

Annual Progress Report 2023 (Final Draft)



The Central Management Committee (CMC) headed by the Cabinet Secretary met in its 18th meeting on 21 December 2023

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Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme

Cabinet Division and General Economics Division (GED)

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADP	Annual Development Programme
APA	Annual Performance Agreement
AuD	Australian Dollar
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDT	Bangladeshi taka
BEF	Bangladesh Employers' Federation
BFBCCI	Bangladesh Federation Chambers of Commerce and Industries
BICC	Bangabandhu International Conference Center
BPATC	Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre
BSEC	Bangladesh Security and Exchange Commission
BWCCI	Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries
CD	Cabinet Division
CDD	Centre for Disability in Development
CMC	Central Monitoring Committee; Central Management Committee
CODI	Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI)
COVID	COronaVirus Disease
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CRVS	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DP	Development Partner
DPO	Development Partner Organizations
DSS	Department of Social Services
DU	Dhaka University
EGPP	Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest
EIS	Employment Insurance Scheme
ERD	Economic Relations Division
EU	European Union
FD	Finance Division
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FID	Financial Institutions Division
FLIP	Five-Year Plan
FY	Fiscal Year
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GED	General Economics Division
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GO	Government Organization
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GRS	Grievance Redressal System
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
HPM	Honourable Prime Minister
IBAS++	Integrated Budget And Accounting System
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICTD	Information and Communications Technology Division

IDPD	International Day of Persons with Disabilities
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMED	Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LCG	Local Consultative Group
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LGD	Local Government Division
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MIC	Middle Income Country
MIS	Management Information System
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
MoDMR	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
MoEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment
MoSW	Ministry of Social Welfare
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NBR	National Board of Revenue
NEC	National Economic Council
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NID	National Identity Card
NILG	National Institute of Local Government
NIS	National Integrity Strategy
NPR	National Population Register
NSIS	National Social Insurance System
NSPS	National Social Protection Strategy
NSSS	National Social Security Strategy
NUPRP	National Urban Poverty Reduction Programme
OAA	Old Age Allowance
OMS	Open Market Sale
OPDs	Organisation of Person with Disabilities
PIC	Project Implementation Committee
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
PMT	Proxy Means Testing
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PTD	Posts and Telecommunications Division
PWD	Person(s) With Disability
ROAR	Results Oriented Analysis Report
RTAPP	Revised Technical Assistance Project Proposal
SDF	Social Development Framework
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SES	Social and Environmental Screening
SID	Statistics and Informatics Division
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure

SP	Social Protection
SPEC	Special Project Evaluation Committee
SSPS	Social Security Policy Support Programme
SVRS	Sample Vital Registration System
TA	Technical Assistance
TAPP	Technical Assistance Project Proposal
ToR	Terms of Reference
TPP	Technical Assistance Project Proforma/Proposal
UN	United Nations
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme Bangladesh
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNPRPD	United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UP	Union Parishad
USD	United States Dollar
VFM	Value for Money
VGd	Vulnerable Group Development
VWB	Vulnerable Women Benefit
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WG	Working Group

Executive Summary

The Annual Report of the Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme highlights the key progress and achievements of 2023. This year was the transition phase of the SSPS Programme for 2021-26. The first phase has addressed and achieved several reform milestones¹. Built on the successes of Phase – I, DFAT support to Phase II commenced in August 2023 and will continue up to mid-2026. The Phase II will continue to carry forward the critical reform areas of Bangladesh's social protection programme.

Making the reform profile inclusive, in the process of inclusivity, the SSPS Programme includes all relevant stakeholders, i.e., Members of Parliament, national and sub-national level policymakers², programme planners, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), professional organizations, private sectors, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), marginalized population groups, UN Agencies³, and Development Partners (DPs), and others both at the national and sub-national level to create an enabling environment for Leave No One Behind (LNOB).

During the reporting period, apart from the Cabinet Division and the General Economics Division (GED) of the Bangladesh Planning Commission, the SSPS Programme engaged the Ministry of Finance (MoFin), the Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW), the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), the Statistics and Informatics Division (SID), SDG Coordinator Office of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), and Information Communication and Technology Division (ICTD) in social protection reform. The reform areas are, in particular, social insurance, social protection monitoring and evaluation (M&E) through a web-based dashboard, single and social registry MIS, increased number and budget allocations in Old Age Allowance (OAA), and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), and addressing correct targeting at the local level. The SSPS Programme took the lead in providing technical assistance and advisory support to the key development partners and UN Agencies who participated in the reform initiatives in the field of social insurance, interoperability and Single and Social Registry MIS, M&E dashboard, and addressing the social protection of PwDs in Bangladesh.

To address the above reform issues, the SSPS Programme organized as many as 30 different types of activities. Among them, some important activities were: social protection needs assessment for women, the reflection of 2022 with key ministries and DFAT officials, single registry MIS, M&E dashboard, mapping urban shock-responsive social protection, climate-induced shock-responsive disaster resilience social protection framework for Bangladesh, social protection pilot initiative in SDG localization areas, review and implementation monitoring of the NSSS Action Plan Phase - II, Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI) exercise, local level dialogues addressing social protection under the current strategy, child-sensitive social protection under the purview of the life-cycle approach, OAA, PwDs, ethnic minority groups, special groups, others.

The urban shock-responsive report was generated with evidence of participatory discussions with the urban migrants, slum populations, and ethnic minorities, including marginalized groups and third-gender groups. On the other hand, for the first time, the Department of Disaster Science and Climate

¹ Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme, Phase – I Completion Report July 2021-June 2023; and the SSPS Programme Mid-term Review of Phase – I (July 2021 – June 2023).

² Preparing policy papers or strategies, policy level interactions both national and local levels are imperative. The programmer planners are also played critical contributory role. The SSPS Programme interacts with the policymakers, and programme planners, managers and engaged them in policy and decision-making discussions on social protection issues. Interface interactions with the community leaders are also crucial while assessing the social protection needs of the slum dwellers, PwDs, and other ethnic and special communities.

³ The SSPS Programme provided advisory and TA supports arranging several national and local level policy workshops. The discussions concentrated in nutrition-sensitive child social protection, orphan and abandoned children, lifecycle approach and role of early childhood development in nation building, government's cash assistance through mobile financial services and e-payment, and related problems, universal versus targeted social protection programmes, and use of social cash assistance by the old age people.

Resilience of the University of Dhaka was involved in developing the national shock-responsive social protection framework. The SSPS Programme also worked closely with 14 ministries and related departments to develop the shock-responsive adaptive social protection guideline and form a committee to work closely on a regular basis. The project for the first time, deals with Non-state Actors, particularly OPDs and marginalized communities, to listen to their social protection needs and develop a non-state actors' report under the purview of Leave No One Behind (LNOB).

The SSPS Programme extended its support by organizing the Central Management Committee (CMC)⁴. The CMC met twice during the reporting period and made some critical reform-related decisions. Technical assistance was also provided to the NSSS CMC Focal Points Committee⁵, NSSS Action Plan Implementation Monitoring Committee, and NSSS M&E Committee, under the chair of the Secretary, Coordination and Reform of the Cabinet Division and the Member, GED, respectively.

The SSPS Programme Project Implementation Committee (PIC) and Project Steering Committee (PSC) endorsed the revised Technical Assistance Project Proposal (TAPP) for the period July 2023-June 2026 for approval of the Bangladesh Planning Commission, and also gave approval for revising the six-month time extension (from December 2025 to June 2026) of the Project Document (ProDoc) with the Economics Relations Division (ERD). Both PIC and PSC acknowledged the past achievements of the SSPS Programme and approved the work plan for future reform support up to 2026.

The end outcomes of Phase – II⁶ are, strengthened the social security governance system and adoption of gender and disability-inclusive National Social Insurance Schemes (NSIS); increased coverage of old age persons and persons with disability following the universal approach; policy research proposals and piloting plans for correct targeting, particularly for OAA and PwDs to examine the mileage of universalism, and correct inclusion in the government's e-payment systems; strengthening the ability of central agencies to set the reform agenda and to enforce accountability for progress; and foremost importantly using the evidence of above, develop lifecycle-based shock-responsive adaptive and resilience-focused a new national social protection strategy for Bangladesh by 2026, which will also adopt a gender and disability responsive universal approach.

