

## EVENT REPORT

# LAUNCHING EVENT OF BANGLADESH ACADEMY FOR CLIMATE SERVICES (BACS)



**Venue:** Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), Agargaon, Dhaka

**Date:** Sunday, August 05, 2018

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Bangladesh Academy for Climate Services (BACS) has been formally launched in Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) Auditorium, Dhaka on August 5, 2018. BACS is co-founded by the International Center for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) at Columbia University, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), and the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

The Academy was born from the need for a trans-sectoral dialogue on the use and understanding of weather and climate information in Bangladesh. It aims to respond to that need by facilitating trans-sectoral and multi-stakeholder dialogue on climate services, developing tailored certification short courses and creating graduate level curricula to train the new generation of weather, climate and sector experts. The launch event was the occasion to raise awareness and present the objectives of the Bangladesh Academy for Climate Services, as well as to serve as a networking opportunity for various stakeholders involved in the generation, translation, dissemination and use of weather and climate information and interested in BACS.



*Figure 1: Launching of Bangladesh Academy for Climate Services (BACS) at the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD)*

The first week-long course is an Introduction to Climate Services will to be held from 21<sup>st</sup> October to 25<sup>th</sup> October 2018. Early-to mid-career professionals and students working in fields related to agriculture and food systems, disaster preparedness and response, public health, or aligned fields. Participants will learn strategies to incorporate climate information into their decision-making processes, including identifying and documenting climate-sensitive decisions, learning the basics of

climate science, unpacking specific needs for climate information in their sector and understanding available products. The course will first focus on defining climate sensitive decisions of interest to course participants and provide a basic understanding of climate and climate services relevant to these decisions. The course will then explore strategies for incorporating climate services into existing decision frameworks using the four pillars of climate services, production, transfer, dissemination, and use. The training will be led by resource persons actively engaged in development of climate services in Bangladesh, including scientists and experts from BACS partners, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) at Columbia University, CIMMYT and ICCCAD.

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## PANEL DISCUSSION

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The BACS launch was chaired by **Mr. Shamsuddin Ahmed**, Director, Bangladesh Meteorological Department who opened the event by referencing recent reports that hundreds of people had died in South Korea and Japan due to heatwaves, as evidence that we are living in a changing climate. Mr. Shamsuddin stated that *“Launching of Bangladesh Academy for Climate Services is a significant step in a background of global changing climate.”*



Figure 2: Mr. Shamsuddin Ahmed's opening speech

He also informed attendees that the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has enacted a Meteorological Act in the country, including chapters for definitions, climate services, and earthquake/tsunamis. A copy of the Act was distributed to all attendees. Mr. Shamsuddin thanked Dr. Saleemul Huq for jointly pursuing two interrelated issues: climate change and development. He concluded by confirming that when development activities are undertaken, climate change must also be addressed.

**Dr. Saleemul Huq**, Director, International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) began with an introduction to the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), which is based at the Independent University of Bangladesh (IUB) in Bashundhara. Dr. Huq informed attendees that ICCCAD offers a one-year MS degree program in Climate Change and Development, with lectures and classes taking place over the weekend



Figure 3: Dr. Huq's introductory speech on ICCCAD and BACS activities



(Friday/Saturday). Dr. Huq also briefed attendees on the research performed by ICCCAD on climate change and development. He informed attendees that a major initiative called Gobeshona (the Bangla word for research) was started as a platform to gather research from a variety of institutions, including those in both the public and private sector. Well over 50 organizations have now joined the platform, and the Gobeshona website houses an archive of over 2,000 publications on climate change in Bangladesh. The portal provides the title, author, abstract and link to the paper if it is accessible in the public domain. The Gobeshona platform also coordinates a monthly research seminar, hosted by one of the partner organizations, where researchers present their work to an audience of 50-60 people. Additionally, Dr. Huq advised participants that an annual conference takes place every year from 8-11 January. The format is a four-day event; the first three days are a science conference where researchers present scientific papers, and the fourth day is dedicated to science policy dialogue where policy makers are presented with research, and feedback is sought on further useful activities to be undertaken by researchers to inform the policy agenda. Next year, in 2019, the conference will be truly international, as researchers from all over the world will be invited to come and learn about Bangladesh. One of the authors of the 'Special Report on Global warming of 1.5°C' will attend and present his report.

