forward-looking vision for the R&D Cell as a cornerstone of methodological innovation and a vital enabler of policy relevance within BBS. He emphasized that the Cell is envisioned not merely as a functional unit but as a transformative platform that can catalyze new standards in statistical excellence and institutional agility.

In his remarks, Mr. Rahman referenced the broader reform agenda currently being pursued under the interim government, particularly efforts aimed at enhancing data quality, embedding methodological rigor, and fostering a culture of evidence-informed policymaking. He reaffirmed BBS's unwavering commitment to establishing a credible, dynamic, and globally benchmarked R&D structure capable of responding to emerging national and global development challenges.

Concluding his address, Mr. Rahman extended sincere appreciation to UNDP for its continued technical partnership and support. He also called upon all participants to actively engage in shaping and institutionalizing the R&D Cell, urging them to contribute ideas that would anchor its long-term relevance and impact.

Keynote Presentation by Mr. Md. Mizanur Rahman, Deputy Director, BBS:

Mr. Md. Mizanur Rahman outlined the evolution and future direction of the BBS R&D Cell, referencing the Statistics Act 2013 and NSDS, both of which advocate for a dedicated wing to elevate statistical systems to global standards.

He emphasized the urgency of strengthening R&D to enhance data quality, integrity, and accessibility. Citing emerging data sources such as remote sensing, mobile data, and IoT. He called for adopting advanced techniques like web scraping, geospatial analytics, and machine learning. He underscored the need for strong collaboration with the private sector and academia, and the importance of staying responsive to evolving trends including AI, bioeconomy, digital records, and administrative datasets.

Key Takeaways of the keynote presentation:

Vision: Position the R&D Cell as a Center of Excellence and national hub for statistical innovation.

Priorities: Promote innovation, ensure data quality and methodological rigor, build capacity, and close data gaps.

Outputs: Generate thematic studies, policy briefs, diagnostics, and working papers to inform policymaking.

Goals: Define and implement short-, medium-, and long-term action plans.

Challenges: Limited skilled personnel, funding gaps, weak coordination, and institutional resistance.

Solutions: Invest in capacity building, stakeholder engagement, innovation culture, and strategic budgeting.

Reflection Remarks by Mr. Anowarul Haq, Assistant Resident Representative (Democratic Governance), UNDP Bangladesh

Mr. Anowarul Haq, Assistant Resident Representative (Democratic Governance), UNDP Bangladesh, reflected on the longstanding collaboration between UNDP and BBS in building institutional capacities and promoting data-informed governance. He reaffirmed UNDP's commitment to supporting this journey and emphasized the importance of co-creation and participatory reform.

Drawing attention to the global wave of technological disruption particularly the rapid emergence of AI and digital transformation Mr. Haq stressed the urgency for BBS to evolve and innovate. He highlighted the Bureau's potential to serve as a national leader in data quality assurance, statistical innovation, stakeholder engagement, and institutional modernization. In closing, he urged participants to envision a long-term transformation of the R&D Cell into a hub of excellence, strategically positioned at the heart of Bangladesh's national data ecosystem.

5. Thematic Group Work

Participants were divided into six thematic groups to co-design the core dimensions of the R&D Cell. Each group was assigned a focus area and tasked with identifying priorities, gaps, and actionable strategies.

Group Themes:

- ◆ Strategic Vision and Future Role
- ◆ Enhancing Research Quality and Policy Impact
- ◆ Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement
- ◆ Data Integrity and Dissemination
- ◆ Capacity Development and Innovation
- ◆ Sustainability and Risk Mitigation

6. Group Presentations

Each group presented a concise summary of their discussions, highlighting both immediate priorities and long-term strategies. Common themes emerged across groups, including the need for autonomy, robust staffing, capacity building, and cross-sectoral collaboration.