The SSPS Programme's reform efforts ultimately hold the potential to impact Bangladesh's social protection landscape significantly:

Improved targeting: ensuring social protection programmes reach the most vulnerable population effectively;

Enhanced efficiency: streamlining delivery mechanisms and reducing administrative burdens;

Evidence-based policymaking: strengthening research and analysis capabilities to inform decision-making based on data and evidence;

Increased accountability: strengthening M&E systems to ensure transparency and accountability in programme implementation; and

⁴ Central Management Committee (CMC) on National Social Protection Programmes is the highest policy coordination committee established by the Honourable Prime Minister, headed by the Cabinet Secretary, where secretaries of 39 ministries are the member of this committee.

⁵ Members are the Additional/Joint Secretaries of 39 ministries under the Chair of Secretary, Coordination and Reforms of the Cabinet Division. In absence of member, the committee also developed a backup plan, constituting alternate focal points to attend the meeting. The committee members usually conveyed the critical reform information to their respective Secretaries before attending the CMC meeting, the highest policy coordination body for National Social Protection Programmes.

⁶ For more details, please see the Annex – B, C, D, E and F.

Overall social protection: contributing towards achieving the overall goals of the NSSS, which include poverty reduction, vulnerability reduction, and promoting inclusive and sustainable development. The DFAT assessment criteria rated the SSPS Programme rating “A.” On the other hand, The SSPS Programme conducted the mid-term independent evaluation of the DFAT support for Phase – I, which has provided a very good note on the SSPS Programme’s successful contributions to the Government’s social protection reform. It may be mentionable here that the DFAT fund support to UNDP, Bangladesh for the SSPS Programme is under the purview of ‘Social Cohesion’ strategy, and at this moment, is the only policy project working across the Asia-Pacific region dealing with critical social protection reform in Bangladesh. Therefore, the SSPS Programme’s lessons learned, and achievements would be the DFAT investment success to build the case for social cohesion addressing through critical social protection reform.

1. Context

In 2015, with support from the Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme, the Government of Bangladesh approved a 10-year National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) for the first time, covering the period from 2015 to 2026. The NSSS is based on human rights principles and the fundamental responsibility of the State to provide social security to its citizens, as outlined in the Bangladesh Constitution, article 15 and 15 (d).

The NSSS adopts a Life-Cycle Approach to ensure that all Bangladeshi citizens in need of support are covered at every stage of their lives, from birth to death. It envisions reform through the National Social Development Framework (SDF), which includes revising and consolidating social security programmes, implementing a Grievance Redressal System (GRS), enhancing Government to Person (G2P) e-payment mechanisms, standardizing targeting criteria, and improving monitoring and evaluation.

Reforming the national social security system is a significant undertaking that requires time, consultations, consensus-building, and policy decision-making. The current DFAT support to the SSPS Programme builds on progress made from 2017 to 2019 and the government's commitment to social protection reforms outlined in the 8th Five Year Plan.

The DFAT support to the SSPS Programme is structured in two phases over five years, aiming to assist the Government in implementing reform initiatives until June 2026. The project aims to develop a new National Social Protection Strategy 2026+ to address emerging challenges and promote social cohesion in Bangladesh by 2041.

The SSPS Programme, led by the Cabinet Division and the General Economics Division (GED) of the Planning Commission, works closely with the Government to provide research, assessments, technical assistance, and policy guidance. The Programme aims to create an inclusive social security system that combats poverty, inequality, and contributes to human development, employment, and economic growth.

The Government expects the SSPS Programme to reconfigure the social protection system to reach the rural and urban poor and vulnerable groups, enhancing economic growth inclusively. The Programme's Theory of Change includes two outcomes, four outputs, and five intervention areas to achieve its objectives.

Goal

Build an inclusive social security system for all deserving Bangladeshis that effectively tackles and prevents poverty and inequality and contributes to broader human development, employment, and economic growth strengthens the social contract, enhances stability, and builds resilience.

Outcome – 1

Modern social protection infrastructure is developed and capable of supporting a nationally integrated delivery system for reliable, transparent, and developmental GoB social transfers while promoting linkages to ensure effective coordination.

Intermediate Outcome 1

Bangladesh established the systems of universal pension, PwDs, social insurance schemes, and shocks, in line with GoB's commitment.

Output 1

By 2024, four policy proposals (OAA, PwDs, NSIS, COVID-19 policy response) and draft NSSS 2026+ are tabled for Govt. approval.

Output 2

Research and pilot generated evidence available to and utilized by policymakers and other stakeholders.

Outcome – 2

Improved social protection governance by strengthening institutionalization, coordination, planning, M&E, and reporting functions, and stronger research and analysis capacity building for a more effective evidence-base for policy development.

Intermediate Outcome 2

Governance systems strengthened and made inclusive universal lifecycle-based social security and commitment to gender equality is demonstrated through incorporation into strategic national planning.

Output 3

Gender-responsive policy advice and accountability tools are made available to the line ministries to demonstrate their accountability to social protection reform.

Output 4

Broaden the knowledge base and influence of NGOs working for marginalized and excluded groups, including persons with disabilities, in social protection decision-making.

The SSPS Programme's Current Areas of Work

1. Technical

- Expert, evidence-based technical support.

2. Knowledge

- Evidence-based findings, lessons learned to fill out the knowledge gaps.

3. Training and communication

- Building capacity for ensuring coherent reform.

4. Evidence-based research

- Evidence-based diagnostics and research for facilitating developing strategies as background papers.

5. Pilot

- To create evidence and better replicate the modern system in place following better good governance.

6. Policy, strategies, plans

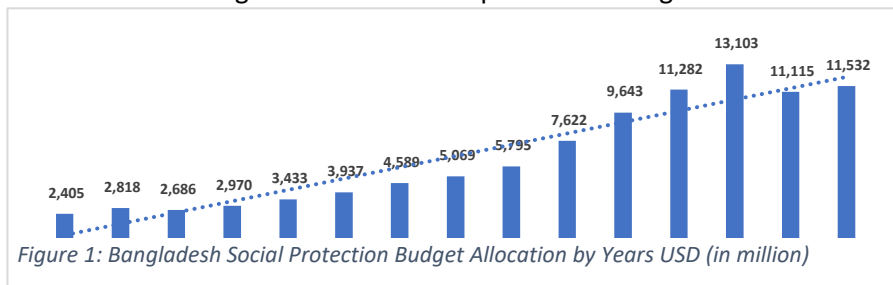
- Through intensive research, inputs from stakeholders consistent with the national goals, principles, in accordance with the constitutional obligation, and human rights, primary policy tools, social law, policies, and strategy, including implementation plans with set objectives outcomes, and milestones.

7. Coordination

- Among the ministries, programmes, and development partners for intra and inter-agencies coordination for inclusive reform and better implementation

2. National Progress in Social Protection

Considering the budgetary constraints, regular increases in the social protection budget have almost always prioritized increased coverage (over increases in benefit size or amounts). The social protection allocation in the annual budget has consistently increased over the last 14 years. In the current fiscal year, the Ministry of Finance published 115 social protection programmes, and Figure 1 indicates that the government's social protection budget allocation has consistently increased from USD



2.4 billion in FY 2009-10 to USD 12 billion in FY 2023-24. The government allocated more than USD 13 billion in 2022, the highest ever allocation, due to the inclusion of the stimulus package to address COVID-19 in

2022. The items included in the stimulus package are support for unemployed labour and direct cash transfers to vulnerable people. The number of beneficiaries of social protection programmes has more than doubled, from 12 percent in 2005 to 30 percent in 2022⁷.

Introducing universal social protection, including pension schemes for all, allowances for freedom fighters and their families, the Government has made significant progress in fulfilling its commitment to provide universal Old Age, Widowed, Deserted and Destitute Women, and Financially Insolvent Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) allowances. This initiative has been extended logically from the most poverty-prone upazilas (covering 262 upazilas⁸ of total 495) to all by implementing a self-online registration system and adjusting allowances to account for inflation. These three programmes effectively target the most vulnerable groups in society, and universal coverage is essential for those who are deserving of these benefits. It is anticipated that by 2025, the Government will achieve universal social protection coverage across all upazilas of Bangladesh.