Dr. Huq explained that idea of an academy of climate services was born in November 2017 at the ACToday consultation workshop and then presented in a Symposium at this year's Gobeshona conference, with the idea of bridging the gap between those who produce and use climate information was presented. He noted that *"Production of information is going on but using it properly is the major issue. So that is what we are trying to address, enhancing the effectiveness of climate information and how we can improve it for the users and enhance the ability to use the information"*. Today's event marks the official launch of BACS, and further information on the initiative is included on a flyer which was distributed to all attendees.

Dr. Huq announced that one of the first activities of BACS will be a short training course called 'Introduction to Climate Services', which will take place between 21-25 October 2018. A leaflet was distributed to all attendees with further information. The aim of the training course is to attract users of climate services, including the private sector. As an example, one of the organizations who has already indicated interest in the course is Polar Ice Cream, since the longevity of their product and hence their sales are partially dependent on the weather. Other targeted attendees are users of long-term climate information. Other targeted attendees are those who would benefit from use of climate information on seasonal and longer time sales. Attendees will receive a certificate and will become academicians. BACS will maintain contact with alumni upon course completion.

Dr. Huq stated that the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) was extremely proactive regarding climate change and produced a pioneering document in 2009, the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP), which was the basis for major investments such as the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF). The plan was funded by the GoB and prepared by a team of Bangladeshi experts who are now revising the document for 2030. Dr. Huq added he had just returned this morning from a writing retreat for this purpose. One of the new elements in the updated plan is climate information; Dr. Huq recognised that the ability to produce such information has advanced quite a lot, however stated that utilization is falling behind.

Dr. Huq concluded his remarks by inviting all attendees to participate in BACS; he clarified that BACS is an open-ended institution which all attendees are welcome to join.

**Mélody Braun**, Research Staff Associate, Project lead of ACToday Bangladesh, International Research Institute for Climate and Society, The Earth Institute at Columbia University informed attendees that climate services could be defined as the production, translation, dissemination and use of climate information, however she stressed that there was a difference between making such information available and actually using it. Ms. Braun explained that users of climate information come from a variety of backgrounds and therefore posed the question of how the gap between producers and users can be bridged, especially for those who do not have any climate background at all.



Figure 4: Ms. Mélody speaking about IRI's project and BACS initiative

Ms. Braun briefed attendees on a new five-year project led by the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI), at the request of the President of Columbia University. Ms. Braun explained that so much information is produced in academic institutions that needs to be linked to users. The Columbia University project, 'Adapting Agriculture to Climate Today, for Tomorrow' (or ACToday), seeks to identify climate threats to food systems and is working in six countries: Bangladesh, Vietnam, Senegal, Ethiopia, Columbia and Guatemala. Ms. Braun is leading this project in Bangladesh. Ms. Braun stated that *"while it is important to have good quality data for the development of climate services, a major challenge lies in the translation and integration of this information into the decision-making processes of practitioners in different sectors."* In Bangladesh in particular, there are so many different initiatives that is hard to keep track of all climate projects, and know what is available. Ms. Braun suggested that BACS could be a platform to do just that and identify gaps.

Ms. Braun explained that there is currently no core funding for BACS, however the four founding partners (ICCCAD, IRI, CIMMYT and BMD) are providing in-kind contributions of resources. For

example, the ACToday project led by IRI is focused on food systems and how climate services can be used to contribute to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 (zero hunger), as well as national level goals. Ms. Braun mentioned that IRI was currently working on improving sub-seasonal and seasonal forecasting with BMD, implementing a new tool to merge satellite and observational data, and having several discussions on Forecast-based Financing (FbF) and weather-based index insurance, as IRI has significant experience in these areas. Ms. Braun added that many people are talking about climate services for agriculture, but not for aquaculture, therefore it is important to engage stakeholders such as WorldFish and the Department of Fisheries in this discussion. Ms. Braun informed attendees that IRI uses 'map-rooms' as a way to visualize climate data online and wants to explore how these can be used in Bangladesh. She also added that since IRI is housed at Columbia University, another objective of IRI is to improve collaboration between universities in Bangladesh and in the United States of America, and bring together people from different countries. Ms. Braun suggested that students from Columbia University could be paired with students from Bangladesh to further learning opportunities.