Group 1: Strategic Vision and Future Role of R&D Cell

Group 1 outlined a comprehensive vision of the R&D Cell, positioning it as a hub for innovation within the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). Core priorities included fostering statistical innovation through the use of advanced techniques such as AI, machine learning, and big data analytics, and promoting continuous methodological development aligned with global best practices. The group stressed the importance of forging strong partnerships with national and international stakeholders, including academia, think tanks, and private sector actors, to enable knowledge exchange and joint research. Internal capacity development was highlighted as essential, with recommendations for regular training and mentorship in emerging areas like data science and digital tools. To ensure credibility, the Cell should adopt strict quality assurance protocols and conduct regular data audits. Institutional integration was seen as critical, with calls for formal inclusion of the Cell in the BBS organogram, adequate staffing, and sustainable funding. Strategic milestones were also proposed: producing 4–5 policy papers annually, publishing collaborative research within two years, and integrating AI in national surveys within three years. Key partnerships with institutions such as BIDS, BANBEIS, NIPORT, and icddr,b were identified, and performance would be tracked through outputs, partnerships, and adherence to a detailed work plan. These recommendations collectively aimed to establish the R&D Cell as a transformative force driving data-driven policymaking and national development.

Group 2: Enhancing research quality, relevance and policy impact

Group 2 proposed a comprehensive vision for establishing the R&D Cell as a center of excellence and an authoritative entity on quality assurance within the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), with a focus on enhancing methodological rigor and fostering innovation to support evidence-based policymaking. Their strategic recommendations included identifying and addressing methodological gaps, adopting international standards, promoting analytical innovation, and institutionalizing the production of policy briefs and rapid diagnostics. The group emphasized the need to overcome key challenges such as sampling bias, data quality issues, outdated survey instruments, limited analytical rigor, and delays in data dissemination. To address these, they advocated for the integration of global standards, advanced statistical tools like Python and R, adaptive sampling, and mixed methods research. The R&D Cell was envisioned as a catalyst for innovation in sampling design, survey development, capacity building, and the use of emerging technologies such as AI and machine learning. In terms of policy contribution, the cell would generate timely, policy-relevant insights, foster stakeholder engagement, and support monitoring and evaluation. For effective implementation, the group recommended starting with a baseline assessment, establishing a robust quality assurance framework, investing in technology and training, and instituting performance feedback loops.

Group 3: Navigate Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Group 3 developed a comprehensive partnership and stakeholder engagement strategy aimed at strengthening the BBS R&D Cell through dynamic, sustainable collaborations with external entities including academia, think tanks, civil society, the private sector, and development partners. The vision centers on leveraging the strengths of diverse stakeholders to enhance the Cell's research capacity and inform effective policymaking. Key partners identified include public and private universities for technical expertise, national and international research organizations for knowledge exchange, leading NSOs for benchmarking best practices, individual experts for mentorship, development partners for technical and financial support, and the private sector for relevance and dissemination. Internal BBS stakeholders were also emphasized to foster institutional coherence. The group identified several gaps, such as the absence of statistical wings in ministries, limited skilled personnel, weak internal collaboration, technological shortfalls, and poor academic linkages. However, opportunities were also noted, including expanded collaboration with government and non-government bodies and strategic partnerships with national universities. Strategic recommendations included advocating for the formal establishment and sustained funding of the R&D wing, building long-term partnerships for financial and technical support, ensuring accountability and transparency through regular reporting, monitoring and evaluation systems to assess progress and refine engagement strategies.

Group 4: Enhancing Data Integrity, Accessibility, Security, Usability, and Dissemination Standards

Group 4 focused on formulating strategies to significantly enhance the integrity, accessibility, security, usability, and dissemination of data produced by the BBS R&D Cell, with the overarching vision of creating a trusted, secure, user-friendly, and policy-relevant data environment. To ensure data integrity, the group recommended establishing comprehensive validation protocols, incorporating both automated and manual checks throughout the data lifecycle to maintain accuracy and consistency. For improved accessibility, they proposed making datasets available in multiple user-friendly formats such as CSV, Excel, SPSS, and JSON and developing an intuitive, publicly accessible data portal managed by the R&D Cell. On data security, robust data protection policies were advised, including encrypted storage systems, secure cloud platforms, and regular security audits to prevent unauthorized access and ensure compliance. The group emphasized the R&D Cell's central role in data validation and quality control, advocating for strong collaboration with data providers and consistent training to ensure high standards from the source. They also recommended implementing structured quality control frameworks through periodic audits, peer reviews, and use of advanced statistical software to detect anomalies early. Key implementation measures included conducting

regular audits and reviews, investing in capacity building on data security and validation, and establishing transparent feedback mechanisms to incorporate user insights and continuously refine processes.