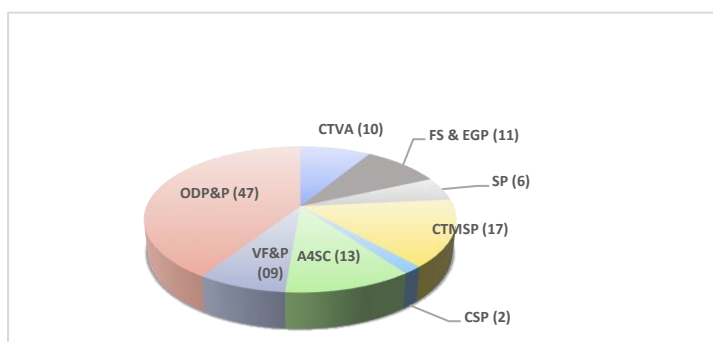


Figure 2: Number of Programmes under Major Categories 2023-24,
Source: MoF 2023

The Old Age Allowance covers 5.8 million beneficiaries across rural and urban areas, which includes about 50 percent of the elderly population of the country. The Allowances for Widow, Deserted and Destitute Women currently benefit 2.57 million women, while 2.9 million insolvent disabled persons receive disability allowances.

As for sustainability concerns, almost 95 percent of the current national social protection programmes are now either government tax-financed or budget support funded. The social protection programmes are primarily centred around food distribution and cash transfers, support for vulnerable,

⁷ The Household Income Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2022 shows that nearly 38 percent people received at least one social protection benefits from the Government, which was close to 28 percent. This means that in 2016 more than one person received social protection benefits when poverty rate was above 24 percent, which at present, two in five received social protection benefits, when poverty rate reduced close to 19 percent.

⁸ At present, more than half (53%) upazila (total number 495) are under universal coverage of social protection.

distressed, and homeless people to cope with covariate and endemic shocks across the life cycle. The Finance Division modified the national social protection budget allocation by categories by implementing ministries. Hence, the social protection budget distribution is shown in eight categories⁹. Figure 2 shows the distribution of 115 social protection programmes under the major categories⁹. Cash and material transfers, food security, employment generation and livelihood, stipend programmes including interest-free microcredit programmes altogether constituted 46 programmes addressing lifecycle-based programmes, while 13 programmes target special communities, and nine programmes specifically address shocks. In the development part, the ongoing development projects and programmes mainly address infrastructure development-related projects and programmes, such as Ashroyan 2 and other infrastructure development projects, school feeding programmes, and cash transfer modernization, etc.

While Bangladesh is advancing towards an aging society, the government is increasingly ramping up social protection support for the old-age population. Importantly, the government currently emphasizes social protection as a basic human right enshrined in the country's constitution. Accordingly, the government has made a commitment to bring the country's old-age population under universal social protection coverage by 2025. Therefore, the government allocated the highest budget of BDT 4205.96 crore, equivalent to USD four billion, in favour of OAA, BDT 2978.71 crore, or close to USD three billion for financially insolvent disabled allowance, followed by BDT 1711.40 or close to USD two billion for widows, deserted, and destitute women, and a comparatively low allocation for the mother and child benefit programme with an amount of BDT 1294.42 crore, equivalent to USD about USD one billion.

Social protection for disability has shifted from a charity or mercy-based focus to that of human rights. Social empowerment of disabled people is one of the main objectives of the social protection system in many countries, including Bangladesh. Bangladesh has enacted the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013, to ensure the social rights of persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Welfare aims to create a monitoring system for the development of children with disabilities and to consolidate complementary programmes for vocational education, enterprise support, and anti-discrimination in the job market.

Table 1 shows the number of beneficiaries and budget allocation for social protection programmes for Persons with Disabilities in Bangladesh. Currently, more than three million PwDs receive a monthly disability allowance at a rate of Tk 800. The coverage has increased significantly over the last few years, and some special disability schemes include the Institute for Autistic and Blind Children, Socially Disabled Adolescent Girls, and promotional services of opportunities for girls with disabilities. The NSSS stipulates that the disability allowance should be reformed in line with the spirit of lifecycle-based social security frameworks.

Table 1: Programmes for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) Fiscal Year 2023-24

Programme	Beneficiaries (in million)	Budget (in crore BDT)
Allowances for the Financially insolvent disabled	2.9	2978.71

⁹ CTVA (Cash Transfer Various Allowances); FSEGP (Food Security and Employment Generation Programmes); SP (Stipend Programmes); CTMSP (Cash or Transfer of Materials Special Programmes); CSP (Credit Support Programmes); ASC (Assistance for Special Communities); VFP (Various Funds and Programmes); ODP&P (Ongoing Development {Projects or Programmes}).

Programme	Beneficiaries (in million)	Budget (in crore BDT)
Stipend for disabled students	0.1	112.74
Grants for the schools for the disabled	0.12	42.0
Fund for the welfare of acid burnt women and disabled	0.02	7.12
Trust for the protection of the persons with neurodevelopmental disabilities	0.315	36.08
Welfare trust for physical disabilities	0.09	20.0
Service and assistance centre for disabled	1.2	76.14

Paucity of reliable data make difficult estimating the real percentage of people living in poverty. During the pandemic period, there had been wide speculation that the number of poor has gone up since mid-2020, and emerging of new poor, particularly in urban areas. In contrast, the Household Income Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2022 – due was in 2021¹⁰ because of COVID 19 interruption, indicates overall poverty declined from 24.3 percent in 2016 to 18.7 percent in 2022. During this period, the extreme poverty declined from 12.9 percent to 5.6 percent, and urban extreme poverty interestingly came down almost half from 7.6 percent to 3.8 percent. Despite silent denial by low poverty the government undertook the Open Market Sale (OMS) addressing the urban poor and new poor, where the Food Friendly Programme offers BDT 15 per kilo rice for the rural poor. The GoB's these initiatives are regular interval additional tax-financed subsidy-based social assistance programmes aimed at reducing the social and economic vulnerabilities of the poor families.

The key ministries agreed on pilot the social Insurance. The ILO, ADB, GIZ and EU have been working on labour garment unemployment labours, and workplace injury-related insurance, while the SSPS Programme of UNDP under DFAT fund supporting all stakeholders with advisory services, and has been concentrating on the research work, suitable models' selection, advocacy to policy and dialogues to build the national consensus on developing the National Social Insurance Scheme (NSIS) for Bangladesh. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has been piloting the maternity-related insurance in selected urban settings in Dhaka Metropolitan. To test the models of universal and correct targeting approaches will follow the two-prone approaches. The national level technological solution will deal the different registers and noble data has been pronouncing more now-a-days, while piloting at the rural sites, a test on single registry MIS will be conducted in small areas linked with the programme M&E dashboard of social protection programmes.

¹⁰ COVID 19 interruption forced the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics delay the survey initiation process.

3. Progress: Social Protection System Strengthening

This Section will investigate the Key activities and result in 2023.

Outcome – 1: Establish systems of universal pension, entitlements for persons with disabilities, social insurance, and shock-responsive schemes, in line with GoB commitment to human rights and the rights to social protection		
Indicators	Target	SSPS Programme Contribution in Progress
By 2025, the Government has significantly increased social security coverage of old age persons and persons with disability by adopting a universal approach	Old Age Allowance (OAA) coverage increased by 20% from baseline. Coverage of persons with disabilities increased by 20% from baseline.	The number of OAA coverage increased from 4.4 million in 2019 to 5.8 million ¹¹ in 2023, which indicates 32 percent increased of coverage. The number of coverages of PwDs increased from 1.8 million in 2019 to 2.9 million ¹² in 2023, which indicates 60 percent increased coverage from the baseline.
By 2025, Government has adopted gender and disability inclusive NSIS	Draft NSIS policy is ready for review by NSSS M&E/Sub-Committee (line ministries) and CMC consideration	NSIS is the key reform area of the NSSS Action Plan, Phase – II approved by the CMC and Prime Minister. In developing the NSIS, couple of studies were conducted: 1) Social Insurance Framework for Bangladesh; and 2) Review of the NSIS Framework and Towards a Feasible Model for Bangladesh. The National Parliament of Bangladesh adopted a bill on Universal Pension, and the GoB has introduced Universal Private Pension for all based on the study findings in 2023. The Universal pension introduced four schemes out of six. Besides, the Bancassurance (The banking sector's engagement in social insurance and the public pension system) on a limited scale was approved.
By 2025, the NSSS 2026+ adopted a gender and disability responsive universal social security approach	CMC Sub-committee approves the NSSS 2026+ formulation roadmap and overseeing its implementation	A road Map 2026+ discussion paper presented in a policy consultative dialogue. The Cabinet Secretary approved the proceeding of the dialogue in October 2022. The next generation NSSS 2026+ paper presented in the DPs LCG forum, and the SSPS Programme's PIC and PSC also discussed the issue of developing the next generation NSSS 2026+.