Ms. Braun concluded by confirming there were lots of ideas for BACS and that the founding members are very open to discussion and suggestions from other partners. Ms. Braun added that she had recently talked about the Academy in Mexico, at the Understanding Risk conference, and in Malaysia, at a Forecast-based Financing conference - everyone was very excited at the prospect of the Academy, and other countries were keen to come and learn from Bangladesh.

**Dr. Timothy J. Krupnik**, Senior Scientist and Systems Agronomist, International Wheat and Maize Improvement Center (CIMMYT) began by saying that the strong attendance confirmed that the BACS team was on the right track and that there was an interest and need for what BACS aims to offer in Bangladesh. Dr. Krupnik explained that the International Wheat and Maize Improvement Center (known



*Figure 5: Dr. Krupnik explaining about CIMMYT's work on climate services*

by its Spanish acronym, CIMMYT, on account of its head office being in Mexico), is one of the fifteen agricultural research centres which form the CGIAR, and has been working in Bangladesh for over 35 years. CIMMYT is involved in climate services through its leadership of the Climate Services for Resilient Development in South Asia (CSRD) project which is funded by USAID. Dr. Krupnik mentioned that CSRD with IRI and a number of other institutions, including others represented in the room, regarding providing information to farmers, so they can benefit from reducing crop loss due to climate variability and extremes. Dr. Krupnik added that his colleague, Dr. Carlo Montes (also in attendance at the launch event) is a climatologist and is working with BMD on improving forecast accuracy and monsoon forecasting. He explained that this is important for agronomists (like himself), as climate information can help inform the timing of agricultural activities such as transplanting of *boro* rice and to infer climate effects on the productivity of other crops and



diseases. Dr. Krupnik also recognized Dr. Nachiketa Acharya (also in attendance), another climatologist from IRI who has been working on this project.

Dr. Krupnik informed participants that CIMMYT is working with the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) to supply information to farmers in a way they will understand, and added that simply providing a weather forecast will not change farmers' decision making and behaviour. Dr. Krupnik highlighted the importance of working with partners like DAE on the ground to translate climate information into actionable advisories.

Dr. Krupnik added that he had learned from Dr. Huq that "Gobeshona is not a project - it's a program". CSRD is a project, since it has an end date. Dr Krupnik suggested that project resources should be used to put in place something that can be sustained over a long period, like the BACS and Gobeshona program, beyond project cycles. He added that through projects, gaps in training and learning had been identified, hence there was a need to develop a platform of organizations interested in making a long-term commitment to climate services, and not just another short-term project. Dr. Krupnik commented that *"This academy is so important for bringing climate information to public. This is an initiative which is meant to be open for partners who are working in this area. Our job is to help the improvement of the use of climate services in Bangladesh."* He was excited to see all of the attendees at the launch event, and to create a Bangladeshi institution that will outlive all of the projects both he and the attendees are involved in.

Dr. Krupnik concluded by recognizing that attendees may have questions about BACS and what it can do, and clarified that it was still in development, however the initiative is meant to be open to all partner organizations working in the area of climate services. Dr. Krupnik added that the short course offered by BACS is a paid-for course as there is no budget for BACS at this time, and that many relevant sectors could benefit from climate information. Dr. Krupnik confirmed that there would be a limited number of scholarships that the team would be pleased to invite people to apply for.

**Ms. Braun** added that this training is meant to be hands-on and participatory, with participants expected to learn how to apply tools and knowledge to their own personal work situation and the climate-sensitive decisions they have to take in their organization. As such, participants should have a strong desire to integrate and apply knowledge gained in their job and organization after completing the course. Ms. Braun explained that participants will receive a certificate, will become alumni upon completion of the course (therefore will be part of the BACS network) and follow up will be conducted to learn what information participants need and how it can be integrated over time.