Group 5: Capacity Development, Innovation and Digital Transformation in Statistical Research

Group 5 focused on formulating comprehensive strategies to enhance the institutional capacity of the R&D Cell by leveraging innovation, advanced technologies, and digital transformation. Their overarching vision is to position the R&D Cell as a leader in statistical research excellence through closing capacity gaps, integrating technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and big data, and fostering a vibrant culture of experimentation and continuous learning. The group identified several critical challenges, including a shortage of skilled human resources in fields like data science, machine learning, and advanced analytics; insufficient hands-on experience with modern tools among existing staff; and limited use of platforms such as R, Python, and cloud-based analytics. Additional challenges include weak stakeholder engagement, data accessibility issues, and structural and financial constraints that hinder innovation and retention of skilled personnel. To address these, the group recommended targeted capacity development initiatives such as launching advanced training and certification programs, offering workshops led by national and international experts, and ensuring hands-on proficiency in modern data management systems and statistical computing environments. They also emphasized technological integration, including institutional access to high-performance computing and secure data sharing platforms. To foster a culture of innovation, Group 5 proposed establishing a centralized knowledge hub for resource sharing, incentivizing collaboration and learning through rewards and recognition, and adopting agile project frameworks to support adaptability and rapid iteration. They further recommended organizing hackathons and internal data challenges, encouraging open innovation and partnerships with academic and private sector entities, and institutionalizing knowledge through structured documentation and knowledge transfer mechanisms. Collectively, these strategies aim to build a digitally empowered, highly capable, and innovation-driven R&D Cell that can lead transformative statistical research and drive forward-looking change within BBS.

Group 6: Challenges, Mitigation Strategies and Sustainability of the R&D cell

Group 6 focused on identifying the institutional, financial, and operational challenges confronting the R&D Cell of BBS and proposed a strategic roadmap to ensure its long-term sustainability and effectiveness. They emphasized that establishing a resilient, future-ready R&D Cell requires structural reforms, stable financing, enabling policies, and a performance-based culture that fosters innovation and accountability. Key institutional challenges include the absence of formal institutionalization within the BBS organogram, inadequate policy mandates, and limited autonomy in strategic planning and staffing. Financially, the cell suffers from overreliance on development partner support, lack of dedicated budget lines, and limited access to competitive research grants. Operationally, outdated infrastructure, insufficient training, weak collaboration mechanisms, and inadequate research capacity were highlighted. To mitigate these issues, the group proposed institutionalizing the R&D Cell within the BBS structure, amending the Statistical Act to support innovation and digital transformation, adopting a flexible administrative setup, and granting operational autonomy. They also recommended regular training in advanced analytics, upgrading infrastructure, and strengthening partnerships with academic and research institutions. For long-term sustainability, the group advocated for diversified funding sources, stable staffing structures, and institutional knowledge retention systems. Performance and impact should be measured through KPIs such as improved data integration, peer-reviewed publications, policy uptake, and stakeholder engagement. To enhance visibility, Group 6 proposed launching a dedicated R&D bulletin, engaging with media, hosting conferences, publishing impact reports, developing an online research portal, and organizing research competitions. These measures collectively aim to transform the R&D Cell into a credible, innovative, and sustainable institution capable of driving evidence-based policymaking.

7. Synthesis and Way Forward

Mr. Kabir Uddin Ahmed, Director of BBS, provided a comprehensive synthesis of the group recommendations, emphasizing the need for a phased and strategically sequenced implementation approach that aligns with BBS's current capacities while capitalizing on existing policy opportunities. He underscored that transforming the R&D Cell into an effective and future-ready unit will require ensuring its autonomy, strengthening human resources, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and cultivating a culture of continuous innovation.

8. Outcomes: Based on the insights and recommendations from the workshop:

- A draft working paper will be prepared to serve as a guiding document.
- The second consultation workshop, with external stakeholders, will be held in June 2025.
- BBS and UNDP will work together to integrate the workshop outcomes into a phased implementation plan for the R&D Cell.