Key Activities and Results

The national social protection budget showed that the Old Age Allowance (OAA) was awarded the highest allocation¹³ followed by the Programme Allowance for Financially Insolvent PwDs. The continuous and increased allocation indicates that the government has been working to protect the rights of the elderly by implementing long-term and long-lasting programmes. The allowances have been extended to all eligible senior citizens and widows in 262 upazilas in FY2023-24 at the monthly rate of BDT 600, which is a 100 increment after being adjusted with the current rate of inflation. The SSPS programme collaborated with the ADB Manila office and shared the idea of Mid-term Review (MTR) findings

¹¹ Social safety net budget 2023, Ministry of Finance

¹² Ditto

¹³ This highest allocation excluded the Pension for Retired Government Employees and their Families, and Honorarium for Heroic Freedom Fighters.

and the plan for OAA Universalism, which was very much in line with the MoSW's scheduled plan for universal OAA by 2025, and the ministry started augmenting the process. In the fiscal year 2023-24, Old age allowances are being supplied on a larger scale to defend the rights of the poor elderly, with priority given to elderly women when it comes to widows and deserted and destitute women's allowances, increased from BDT 500 to 550 with the provision of universalism in 262 upazilas, and allowances are being provided to 2.9 million disabled persons at the monthly rate increased from BDT 700 to 850.

The Universal Pension Management Bill, 2022, was placed in the National Parliament by the Finance Minister on August 29 and passed on January 25th, 2023. The approved universal pension bill is for all Bangladeshi nationals aged from 18 to 50 years who are eligible for accessing the pension schemes. Expatriate Bangladeshis are also eligible to access the benefits. The Governing Body of the National Pension Authority is composed of 16 members. The Finance Minister serves as the chairman supported by the Executive Chairman of the National Pension Authority as the Member-Secretary. The other members are from the Bangladesh Bank, Finance Division (FD), Financial Institutions Division (FID), National Board of Revenue (NBR), Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW), Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE), Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), Posts and Telecommunications Division (PTD), Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Bangladesh Security and Exchange Commission (BSEC), Bangladesh Federation Chambers of Commerce and Industries (BFCCI), Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF), Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries (BWCCI).

3.1 Progress: Output 1

Output – 1: By 2024, 4 policy proposals (OAA, Persons with Disabilities, NSIS, COVID-19) and draft NSSS 2026+ tabled for Govt. approval		
Indicators	Target	SSPS Programme Contribution in Progress
By 2024, Govt. has gender responsive universal old age and persons with disability policy proposals.	A framework outlining suitable model and policy and financial options for the proposal undertaken by MoSW.	NSSS M&E Committee approved the concept notes on OAA and PwDs, research needs, and M&E Dashboard. The SSPS Programme introduced the M&E web-based dashboard feature in the GoB website ¹⁴ . The website reshaped with new design and features. Further consultation in progress with the BBS of Statistics and Informatics Division.
By 2024, existence of gender and disability responsive National Social Insurance Scheme (NSIS) proposal.	Technical support to MoLE and MoF to start developing the draft policy proposal.	NSSS Action plan phase 2 well captured NSIS. MOLE in collaboration with ILO, GIZ and EU collaborating to implement EIS. MOH implementing a pilot on Maternal Insurance. ILO-UNDP will go for joint advocacy dialogues with the GoB for consensus building on NSIS by 2024.
Existence of COVID-19 social protection policy responses focusing on disabled individuals and marginalized groups including	Shock-responsive (COVID-19) specific social protection strategy and Urban Social Protection Delivery Model and Climate	Draft Adaptive social protection guidelines and ToR for Adaptive Social Protection Committee shared for comments from the ministries in the CMC meeting in December 2023.

¹⁴ mne.socialprotection.gov.bd

Output – 1: By 2024, 4 policy proposals (OAA, Persons with Disabilities, NSIS, COVID-19) and draft NSSS 2026+ tabled for Govt. approval		
urban poor, and climate change responsive social protection.	Adaptive Social Protection proposal completed.	Draft report addressing the climate-induced shock-responsive situation under the title of “A Model of Urban Social Protection in Bangladesh” is under review process for dialogue. A shock-responsive social protection framework for Bangladesh is underway, while another sudden shock-related study on “Climate-induced Shock-Responsive Disaster Resilience Mapping for Adaptive Social Protection Programming for At-risk Population in the Sylhet Division of Bangladesh.”

Key Activities and Results

In preparing the NSSS, the government, for the first time, introduced the Universal Pension system in the private sector in Bangladesh. This was a political commitment of the current government to bring the old-age population into a sustainable social protection system ensuring their old-age security. In establishing the universal pension, the government introduced four schemes out of six. The remaining two schemes are corporate sector pension and public pension, which may require more political consensus before implementation.

The four schemes currently available are: Somota¹⁵, Suraksha¹⁶, Pragati¹⁷, and Probash¹⁸. The government is also seriously considering two additional universal pension schemes, one for corporate and independent self-ruled agencies under the scheme 'Prottoy', and finally, a pension for government employees. The National Pension Authority has been established, and an Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Finance leads the Chairperson of the Pension Authority under a makeshift arrangement at the moment.

To build a national consensus, based on recommendations of the Central Management Committee (CMC), the SSPS Programme shared the key findings of an earlier conducted social insurance study¹⁹ with the key ministries. Government officials recommended sharing the key findings on a larger platform to build a national consensus before developing the NSIS. The SSPS Programme provided advisory support to the ILO, GIZ, and DPs LCG and CMC on social protection.

Advisory support has also been provided in media dialogues, joint advocacy, and capacity-building programmes with ILO engaging the MoLE and labour organizations and other stakeholders on injury insurance.

According to the new Action Plan, the new/revised framework for NSIS is expected to be completed by June 2023, while one branch of the NSIS – the unemployment insurance scheme – is supposed to be ready for piloting by July 2024 and rolled out nationally by July 2025. Before making further progress, the NSIS requires a careful review to ensure it meets International Social Security Standards and avoids criticism.

¹⁵ Somota (Equal) is for poor people, where the Government will contribute a premium of BDT 500 per month.

¹⁶ Sorokkha (Protection) is for Labourers in the informal sector, where the clients will pay at least a premium of BDT 1,000 per month with no contribution from the Government.

¹⁷ Progati (Progress) is for private employees, where the client will pay at least a premium of BDT 2,000 per month with no contribution from the Government.

¹⁸ Probash (Expatriates) is for Non-resident Bangladeshis living abroad, where the client will pay the premium in foreign currency in different slots equivalent to BDT 5,000, 7,500, and 10,000, with no contribution from the Government.

¹⁹ Reviewing the NSIS Framework and Towards A Feasible Model for Bangladesh.

Shock-responsive social protection models have become increasingly important in urban settings, particularly in developing countries where vulnerable populations are exposed to a range of shocks, including natural disasters and economic crises. This paper focuses on the case of Bangladesh, where the urban poor are particularly vulnerable to shocks due to their lack of resources and limited access to social protection schemes. The study aims to explore the existing social protection models in urban settings of Bangladesh implemented by different agencies, both the government and NGOs, programmes' limitations, and how those programmes could be more responsive to any kind of shocks. This paper also outlines a model for shock-responsive urban poor so that they may access benefits when they need assistance under certain circumstances. The study took evidence from the World Food Programme's (WFP) slum interventions and UNDP's National Urban Poverty Reduction Programme (NUPRP) urban interventions in Dhaka.

The Department of Disaster Science and Climate Resilience of the University of Dhaka conducted a study on Climate-induced Shock Responsive Disaster Resilience Mapping for Adaptive Social Protection Programming of the at-risk Population in the Sylhet Division of Bangladesh for the SSPS Programme²⁰. The expected result of the partnership is:

- Inference on the possible repeatable frequency of shocks in the region in the future and determine possible climate-induced disaster-related shock-responsive local resilience-focused social protection model(s)/programming to protect the people in disaster periods.
- Develop an adaptive social protection programming to integrate into the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) 2026 in support of addressing Bangladesh graduation towards a Middle-Income Country (MIC) and to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 2, 5, 8, 10, and 13, and the vision 2041 of Bangladesh.
- Strengthening the delivery of protection programmes through a Single Registry is one of the key activities to bring synergistic change in Bangladesh's social protection system.