**Mr. Shamsuddin** kindly requested 2-3 minutes of participants time to demonstrate the latest BMD resource, Operational Numerical Weather Prediction (NWP), which is available at the following link: <http://123.49.38.4/>

**Mr. Md. Abdul Mannan, Meteorologist BMD** presented a demonstration of precipitation data using a 10 day forecast. Mr. Mannan also showed participants the various domains available including 1km domain, 3 km domain and 9 km domain. Mr. Mannan explained that the model is able to

capture various parameters including low cloud fraction. He added that the tool could also provide alerts for wind, rain, heatwave and cold wave and that thunderstorms were being incorporated. Mr. Mannan gave a demonstration of rain forecasts at levels 1, 2 and 3 using a coloured scale, noting stage 3 was in development.



Figure 6: Mr. Mannan's presentation on demonstration of precipitation data

The screenshots below show the welcome screen of the portal:

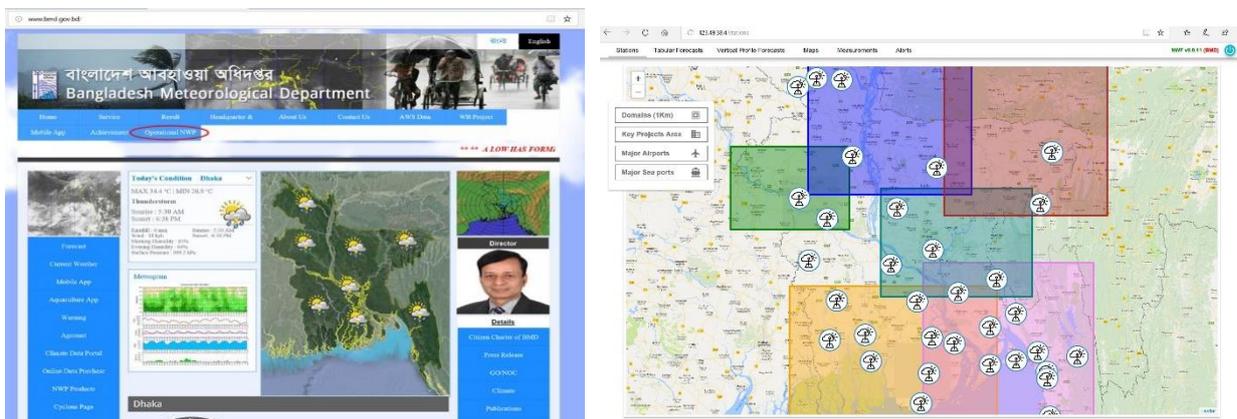


Figure 7: Screenshot on NWP from BMD website and the portal

Mr. Shamsuddin clarified that only Bangladesh has this system to generate location specific and time specific information and invited all attendees to explore the resource using the following credentials:

Username: test  
 Password: test

Dr. Krupnik commented that demonstrating the Operational NWP tool today is a good example of knowledge sharing facilitated through BACS, as not everyone in attendance may have known that this product was being developed. Dr. Krupnik then advised attendees there was an opportunity to entertain questions from the audience.

Ms. Braun added that it was also appropriate for attendees to share their project activities, if relevant.

## OPEN DISCUSSION

**Muhammed Atikul Haque**, Coordinator-Research, Climate Change Program, Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB) commented that the fees for the training course were a bit high. He added that his organization has provided training to 329 participants from more than 100 organizations and subsidized 80% of the total cost, therefore he requested that the training costs be reduced. He also added that



Figure 8: Mr. Atikul's comment in the open discussion

CCDB is very interested to join BACS, as they are currently developing a climate change initiative. He explained that CCDB had very recently installed an Automated Weather Station with BMD, and that whilst they have the machine they do not know how to use it.

**Dr. Huq** responded that since BACS has no donor funds it will offer courses on a cost recovery basis. He added that the BACS team expect participants in the training course to value what they pay, and that scholarships would be available for those who could not pay. Dr. Huq clarified that no one typically pays from their own pocket for such training - usually the attendees' organization or a donor would pay. He reiterated that he expects organizations to send people who would value the experience sufficiently in order to pay for it, and concluded that the course fees are not expensive by international standards.

**Ms. Braun** added that if organizations are interested in being part of the Advisory Committee for BACS then they can send a letter to Dr. Huq at ICCAD. She mentioned BACS will also have a webpage on the Gobeshona site.