9. Closing Remarks

The workshop concluded with insightful reflections and a strong call to action from key organizers and facilitators, reaffirming the importance of the R&D Cell as a strategic driver of innovation and modernization within the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

Closing remarks by Mahmudul Hasan, Project Manager of the Strengthening Institutions, Policies and Services (SIPS): He expressed sincere appreciation to all participants for their active engagement, cooperation, and valuable contributions throughout the day-long workshop. He commended the quality of group discussions and the forward-thinking nature of the recommendations, noting that such collaborative exercises are instrumental in shaping a research and development agenda that is both responsive and impactful.

Tanvir Mahmud, Senior Governance Specialist, UNDP: He proposed that the future R&D wing of BBS be formally designated as a "Center of Excellence", emphasizing the strategic importance of branding the cell as a leading hub for statistical innovation, capacity building, and policy-relevant research. This designation, he argued, would not only raise the national and international profile of the unit but also attract the necessary institutional support and credibility. He also stressed the importance of adopting a SMART approach (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) in defining the goals and deliverables of the R&D Cell. He cautioned that while ambition is necessary, all reform proposals must take into account existing resource constraints and be realistically sequenced. Prioritization will be key to ensuring early wins and long-term sustainability.

A critical element highlighted in his remarks was the need for sustained advocacy and political buy-in. To drive forward institutional reforms such as the establishment of the R&D wing, increased autonomy, or expanded mandates active engagement with policymakers and high-level stakeholders is imperative. He recommended the formation of an Advisory Council or Oversight Body, comprised of eminent experts and champions of data-driven governance, who can act as advocates for the cell and liaise with external actors to secure sustained support.

Finally, Mr. Mahmud underscored the importance of public trust and transparency in the work of BBS. He noted that innovation—particularly through the integration of cutting-edge technologies, data integrity mechanisms, and responsive dissemination practices—can significantly strengthen the credibility and perceived value of BBS among the general public, development partners, and policy actors. The closing remarks reaffirmed the shared vision among stakeholders to build a dynamic, future-ready R&D Cell that contributes meaningfully to evidence-based policymaking and national development. The workshop was thus concluded on a note of optimism, collaboration, and strategic intent.

Annex 1: Agenda

Time	Session/ Details
09:30–10:00	Registration
10.00- 10.10	Welcome Remarks Mr. Lizen Shah Nayem, Deputy Director, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)
10.10-10.30	Keynote Presentation “From Vision to Reality –Setting priorities for Statistical Excellence: Role of BBS’s R&D Cell” Md. Mizanur Rahman, Deputy Director, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)
10.30-10.40	Reflection Remarks Mr. Anowarul Haq, Assistant Resident Representative, Democratic Governance, UNDP Bangladesh
10.40-10:50	Remarks by Chief Guest Mr. Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, Director General, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)
10:50–11:10	Networking Break & Refreshments
11:10-12:00	Thematic Group Work: Co-design the R&D Cell’s Strategic Direction <i>Group Theme 1: Strategic Vision and Future Role of the R&D Cell</i> <i>Group Theme 2: Enhancing Research Quality, Relevance, and Policy Impact</i> <i>Group Theme 3: Navigate Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy</i> <i>Group Theme 4: Data Integrity, Accessibility, Data Security, Usability, and Dissemination Standards</i> <i>Group theme 5: Capacity Development, Innovation and Digital Transformation in Statistical Research</i> <i>Group Theme 6: Challenges, Mitigation strategies and Sustainability of the R&D Cell</i>
12:00–12:50	Group Presentations
12:50- 1:00	Synthesis and Way Forward Mr. Kabir Uddin Ahmed, Director, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)
01:00-01:10	Remarks by UNDP
01:10 –01:20	Closing Remarks Mr. Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, Director General, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)
01.20– 02.30	Lunch

ANNEXURE: Workshop Report on Strengthening BBS R&D Cell – May 2025

Strengthening the BBS R&D Cell: Priorities for Excellence in Data and Research

18th May 2025 | 09:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Venue: Padma Hall, Pan-pacific Sonargaon

Introduction:

Following the political shift on 5 August 2024 and the formation of an interim government, Bangladesh has entered a transitional phase marked by renewed momentum for structural reforms. A key area of focus within this evolving context is the integrity and autonomy of official data- recognized as essential pillars for fostering transparency, accountability, and inclusive development. Aligned with these national priorities, the Strengthening Institutions, Policies, and Services (SIPS) project of UNDP Bangladesh has initiated a series of strategic intervention to enhance the institutional capacity of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). These efforts aim to strengthen the role of BBS as the country's central statistical authority and position it as a globally credible National Statistical Office (NSO) committed to delivering high-quality, reliable, and independent data.