The SSPS Programme provided technical support in mapping out the broader framework of designing the social protection single registry MIS. Three Secretaries belonging to the SID, ICT Division, and Cabinet Division made tripartite efforts to design a road-map in a consultative workshop. The road-map was subsequently presented for policy approval at CMC. The CMC, in its last meeting, guided SID in detailing the cost-

implicated implementation roadmap.

3.2 Progress: Output 2

Output – 2: Research and pilot-generated evidence available to and utilized by policymakers and other stakeholders		
Indicators	Target	SSPS Programme Contribution in Progress
Incorporation of research recommendations into social protection policy (PwDs accessing social protection, targeting and selection, examination of options for expanding the fiscal space for universal allowances for old age, persons with disabilities, and social insurance, NID documentation)	4 research papers finalized (Persons with Disabilities accessing social protection, targeting and selection, examination of options for expanding the fiscal space for universal allowances for old age, persons with disabilities, and social insurance, NID documentation)	The pilot Design of OAA and PwD are completed. The implementation of a pilot in the Government localization areas is in the process of finalization. The pilot will test the single registry, programme M&E, correct targeting and model testing. Preliminary consensus was built with the Statistics and Informatics Division (SID) on analysing the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) data for social protection issues including impact

²⁰ Climate-induced Shock Responsive Disaster Resilience Mapping for Adaptive Social Protection Programming of the at-Risk Population in the Sylhet Division of Bangladesh (Draft) | Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme.

Output – 2: Research and pilot-generated evidence available to and utilized by policymakers and other stakeholders		
		assessment, which will build the case for NSSS 2026+. The SSPS Programme provided advisory support to the ILO, GIZ, and DPs LCG and CMC on social protection. Advisory support has also been provided in media dialogues, joint advocacy, and capacity-building programmes with ILO engaging the MoLE and Labour Organizations and other stakeholders on injury insurance.
Availability, incorporation into policy, and dissemination of case studies for developing an evidence base for universal allowances for old age and persons with disability social protection policies in Bangladesh.	CMC sub-committee approves pilot plan and implementation plans.	The M&E sub-committee approves the pilot design. The analytical models would be Universal vs targeted approaches with interventions and without interventions to test correct targeting, minimize inclusion errors and double dipping, and impact between universal and targeted approaches.

Key Activities and Results

Follow-up on the workshop results on Social Security Research Topics: a couple of workshops were organized with the Statistics and Informatics Division (SID) in August 2023. The SSPS Programme identified the Bureau of Statistics (BBS) of the Statistics and Informatics Division (SID) as the potential agency for conducting social protection research works and pilot design²¹ for correct targeting, addressing double dipping, and identifying the scope of harmonization and consolidation of social protection programmes. This is one of the long-standing reform issues before developing the next generation of social protection. The Poverty and Livelihood, Sample Vital Statistics, Labour, and Census Wings generate all the important statistics of Bangladesh. The BBS generates primary data used for research and national policy building. The workshop with the BBS identified the potential datasets for social protection research and supported the pilot study to build the case of statistics and economic models. This would ultimately help build the economic framework of the next generation of the NSSS. The pilot will use census and SVRS data and systems to address the right targeting, compare universal and targeted methods, assess the impact on poverty reduction, adopt social protection programme implementation policies, identify inclusion and exclusion errors based on randomized control trials, and plan the way forward to avoid errors. It will also test the local-level programme M&E and Single Registry MIS. The local-level Single Registry MIS will provide evidence for building a national-level Single Registry MIS, with results linked to the SDG dashboard at BBS and the M&E web-based dashboard introduced at the Cabinet Division website. Three policy-level discussions were held related to SDG localization pilot initiatives in selected areas where social protection issues are important parameters for successful SDG localization. The PMO, SID, a2i, ICTD, concerned ministries including the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission, and the private sector, especially start-up companies, attended these workshops. Initial consensus was built that the pilot will be implemented in two different locations considering the proximity of shocks related to climate and floods. The workshop also agreed that Sample Vital Statistics and Population and Housing Census data could build the case for a Single Registry vis-à-vis the National Population Register, incorporating

²¹ The sample size can be calculated using standard power analysis formulas, such as the following:

$$n = (Z_{\alpha/2} + Z_{\beta})^2 * (\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2) / (\mu_1 - \mu_2)^2$$

where: n is the required sample size per group (pilot and control); $Z_{\alpha/2}$ is the critical value corresponding to the desired significance level (e.g., 1.96 for a 5% significance level); Z_{β} is the critical value corresponding to the desired statistical power (e.g., 0.84 for 80% power); σ_1 and σ_2 are the standard deviations of the outcome variable in the pilot and control groups, respectively. μ_1 and μ_2 are the means of the outcome variable in the pilot and control groups, respectively (...)

extended socioeconomic indicators apart from demographic indicators, and interval-based social protection data collection in selected Union Parishads in SDG Localization districts or upazilas. The NSSS M&E Dashboard is an important milestone for reform in Bangladesh's social protection initiated by the SSPS Programme. The M&E Dashboard for reform is available on the website. In response to growing demand from policy and Development Partners, the SSPS Programme introduced a separate feature of the programme dashboard in the system. The limitation of the social protection programme dashboard is accessing real-time beneficiary and cash transfer data from ministries in the system. These issues were discussed at length in an inter-ministerial workshop. The workshop identified the current online social protection payment system available at the Finance Division using social registries developed by social protection programme implementing ministries through the iBASS+ system. The interoperability of sharing data from these social registries, access to passwords, website system security, and the capacity of technical personnel in key ministries are major impediments to making real-time data available in the dashboard. It was recommended to arrange a consultative dialogue including the development of a Single Registry MIS implementation roadmap, the development of a platform, and capacity building of concerned officials at both national and sub-national levels. The National Population Register (NPR) as an alternate option for a single registry MIS has been widely discussed at the policy level. This issue was discussed in the Secretary Committee meeting at the Cabinet Division. The Cabinet Division agreed with the BBS proposed NPR and single registry pilot in selected areas.

The current national social protection strategy, widely known as NSSS, is a 10-year-long strategy. Policy, institution, and programme reforms are not easy tasks to achieve the expected results, as assumed during the development of the strategy. Despite many exemplary milestones achieved under the guidance of NSSS, a few crucial milestones are still under discussion. Meanwhile, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) aims to bring transformative change in the socioeconomic arena by blending technological solutions, which they refer to as moving from digitization to a SMART Bangladesh²². Based on national-level policy discussions at CMC and other platforms, and the guidance from the Cabinet Secretary and others, the following outline titled "Deliberation on the Next Generation of the NSSS 2026+" was developed and shared in policy and bilateral level discussions.

Deliberation on Next-Generation the NSSS 2026+

The changing role of the State in social policy

- "Welfare State" refers to the classical notion of publicly provided welfare services. The modern understanding of the "Welfare Mix" involves an interplay of different institutions within the welfare system. These institutions include those producing welfare or citizens, families, community and charitable networks, market or commercial providers, and the state. The state plays a central role in national social construction, gender issues, marginalized populations, environmental concerns such as climate change adaptation and mitigation, innovation, compliance, technology engagement, relocation, migration, and development.

The political economy of welfare and SMART Bangladesh

- Middle-income country by 2026, attaining SDGs 2030 and Vision 2041.

²² The four key pillars of SMART Bangladesh: SMART Citizen: empowering citizens with digital literacy, access to e-services, and participation in a digital society. SMART Government: transforming government services into efficient, transparent, and citizen-centric digital platforms. SMART Society: fostering a society that embraces innovation, digital solutions, and ethical use of technology for social good. SMART Economy: promoting a knowledge-based, innovation-driven economy with robust digital infrastructure and global competitiveness.

- A social protection framework revisits: life cycle-based, gender and marginalized inclusive, climate and shocks responsive, transforming safety net, security to protection focused on social contract (constitutional provision clause 15 and 15(d)).
- The decision of how widely coverage is spread, or the dividing lines between the social groups included or excluded, is often the result of political and economic power relations within given societies.
- Fiscal space: tax-GDP ratio, two economic lifelines and coming/expected global recession, budget support and private sector, development partners' engagement.
- The SMART Bangladesh concept encompasses a wide-ranging vision for Bangladesh's future, aiming to transform the country into a technologically advanced, inclusive, and sustainable society by 2041. It builds upon the foundation laid by the previous "Digital Bangladesh" initiative and expands its scope to encompass various aspects of life. The four key pillars of SMART Bangladesh:
 - SMART Citizen: empowering citizens with digital literacy, access to e-services, and participation in a digital society.
 - SMART Government: transforming government services into efficient, transparent, and citizen-centric digital platforms.
 - SMART Society: fostering a society that embraces innovation, digital solutions, and ethical use of technology for social good.
 - SMART Economy: promoting a knowledge-based, innovation-driven economy with robust digital infrastructure and global competitiveness.
- Impact and significance:
 - Reduce poverty and inequality: by creating new economic opportunities and improving access to essential services,
 - Improve citizen engagement: through enhanced transparency and participation in government processes.
 - Promote sustainable development: by utilizing technology for efficient resource management and environmental protection.
 - Enhance global competitiveness: by building a robust knowledge-based economy.