**Ashfaqur Rahman Khan** from IOM congratulated the BACS founding members on a timely and much needed initiative. He requested to make knowledge free, and enquired whether online modules could be made available for those who cannot pay. Mr. Ashfaqur expressed an interest in translation of climate information, and commented that as a project manager it would be helpful to translate such information in layman's terms. Mr. Ashfaqur explained that the link between



Figure 9: Mr. Rahman mentions his observation

climate services and IOM was clear, as it was an established fact that climate change drives migration. He added that climate services are important for work with refugees, and provided examples of needing to know windspeed (in order to construct shelters) and the volume of groundwater extracted. Mr. Ashfaque observed that it is difficult to extract such information in layman's language (for example, the windspeed is  $x$  therefore the shelter should be built to specifications  $a$ ,  $b$ , and  $c$ , or the extraction of groundwater is occurring at rate  $y$  therefore depletion will occur after  $z$  years).

**Ms. Braun** commented that IRI has been working with IOM in the Rohingya refugee camps, and was recently awarded funding from NASA for a project. She explained that IRI has frequent communication with a group of organizations working in the camps, to support interpretation of available forecasts. Regarding the suggestion to put training online, Ms. Braun highlighted that online modules alone carry the risk of missing context and not helping people understand how it applies to their decisions. Ms. Braun suggested that instead of starting with the climate information, it is important to start with the decisions that need to be made, and determine what information is needed to make those decisions, which is hard to do with an online module. Ms. Braun emphasized that the course is not just a one week course but an ongoing partnership with follow up.

**Dr. Huq** added that there was a lot of free information available, citing the earlier demonstration of the BMD Operational NWP tool as an example. He explained that the training course is to show participants how to use such information. In order to tailor free information to a particular region, use etc., there will be an associated cost, similar to paying a consultant. Dr. Huq



*Figure 10: Dr. Huq's additional information on ICCCAD's environmental monitoring in the Rohingya refugee camps with IOM*

announced that IOM have just contracted ICCCAD to perform environmental monitoring in the Rohingya refugee camps. He explained that, over time, ICCCAD hope to collect data and information and provide this in real time to enable action. Data will be collected in the field and a monthly report will be produced which will be shared with IOM and the authorities, and a broader report will be made available to the public (covering data both from within the camps and the host communities outside the camps).

**Colonel Md Bashirul Islam**, Deputy Director General, Sena Kalyan Sangstha / Disaster Management and Human Security Practitioner who is currently pursuing a PhD stated that Bangladesh is a climate vulnerable nation. He raised a question about disasters (such as floods in the Haor region) and asked how information can be shared so we are safe from such disasters.

**Dr. Huq** responded that having all of the information will not mean that the problem will disappear. He cited the example of using data on the most vulnerable households in the Rohingya camps to identify which should be relocated, and stated that knowing what to do is a big asset. Dr. Huq added that Bangladesh was not prepared for abnormal rainfall. He also stated that another recent event bearing the fingerprint of climate change is heatwaves. People have died as a result of ongoing heatwaves in Japan and South Korea. Dr. Huq asserted there is a direct correlation with climate change and that attribution is now unchallengeable. **Laskar Muqsudur Rahman**, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO commented that the problems are well defined for other sectors (for example agriculture, fisheries etc) but that forestry is neglected. He therefore questioned how the learning could be applied to forestry.



Figure 11: Mr. Laskar' comment on adding climate services learning into the forestry

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## CLOSING REMARKS

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**Mr. Shamsuddin** closed the session by observing that there are many organizations and activities related to climate services which are working on an outcome that is not efficient. He added that climate services is a diversified field, noting the applications for forestry will not be the same as for fisheries, nor for agriculture etc. Mr. Shamsuddin reiterated the goal of the BACS Academy to enhance training in this regard, and closed the session with an invitation to all guests to enjoy snacks and refreshment.