Functionalization of the Research and Development (R&D) Cell within BBS has been identified as a key reform priority. Although the Cell has been formed it remains at a nascent stage of development. Recognizing the Cell's potential to drive innovation, methodological advancement, and policy-relevant research, the SIPS project is supporting its transformation into a dynamic and high-impact institutional unit.

As a first step in this process, high-level consultation workshop titled “Strengthening the BBS R&D Cell: Priorities for Excellence in Data and Research” was convened on 18th of May 2025. The workshop served as a critical forum for articulating a strategic vision for the BBS Research and Development (R&D) Cell, engaging approximately 80 participants from government, academia, research institutions, and the private sector. Focused on addressing current gaps, institutional challenges, and defining a roadmap to transform the R&D Cell into a dynamic and impactful hub of innovation.

The event was graced by Ms. Aleya Akter, Secretary, Statistics and Informatics Division, Ministry of Planning, who served as Chief Guest. Mr. Owais Parray, Country Economic Advisor, UNDP Bangladesh, attended as Special Guest, and the sessions were chaired by Mr. Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, Director General of BBS.

Session Highlights

Welcome Remarks by Mr. Mohammad Obaidul Islam, DDG, BBS

Mr. Mohammad Obaidul Islam formally opened the session by welcoming all participants and acknowledging the ongoing collaboration between the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and UNDP's Strengthening Institutions, Policies, and Services (SIPS) project. He emphasized the critical role of a dynamic Research and Development (R&D) Cell in promoting evidence-based policymaking and conducting impactful research.

Drawing from insights gathered during an internal workshop, Mr. Islam outlined three key priorities for enhancing the R&D Cell: (1) strengthening its organizational structure and human resources, (2) institutionalizing research practices within BBS, and (3) ensuring that research findings effectively inform national policy decisions.

He encouraged participants to engage actively in the discussions to co-create a practical and forward-looking roadmap for the Cell's development. Mr. Islam expressed his appreciation for the continuous support provided by the SIPS project and reaffirmed BBS's commitment to transforming the R&D Cell into a modern, high-performing unit aligned with international standards.

Setting the Tone by Anowarul Haq, Assistant Resident Representative - Democratic Governance, UNDP Bangladesh.

Mr. Anowarul Haq delivered the opening remarks, setting the tone for the workshop by emphasizing the critical importance of institutionalizing a forward-looking and functional R&D Cell within the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). He contextualized the initiative within the global landscape of data governance, underscoring the evolving role of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) as hubs of methodological innovation and adaptive statistical systems.

Mr. Haq emphasized the need for the R&D Cell to be not only technically sound but also strategically embedded within a broader ecosystem of collaboration involving academia, research institutions, development partners, and policymakers.



Reaffirming UNDP's commitment to strengthening BBS, he assured continued support through:

- Comprehensive capacity development initiatives,
- Targeted institutional support, and
- Facilitated multi-stakeholder engagement to ensure the Cell's relevance and sustainability.

He encouraged workshop participants to offer bold, constructive, and future-ready feedback, reinforcing that this initiative presents a significant opportunity to transform BBS into a more agile and innovative statistical institution aligned with national priorities and global best practices.

Chief Guest Remarks by Ms. Aleya Akter, Secretary, Statistics and Informatics Division, Ministry of Planning



The Secretary, Statistics and Informatics Division, commenced her remarks by expressing sincere appreciation to all participants for their active engagement in the workshop and extended gratitude to UNDP for its continued technical support to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). She underscored that the establishment of the Research and Development (R&D) Cell represents a critical milestone in enhancing BBS's institutional capacity and strengthening its contribution to evidence-based policymaking in support of national development.