The rights-based approach and the social protection floors across the life cycle

- The human rights principles of equality, participation, and access **dictate** that essential goods, services, and care **should be** available in sufficient quantity, accessible, affordable to everyone without discrimination, and of a quality that **meets** individual **needs**.

- The social protection floor **outlines** available options and recommendations in the so-called staircase approach, where basic social protection and healthcare services should be **accessible** to the entire population **regardless** of their ability to pay. **This fundamental** protection requires significant vertical distribution, organized by the state to provide people with resilience to shocks and crises. Higher levels of protection can be **achieved** through mandatory social insurance **for** the employed or other contributory protection schemes. Social security/insurance **is** based on contributions (solidarity) **from the** government, employers, workers, and other stakeholders. **Examples include** employment injury protection, unemployment insurance, maternity protection, old age pension, and the National Social Insurance Scheme (NSIS).
- Social assistance **is** non-contributory **and** based on government budget allocation. **Examples include** social pension, food assistance, access to free health **care**, disaster relief, **among** others.
- Active labour market policies are supported by the government through relevant institutions, **such as** wages, job protection, skills development, livelihoods, enterprise development, **automation**, Artificial Intelligence, **and the** 4th Industrial Revolution.
- **Leave No One Behind (LNOB)** and inclusive social protection **involve climate-resilient, shock-responsive, gender-sensitive, inclusive support for persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, urban and hard-to-reach populations** (remote areas), and people and livelihoods in **coastal** areas.

Institutional arrangements

- The capacity of states and societies to balance inequalities, empower through **creating** adequate employment opportunities, and offer fair jobs with the provision of social security, provide and ensure distribution of the right quantity and quality of social services, and enable institutions compatible **with** the need, and accordingly design policy instruments.
- National Integrity Strategy (NIS), Grievance Redress System (GRS), G2P e-payment of social transfers, and national social development plan include gender, ethnic minority, and people living in hard-to-reach areas under the purview of Leave No One Behind.
- Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for reform and programme tracking.
- Single register to social register and fair distribution based on entitlements (social register from National Household Database, population register and geocode by population and housing census, vaccination register, NID, G2P mfs data, micro-credit, insurance, and microinsurance MIS, other databases) MIS.

Public sector employment

- Social welfare systems are the result and reflection of social power relations. They are not technical or neutral solutions to social problems, but politically shaped mechanisms of resource allocation that determine who **pays** for whom and which social groups are included in or excluded from social benefits.
- **The** public employment guarantee scheme establishes **a** strong sense of entitlement, **which** may need to be phased out gradually. Special programs **should be implemented** to increase private sector employment among the national population.

Public social services

- Pandemic and health care, in particular immunization, maternity care, skilled birth services, and insurance
- Multi-dimensional poverty and asset distribution linked to livelihood programs, WASH, nutrition, Violence Against Women, Disserted/widowed, and income generation by wealth quintile, PwDs, and ethnic minorities.
- Hearing the citizens' grievances and taking necessary mitigation measures using simple complaint mechanisms.
- Existing social services available to the citizens may be unequal. The main concern is equity in accessing public and private services for those unable to pay.

The private sector: Commercial Provision of Social Services and Corporate Philanthropy

- What can the private sector offer in a welfare mix: private insurance, such as health insurance, enhances access to social services, provides social protection, minimizes medical costs out of pocket, reduces vulnerability, and prevents falling into the poverty trap.
- The private sector is not only responsible for profit-making but is also expected to take on legal, ethical, and philanthropic tasks. This includes ensuring fair wages, contributing to community development through philanthropic and charitable activities, and environmental protection.

Civil Society and its Role in the Provision of Social Services

- Civil Society Organizations (CBOs) have a long tradition of organizing charitable social services for the people. Before the building of modern nation-states, social services were mainly provided by civil society: mosques had an essential role in providing education by teaching the Holy Quran, basic literacy and education, other institutions like schools, hospitals, orphanages, food, zakat, waqf and sadaqah (charitable donations) that promoted community-driven initiatives for social protection through religious endowments.
- Registered NGOs are non-profit organizations that play the supplementary role of providing social services primarily in every corner of society with technical support from the public and international development partners.
- NGOs are often seen as best suited to reaching marginalized groups. Among their other charitable goals, the mission of many NGOs is to help those not reached by other services. Many NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, and OPDs are formed at the grass-roots level to meet the needs of particular groups and attempt to reach the unreached groups, i.e., Persons with Disabilities.

Welfare organizations beyond the state

- What are the alternative institutions to help poorer parts of the population cope with risks, provide their children with quality education and care for their health, and contribute to the national human capital? What are the particular strengths or advantages the government may wish to harness through partnerships that formally integrate them into the welfare system and broaden access and coverage?

4. Progress: Governance System Strengthened

Outcome – 2: Governance systems strengthened and made inclusive universal lifecycle-based social security and commitment to gender equality is demonstrated through incorporation into strategic national planning		
Indicators	Target	SSPS Programme Contribution in Progress
Dedicated NSSS CMC sub-committee activated with fit for purpose composition and scope for efficient implementation of reform plans.	Integration of social protection reforms plans in the Annual Performance Agreement (APA) ²³ .	Consultation dialogue was held with 39 ministries and five thematic clusters on NSSS Action Plan implementation monitoring exercise. A draft report was shared with CMC members for their comments. The key findings will be shared in the Bangladesh Social Security Conference 2024. The APA Committee in the Cabinet Division inquired the performance of NSSS Action Plan activities of the respective ministries. The Committee also provided guidance on proper reflection of NSSS Action Plan activities in the APA. Provided guidance and advisory support in CODI exercise workshop helping the EU for meeting the reporting and budget support. Support provided in organising the LCG Governance and Social Protection meeting provided guidance and advisory support ensured better engagement of GoB and DPs in social protection for accountability.
Percentage of Old Age Allowance and Persons with Disability Allowance expenditure against GDP	Draft NSIS policy is ready for review by NSSS M&E/Sub-Committee (line ministries) and CMC consideration	Universal Pension Scheme introduced successfully in the Government system. Out of six, four are functional from 2023. The SSPS Programme conducted study was the basis of initiating the social insurance and universal pension in the GoB's social protection system. NSIS is the key reform area of the NSSS Action Plan, Phase – II was discussed in the CMC several times.
By 2025, NSSS 2026+ adopted a gender inclusive and disability responsive universal social security approach	OAA: 10% increase from 2019 Persons with Disabilities: 30% increase from 2019. Social protection gender strategy inclusive national budget, 9th five-year plan, and NSSS 2026+	The number of OAA coverage increased from 4.4 million in 2019 to 5.8 million in 2023, which indicates 41 percent increased of coverage. The number of coverages of PwDs increased from 1.8 million in 2019 to 2.9 million in 2023, which indicates coverage increased more than double from the baseline. The national budget 2023-24 explained the gender budget.

²³ The Government of Bangladesh has introduced Annual Performance Agreement (APA) across the public sectors to establish a culture of enhanced productivity and accountability. The APA is based on the broader framework of Management by Objective (MBO) model of results-based performance management system. The APA has a mechanism of identifying the low performing sectors and programmes which are incompatible with national goals. Such poorly performing programmes will either be reformed for achieving the optimal output and impacts or will be replaced by better ones or will be simply discontinued.