Figure 12: Mr. Shamsuddin's closing remarks

## APPENDIX: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Sl. No.	Name	Organization	Designation
1	Shamsuddin Ahmed	BMD	Director
2	Md. Sazzad Hossain	BMD	Senior Communication Engineer
3	Rajib Dhar	Dhaka Tribune	Journalist
4	Ahmed Arif Rashid	BWCSRP (Comp-A), BMD	Project Director
5	S. M. Abrar Aowsaf	Dhaka Tribune	Reporter
6	Siddiqui Islam Khan	World Food Programme (WFP)-UN	Senior Program Officer
7	Md. Shahjahan	BDRCS	Project Coordinator
8	Fahmida Khanam	CIMMYT	Program Assistant
9	Dr. Md. Abdul Mueyed	Dept of Agricultural Extension (DAE)	Director (Field Services Wing)
10	Kawsar Parvim	Bangladesh Meteorological Department	Deputy Director
11	Farhana Akhter Kamal	IWM (Institute of Water Modeling)	Associate Specialist
12	Shaikh Nahiduzzaman	IWM (Institute of Water Modeling)	Junior Specialist
13	Raisa Chowdhury	iDE	Project Manager, Powering Aquaculture
14	Shammi Akhter	Dept of Meteorology, Dhaka University	Lecturer
15	Md. Emdad Hossain	WorldFish	Project Leader
16	Dr. Saleemul Huq	ICCCAD	Director
17	Melody Braun	IRI/Columbia University	Research Associate
18	Laskar Muqsudur Rahman	FAO	Senior Forestry Officer
19	Dr. Carlo Montes	CIMMYT	Scientist
20	Muhammed Atikul Haque	Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB)	Coordinator-Research, Climate Change Program
21	Ashfaqur Rahman Khan	IOM	PA
22	Tapas Ranjan Chakrabarty	Oxfam	PC
23	Nuzhat Imam	UNDP	PO
24	Sayed Monjurul Hoque	LGED	Senior Engineer
25	Robayt Khondoker	Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP)	
26	Mossammat Ayesha Khatun	BMD	Deputy Director
27	Saurav Dey Shuvo	Department of Meteorology, University of Dhaka	M.Sc Student
28	Md. Bazlur Rashid	BMD	Meteorologist
29	S.M Quamrul Hasan	BMD	Meteorologist
30	Muhammad Abul Kalam Mallik	BMD	Meteorologist

31	Md. Abdul Mannan	BMD	Meteorologist
32	Md. Asadur Rahman		Assistant Director
33	Shamunul Islam	ERI	Manager
34	Hosna Jannat Tonny	BIID	Agriculture Information Officer
35	Md. Turza Ibna Muksud	BIID	ICT Associate
36	Mohammad Shahidul Haque Khan	CIMMYT	communications officer
37	Puspa Ranjan Uttam	CIMMYT	
38	Dr. Md. Sajidur Rahman	C3ER, BRAC University	Assistant Professor
39	Sharmin Nahar Nipa	C3ER, BRAC University	Training Coordinator & Lecturer
40	Saleh Ahmed	University of Arizona	Lecturer
41	Javed Meandad	Meteorology, DU	MSc Student
42	Tagdira Naznin Smriti	Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture, BD	Actuarial Associate
43	Md. Abdur Rahman	BMD	Deputy Director
44	Md. Bashirul Islam	ICCCAD	DDG,SKS
45	Nachiketa Acharya	IRI/Columbia University	Associate Research Scientist
46	Sk. Ghulam Hussain	CIMMYT	Senior Consultant, CSRD Project
47	Dr. Mazharul Aziz	DAE (Department of Agricultural Extension)	Project Director, Agro-Met system development project
48	Md. Mahedi Hasan	BUP	Assistant Professor
49	Md. Mahbubur Rahman Khan	BMD	
50	MD. Zoinul Abedin	BMD (Bangladesh Meteorological Department)	Meteorologist
51	Md. Gias Uddin	BMD	
52	Md. Azizur Rahman	BMD	
53	Anwarul Alam	Practical Action, Bangladesh	Senior Specialist - Resilience (DRR & Agriculture)
54	Dr. Feisal Rahman	ICCCAD	Research Coordinator
55	Syed Mahmud Hasan	Practical Action	ICT Specialist
56	Tasfia Tasnim	ICCCAD	Research Officer
57	Sarah Louise Johnson	IRI/Columbia University	
58	Md. Abdul Mannan	BMD	Meteorologist
59	Md. Abdul Matin	BMD	Senior Communication Engineer
60	Razia Sultana	BMD	Assistant Communication Engineer
61	Saqib Huq	ICCCAD	Programme Coordinator
62	Timothy J. Krupnik	CIMMYT	Systems Agronomist and CSRD Project Leader