Acknowledging the slower-than-anticipated progress in operationalizing the R&D Cell, the Secretary emphasized the urgency of accelerating efforts to make the Cell fully functional. She noted that the effectiveness of data-driven decision-making is contingent upon the existence of a strong and structured R&D unit within BBS. To advance this objective, the Secretary outlined several strategic recommendations. She called for the strengthening of internal capacities by engaging research-oriented officials and capitalizing on the wealth of institutional knowledge already present within BBS. She also encouraged leveraging local partnerships and opportunities to facilitate the operationalization of the Cell and stressed the importance of inclusive stakeholder engagement to foster broad-based ownership and ensure long-term sustainability.

Furthermore, the Secretary highlighted the necessity of obtaining formal institutional approval for the R&D Cell from the Planning Commission to ensure its structural legitimacy. As a key next step, she recommended the development of a comprehensive two-year action plan, including clearly defined objectives, implementation steps, and deliverables to guide the Cell's full operationalization.

In the end, the Secretary reaffirmed BBS's strong commitment to institutionalizing the R&D Cell and called upon all stakeholders to share practical inputs and actionable suggestions to inform the next phase of implementation.

Keynote Presentation by Md. Mizanur Rahman, Deputy Director, BBS

Mr. Md. Mizanur Rahman outlined a strategic and forward-thinking vision for functionalizing the R&D Cell of BBS, anchored in the mandates of the Statistics Act 2013 and the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). He underscored the urgent need to strengthen the Cell's role in enhancing data quality, accessibility, and integrity; particularly amid the growing relevance of emerging technologies such as IoT, remote sensing, and AI.

He proposed transforming the R&D Cell into a national Center of Excellence. His proposed priorities include fostering innovation, advancing methodological standards, strengthening research capacity, and systematically addressing critical data gaps. He envisioned the Cell delivering high-impact outputs such as policy briefs, working paper formulation, and analytical reports.



Recognizing existing institutional challenges such as limited capacity, insufficient funding, and weak inter-agency coordination Mr. Rahman recommended a set of practical measures including targeted capacity development, enhanced stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning. He concluded by encouraging all participants to actively contribute insights to shape a realistic, sustainable, and impactful roadmap for the R&D Cell's transformation.



Mr. Kabir Uddin Ahmed provided a comprehensive overview of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' (BBS) ongoing transformation from a traditionally structured organization to a forward-looking, technology-driven institution. He reflected on the agency's shift from traditional methods to automated data collection during the 2022 census a key milestone in enhancing efficiency, accuracy, and timeliness. Looking ahead, he announced BBS's plans to launch a Big Data Platform by 2026, alongside the establishment of a Data Lab and Data Warehouse to support

secure, in-house research and facilitate responsible data use. These initiatives aim to strengthen BBS's role in innovation and knowledge generation.

Mr. Ahmed opened the floor for the discussion and invited participants to offer insights to help shape a resilient and future-ready R&D Cell, capable of meeting the country's evolving data needs.

Identified Challenges and Recommendations from Ope floor discussion

In the open discussion session stakeholders engaged in a constructive dialogue, offering critical feedback and thoughtful reflections. Their insights highlighted both existing challenges and opportunities for strengthening the R&D Cell. Key challenges and recommendations are clustered into the following themes.

- ➡ Institutional Position, Mandate, and Governance
- ➡ Data Integrity, Quality, and Accessibility
- ➡ Sustainability and Effectiveness of the R&D Cell