Outcome – 2: Governance systems strengthened and made inclusive universal lifecycle-based social security and commitment to gender equality is demonstrated through incorporation into strategic national planning		
Indicators	Target	SSPS Programme Contribution in Progress
		Revisit the NSSS gender strategy and plan in 2024 will create enabling environment for the GoB inclusion in the 9 th five-year plan and NSSS 2026+

Key Activities and Results

The SSPS Programme assisted the Cabinet Division in monitoring the ministry's implementation progress on the NSSS Action Plan, Phase II. The monitoring results indicated that the overall efficiency of social protection programmes increased in the cash assistance programmes while introducing the Government-to-Person (G2P) e-payment system. Using mobile financial services, 24 cash transfer programmes efficiently covered more than 70 percent of the population under cash-based programmes, apart from the Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest (EGPP)²⁴. The e-cash transfer programme has multiple impacts: it cuts down corruption, eradicates ghost beneficiaries, makes cost-effective cash transfers in mobile financial accounts, which is part of the financial inclusion of the poor, and is timesaving. After making significant progress on the payment aspect, the government is now focusing on targeting the most deserving beneficiaries, which is a challenge that needs to be resolved urgently for better utilisation of public resources.

The SSPS Programme assisted the NSSS Action Plan Implementation Monitoring Committee and provided advisory guidance to the MoSW for ensuring the number of beneficiaries and budget increment per year according to the NSSS guidance and the GoB's commitment towards universalism by 2025. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) took guidance from the SSPS Programme for designing their budgetary support to the GoB in OAA, Widow Allowance, and showed growing interest in social insurance.

The Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI)²⁵ for the evaluation of Bangladesh's social protection programmes was one of the options to measure the progress in social protection reform under the purview of NSSS. The SSPS Programme provided technical assistance along with the European Union (EU) supported international consultant in conducting the CODI exercise with the officials involved in Bangladesh social protection programming. The key results of the CODI exercise of 2023 revealed that overall, Bangladesh's social protection system is performing well. The NSSS-based reform progress, implemented through the two NSSS Action Plans, has been and continues to contribute to programmatic and operational reforms. Across all 47 indicators, the highest score is 4.0 while the lowest score is 2.2. The average score is 3.4. Table 2 below shows the detailed summary of CODI results.

Table 2: Summary Scores of CODI indicators, 2023

Performance Criteria (indicator number)	Indicator Scores						Average
1) Inclusiveness (1-5)	3.4	3.7	2.9	3.0	3.0	-	3.2
2) Adequacy (6-11)	2.9	3.1	3.2	3.1	3.3	3.6	3.2
3) Appropriateness (12-16)	3.9	3.9	3.2	3.5	3.2	-	3.5

²⁴ The World Bank-assisted EGPP remains with the manual direct cash transfer system.

²⁵ The CODI assesses the social protection system based on 10 performance criteria: 1) Inclusiveness; 2) Adequacy; 3) Appropriateness; 4) Respect for rights and dignity; 5) Governance and institutional capacity; 6) Financial and fiscal sustainability; 7) Coherence and integration; 8) Reponsiveness; 9) Cost-effectiveness; and 10) Incentive compatibility. across the performance criteria, a total of 47 indicators were rated on a scale of 1 (low) to 4 (high). To inform scoring, every indicator has a qualitative narrative connected to each score. For each indicator, analyses were developed informed by secondary and primary data, including the government-led technical workshop. The SSPS Programme team along with DFAT Dhaka official provided advisory support and was instrumental in engaging the government in this important exercise.

4) Respect for Rights and Dignity (17-26)	3.4	3.2	3.6	3.0	-	-	3.3
5) Governance and Institutional Capacity (21-26)	3.7	4.0	3.1	3.4	2.9	3.5	3.4
6) Financial and Fiscal Sustainability (27-32)	3.7	3.4	4.0	3.7	3.9	-	3.8
7) Coherence and Integration (33-42)	3.1	3.8	3.1	3.7	4.0	-	3.5
8) Responsiveness (38-42)	3.9	3.0	3.1	3.6	3.9	-	3.5
9) Cost-effectiveness (43)	3.9	-	-	-	-	-	3.9
10) Incentive Compatibility (44-47)	3.0	3.9	2.9	2.2	-	-	3.0
1 (low)							4 (high)

The SSPS Programme provided active support in conducting the LCG, Governance, and Social Protection²⁶ at regular intervals. The LCG met three times in 2023. The major discussed issues were: preparation of the action plan for the Working Group (WG); National Social Insurance Schemes (NSIS) as embedded in the NSSS and its action plan; progress of the enactment and institutionalization of private pension; a brief overview of social protection in Bangladesh; M&E dashboard of social protection; and IMF conditionalities on social protection spending. Against these agendas, the LCG made some key recommendations, and these were:

- The efforts for coordination and information exchange between the GoB and the DPs will be further enhanced to ensure the effective implementation of social protection initiatives. The Cabinet Division convened workshops to review the report on the framework study for the NSIS to finalize a social insurance model. Additionally, it is recommended to explore the possibility of a hybrid model that combines elements from the Beveridge and Bismarck models.
- The DPs are requested to extend their support in terms of raising awareness and providing inputs and suggestions for the social insurance model to be incorporated in the second phase of the NSSS.
Organizations with expertise in social insurance, such as CPD, should be invited to participate in meetings and seminars focused on social insurance and facilitate ongoing discussions within the social insurance cluster.
- The relevant ministries, especially MoLE, FID, and FD, will take measures to raise awareness and understanding of social insurance among the general population through robust awareness campaigns.
An assessment-based national dialogue for social insurance may be initiated by the GoB with technical support from the ILO.
- The MoLE would create a comprehensive database to accurately capture information about formal workers for effective social protection measures.
- The EU was requested to draft the progress report of the LCG Working Group (WG) and subsequently send it to the Cabinet Division for review and forward to the ERD.
- The Action Plan of the WG would be formulated with specific responsibilities: the EU was requested to collaborate with the other representatives of the DPs and develop an action plan for the WG within a timeframe; the draft action plan of the WG from the EU, the Cabinet Division would conduct a comprehensive review and finalize the plan accordingly and would be forwarded to the LCG Secretariat at ERD; and the submitted action plan needs retrospective approval during

²⁶ LCG, Governance and Social Protection is the Cabinet Division led Local Consultative Group. This is absolute a committee combination of the GoB and Development Partners (DPs). The Secretary, Coordination and Reforms of the Cabinet Division chair this group, and key leading ministries, and almost all the development partners who deals the Governance, and Social Protection coordination and programming are the members. The group alternatively discussed the governance and social protection key issues on regular basis in the meeting. At present, the European Union played the Co-chair role.

the upcoming LCG WG meeting. If any changes are suggested during the meeting, a revised action plan would be prepared and subsequently would be re-sent to the ERD.

On the other hand, the SSPS Programme played the main contributory role in presenting reform issues, in particular NSSS M&E web-based dashboard, single registry MIS, and a concept paper on deliberation of the next-generation NSSS and provided advisory support, including helping the partner agencies to make decisions on the implementation of their respective programmes and activities in a coordinated manner.

4.1 Progress Output 3

Output – 3: Gender-responsive strategy including policy advice and accountability tools are made available to the line ministries to demonstrate their accountability for social protection reforms		
Indicators	Target	SSPS Programme Contribution in Progress
Functional and utilized web-based social protection dashboard for improved monitoring of social protection reforms incorporated in the Annual Performance Agreement (APA).	Dashboard is trialled for 2022 and populated with sex, and age disaggregated data, including M&E Framework data.	The NSSS Reform and Programme M&E web-based Dashboard is on the website. The M&E Dashboard is populated with reform data available in the SSPS Programme website. The social protection programme dashboard is under the process of all parties' agreement on interoperability and data sharing after maintaining data security and privacy compliance. The data analytics provision is kept depending on availability of social protection gender disaggregated data in common system. Discussions continued that the web-based M&E dashboard will also be available in the Ministry of Finance website.
Strengthened key line ministries/divisions (Cabinet Division, GED, MoSW, MoF, MoLE) capacity for gender responsive social protection decision making.	Key line ministry decision-makers have enhanced knowledge of and capability to design and implement gender-responsive social protection policy and social security programmes as a result of targeted capacity building.	The SSPS Programme before NSSS Action Plan implementation monitoring, provided orientation to the key ministries' officials on their respective social protection activities, and reporting system. This was done because of the frequent relocating nature of the Government officials. The SSPS Programme also collaborated with the UNICEF TA Project Support to CMC and organized and attended seven sub-national level consultative dialogues, where orientation on NSSS and its Action Plan was one of the important components. The division, district and sub-district officials attended these consultative workshops. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) of the SSPS Programme decided to develop a tool or analysing system to determine the capacity of the concerned ministries holistically, and accordingly design the capacity building programme, instead of individual capacity building.
Increased knowledge about reform priorities of 5 key line ministries/divisions (Cabinet Division, GED, MoSW, MoF, MoLE) with evidence of support from senior leadership to implement them.	Line ministries are regularly updating reform progress data on dashboard.	Consultative dialogues indicate the technical persons of the concerned ministries involved in social protection cash transfer programme required capacity building on data sharing, updating data, and security and privacy, and other technical aspects of iBAS++.