Theme	Challenges	Recommendations
Institutional Position, Mandate, and Governance	1.1 Lack of Formal Approval: The R&D Cell lacks formal institutionalization into the BBS organogram, which undermines sustainability.	Action can be taken to institutionalize the R&D Cell formally in the BBS organogram.
	1.2 Lack of Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration: lack of collaboration strategy with research organizations, academia, private sector, or government ministries.	R&D cell can facilitate to build structured partnerships with universities, think tanks, industry experts, civil society organizations, government counterparts, and private sector to build a robust National statistical system
	1.3 Monitoring/advisory Gaps: No oversight mechanisms, strategic guidance, or accountability frameworks.	Establish an advisory/apex body to ensure statistical robustness and develop an internal review mechanism.
	1.4 Constraint in Recruitment: No provision to hire short-term consultants or outsource specialized researcher for the R&D cell under current recruitment system.	R&D cell can facilitate discussion with senior management of BBS/SID to introduce legal provisions for flexible hiring and contracting human resources
Data Integrity, Quality, and Accessibility	2.1 Concerns over lack of quality assurance mechanisms, sample size determination, data collection, integration and data sharing frequency.	R&D cell can form an expert/advisory group with domain experts, academics, CSOs, & research organizations to ensure data quality, credibility & robustness across BBS's interventions
	2.2 Limited use of emerging data sources (mobile, geospatial, remote sensing).	R&D cell can take initiatives for innovative data collection techniques using cutting-edge technology and collaborate to build technical capacity of the staff of BBS
	2.3 Lack of data segregation, indexing, interoperability, and timely release.	Expert/Advisory group can guide through R&D cell to prioritize improvements in data segregation, indexing, interoperability, and timely dissemination.

Theme	Challenges	Recommendations
Sustainability and Effectiveness of the R&D Cell	3.1 Human resource limitations: staff are already overburdened.	R&D cell can consult and explore way out to allocate dedicated skilled personnel and can explore the scopes to fit in contractual hiring or alternate modalities in collaboration with universities.
	3.2 Absence of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for long-term activity in R&D cell	M&E framework/mechanisms can be developed and introduced for the initiatives of the R&D cell from project inception to implementation.

Next Steps/ Way forward

Based on the workshop discussions, the following actions will be prioritized:

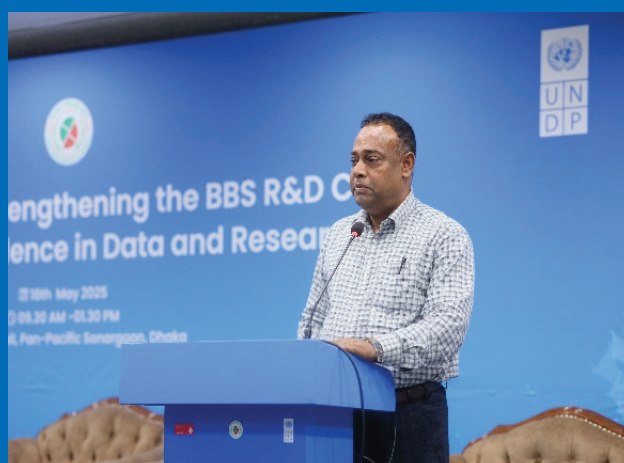
- Finalization of the Working Paper: Incorporating workshop feedback into a strategic document to guide the R&D Cell's development.
- Planning Commission Engagement: Advocacy for formal approval and institutionalization.
- Development of a Two-Year Action Plan: Including staffing, infrastructure, and research priorities.
- Capacity Development Initiatives: Targeted training for BBS staff in advanced research and data analytics.
- Stakeholder Partnership Strategy: Establishing advisory panels, Validation Committee and MOUs with research institutions.

Closing Session

Remarks by Mr. Shakil Akter, Additional Secretary, statistics Information Division.

Mr. Shakil Akter, Additional Secretary of the Planning Division, shared important reflections on the current and future roles of the R&D Cell within BBS. He underscored that while the Cell currently focuses on data generation, publication, and ensuring the quality of statistical outputs, it must gradually shift toward deeper research initiatives once a strong quality assurance framework is in place.

He stressed improving coordination with the ministries and divisions holding administrative data to ensure effective use in policymaking. Mr. Akter also called for institutional reforms, advocating for revised recruitment rules and specialized career tracks with incentives to attract and retain skilled researchers. He urged BBS to adopt a strategic approach to institutional strengthening to ensure the R&D Cell's long-term sustainability and effectiveness.



Remarks by Owais Parray, Country Economic Advisor, UNDP Bangladesh



During the workshop, Mr. Owais Parray, Country Economic Advisor at UNDP Bangladesh, reaffirmed UNDP's commitment to supporting the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) amid the interim government's agenda on governance, data accountability, accessibility, and quality. He highlighted the evolving role of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) in a data-rich environment, stressing that the challenge now lies not only in data collection but in ensuring its meaningful use through innovation, technology, and accessibility. Mr. Parray urged BBS to

move beyond traditional data sources and adopt new methodologies to make data actionable and relevant for effective planning and governance.

He outlined three key recommendations to strengthen the R&D Cell and enhance BBS's strategic role: leveraging modern digital tools for innovation, building trust through transparency and quality assurance, and investing in human capacity to foster a culture of data-driven knowledge generation. Mr. Parray also encouraged BBS to effectively communicate the impact of its data on policy and development outcomes, while acknowledging both achievements and challenges. He concluded by emphasizing the critical importance of intellectual autonomy for NSOs, underscoring that independent and credible statistical institutions are vital for sustainable development.

Closing Remarks by the Director General, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)

In his closing remarks, the Director General of BBS extended sincere thanks to all participants for their active engagement and thoughtful contributions throughout the workshop. He offered special appreciation to UNDP, SIPS project, for their continued technical and strategic support in functionalizing the long-established but previously non-functional R&D Cell at BBS.

He reaffirmed BBS's commitment to producing high-quality, UN-aligned statistics through collaboration with ministries, agencies, and development partners. He highlighted that the workshop outcomes will help define the R&D Cell's core functions; focusing on data quality, sustainability, and strengthened partnerships. Emphasizing policy-relevant research, improved data accessibility, and district-level disaggregation, he pointed to the swift publication of the 2022 HEIS as a model for future work.



Looking ahead, the Director General shared that the R&D Cell would actively engage research institutions and think tanks to enhance analytical outputs. He also highlighted ongoing reform initiatives, including the formation of a Statistics Commission and a dedicated taskforce to guide strategic transformation. Finally, he noted that the Data Release and Sharing Policy is in the final stages of authorization a critical step toward ensuring open, timely, and user-friendly access to statistical information. He expressed optimism that with continued collaboration and commitment, BBS will strengthen its role as a center of statistical excellence supporting national development priorities.

Conclusion:

The workshop reaffirmed the importance of a dynamic, forward-looking R&D Cell within BBS to strengthen the national statistical system and support evidence-based policy development. Stakeholders from diverse sectors recognized the value of strategic reform, institutional innovation, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. With sustained support from UNDP's SIPS project and proactive leadership from BBS and the SID, the transformation of the R&D Cell into a Center of Excellence is both necessary and achievable. The insights and recommendations gathered from this workshop will feed into a working paper and inform the next phase of strategic planning and implementation.

Photo Gallery



Annex 1:

Time	Agenda
09.00–09.30	Registration
09.30– 09.35	Welcome Remarks Mr. Mohammad Obaidul Islam, Deputy Director General, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)
09.35–09.40	Setting the Tone Mr. Anowarul Haq, Assistant Resident Representative - Democratic Governance, UNDP Bangladesh
09.40–09.50	Remarks by Chief Guest Ms. Aleya Akter, Secretary, Statistics and Informatics Division, Ministry of Planning

Time	Agenda
09.50 – 10.10	Tea Break
10.10-10.30	Presentation “From Vision to Reality –Setting priorities for Statistical Excellence: Role of BBS’s R&D Cell” Mr. Mizanur Rahman, Deputy Director, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)
11.00-12.00	Open Discussion
12.00-12.10	Reflection
12.10-12.20	Remark by Mr. Owais Parray Country Economic Advisor, UNDP Bangladesh
12.20-12.30	Closing Remarks Mr. Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, Director General, BBS, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)
12.30-01.30	Lunch

The Research output of the R&D Cell will be as follows:

Research Paper	Summarize, analyze, and synthesize on specific topic using existing census and survey data of BBS.
Review Paper	Provide an in-depth analysis of the technical aspects of the policy, system, or methodology adopted by BBS
Technical Paper	Provide a comprehensive guideline including actionable insights and practical recommendations
Policy Paper	Convert research findings into actionable policy recommendations that address national priorities.
Concept Paper	Present new ideas, concepts, or research proposals for feedback or funding consideration.
Experimental Report	Document the methodologies, findings, and analytical insights from statistical experiments, pilot surveys, or methodological trials conducted by BBS
Statistical Reports	Present official statistical data produced by BBS, accompanied by comprehensive analysis, interpretation, and policy-relevant insights