Key Activities and Results

The objective of the SSPS-developed Web-based NSSS M&E Dashboard is for the GoB to have a fully developed NSSS reform and programme tracking dashboard. The progress of reform tracking through web-based features mirrors the NSSS Action Plans. Users will have the ability to update the status, upload evidence, search reforms by tags and categories, and generate dynamic reports. At the end of the assignment, the GoB will have the ability to populate the dashboard from a baseline starting position, have administrative control, and create user accounts for line ministry personnel.

Additionally, based on the previous phase feasibility study on Single Registry integrated MISs, a master plan will support ministries to initiate the necessary steps for operational readiness from the other databases and to follow up on their actions.

The Cabinet Division, as the coordinating authority for the implementation of the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh, prepared a progress report of the NSSS Action Plan, Phase II²⁷. With support from DFAT from the Government of Australia, and UNDP, the Social Security Policy Support (SSPS)



Programme of the Cabinet Division and the General Economics Division (GED) of the Planning Commission provided technical assistance in conducting a series of consultative dialogues with the 39 ministries and divisions to measure the progress of the implementation of the NSSS Action Plan. The Secretary, Coordination and Reforms of the Cabinet Division led the whole process of

review.

The main objectives of monitoring the progress of activities in the NSSS Action Plan, Phase - II (2021-26) were:

- Evaluate/assess the baseline of the NSSS action plan implementation towards its agreed concrete action plan implementation status to drive forward as a welfare nation.
- Accelerate the capacity building of the social protection stakeholders, particularly of the field-level agencies and departments in the social protection sector in Bangladesh.
- Increase awareness and understanding of the social protection stakeholders on the NSSS and the NSSS Action Plan Phase-II.
- Continue the reform momentum for an effective social protection system that aligns with emerging needs with a focus on gender equality.
- Set further reform agendas, which would mark a significant move towards achieving permanent graduation for middle-income country status, 8th Five-Year Plan (July 2020 – June 2025), SDGs 2030, and Bangladesh as a welfare state by 2041, where all citizens will be guaranteed a minimum level of economic security and well-being.
- Harness and share experiences on implementation, including innovative financing of social protection programmes and promoting the exchange of best practices among national and international partners.

²⁷ Progress Report, 2023 of NSSS Action Plan – II (2021-26) | Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme (socialprotection.gov.bd)

- Initiate discussions around the agencies and institutions for agreed social security reforms at both programmatic and institution levels.

One of the major impediments to augmenting the Bangladesh social protection reform is the frequent relocating of government officials due to the GoB administrative policy. Also, retirement from the government service erodes the historical memories of the ministries involved in reform activities. New officials who join with given responsibilities dealing with social protection reform fall into deep trouble working on the reform. This is because social protection is a complex learning issue, and without proper knowledge and orientation, government officials are unable to communicate or deliver the results properly. These issues were discussed in the reflection workshop. To address these impeding issues, the SSPS Programme took an alternate approach to orient the government officials of the social protection implementation agencies by introducing a succinct knowledge toolkit²⁸ for those who need to understand the social protection issues as well as the NSSS with minimum reading.

During the reporting period, the CMC of Bangladesh Social Protection Programmes led by the Cabinet Secretary met twice. The agenda of these meetings was: national dissemination of the NSSS Action Plan 2021-26; Single registry MIS and status of the National Household Database developed by the BBS; NSSS M&E framework and development of NSSS M&E web-dashboard; activity progresses of the NSSS thematic clusters; appraisal of CODI evaluation; approval for a new committee on adaptive social protection and developing a guideline; and revised schedule of arranging Bangladesh social protection conference.

Based on agenda-based discussions, the CMC took the following major decisions:

The concerned ministries and divisions will immediately coordinate with each other and work on introducing the NSSS Single Registry MIS, and the SID will take necessary measures to develop a detailed roadmap by engaging the Finance Division, ICT Division, and related divisions of the Planning Commission, and the Cabinet Division will take necessary opinions and observations of the concerned ministries on the M&E dashboard;

While selecting the beneficiaries under different social protection schemes implemented by different public agencies, they should include the National Identification (NID) as mandatory, and concerned ministries will send a report to the Cabinet Division that their beneficiary selection is NID enabled;

The concerned ministries should remove the beneficiaries from the list who have graduated and replace them by including new beneficiaries;

The NSSS Action Plan implementation monitoring committee will follow up on the NSSS M&E for social protection programmes, ensure engagement of the thematic clusters for smooth running of the programmes;

The concerned ministries and divisions will make necessary arrangements for the developed NSSS M&E framework to be functional, and the CODI evaluation report was approved for dissemination;

The ministries, divisions, and others will take necessary measures to participate in the proposed Bangladesh social protection conference and knowledge fair, and it could be arranged in April-May 2024;

The Environment, Forestry and Climate Change Ministry will be a member of the Food Security and Disaster Assistance cluster, and the draft adaptive social protection guideline was approved.

²⁸ [Social Protection Toolkit | Social Security Policy Support \(SSPS\) Programme](#)

The representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Land, and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock are now new members of the Social Protection sub-committee. The CMC focal points committee met several times in 2023. They were appraised on several reform issues and provided their decisions on the agenda-based discussions. The focal points were appraised on: the activities that were undertaken for establishing a single registry MIS in Bangladesh; NSSS implementation progress and CODI evaluation status; formation of a sub-committee on the development of shock-responsive adaptive social protection and formulation of a guideline; formation of GO-NGO Coordination Committee to coordinate social security programmes implemented through NGOs; and Bangladesh social protection conference and knowledge fair²⁹.

The SSPS Programme Project Steering Committee (PSC) approved the extension of the project up to June 2026³⁰. The PSC, headed by the Cabinet Secretary, discussed at length the several social protection reform agendas that the project has been addressing. The members of the PSC were appraised of the key contributions made by the SSPS Programme in the country's social protection reform, in particular, governance and institutional reform as guided by the NSSS. The members were also enlightened about the SSPS Programme's contribution to achieving the SDGs 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, and 16 and its commitment to addressing critical social and economic objectives. The Chair thanked DFAT, Government of Australia as a trusted partner for their strong commitment to Bangladesh's social protection reform and expected to continue their endeavours for enrolling and taking forward the next generation NSSS 2026+. The members expressed their deep satisfaction with the reform activities planned by the project up to 2026 and expect that those activities will take Bangladesh's social protection forward towards establishing a welfare state. This is the first time that the GoB has committed to finance this project besides DFAT jointly in the future.

Addressing the COVID-19 and post-pandemic world, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) arranged Social Protection Week 2023 in September at ADB HQs, in Manila, Philippines. The theme of this consultative conference was 'Social Protection in a Changing World.' The conference brought together global and regional social protection experts and practitioners, including representatives from 33 developing member countries in Asia and the Pacific and 26 development partners operating in the region. Over 400 participants attended in person and nearly 300 joined virtually. The conference provided a venue to reflect on the lessons from the recent crises, discuss emerging social protection priorities, and build alliances and networks to strengthen social protection systems for the future of Asia and the Pacific region. The three-day event discussed challenges and opportunities related to the role of social protection in the post-COVID recovery and response to new and emerging crises, systems strengthening, and resilience building. It was the largest in-person gathering of social protection stakeholders in the region post-pandemic.

4.2 Progress in implementing strategies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment

One of the ten priorities identified by Bangladesh's Honourable Prime Minister is Gender Equality. According to the National Women's Development Policy 2011, one of the key areas for reducing women's poverty is social security. The budget and coverage for social protection have been increased as part of the Eighth Five-Year Plan (8FYP July 2020- June 2025). Targeted food security, social empowerment, and livelihood programmes that promote gender equality and women's empowerment are examples of social security programmes.

The SSPS Programme supported the development of the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS), Gender Policy and Strategy, and the Action Plan for the implementing ministries. The NSSS gender policy, strategy, and action plan has been reflected in the NSSS Action Plan 2021-26 (2nd phase). As a part of the Social Development Framework (SDF), the NSSS puts much emphasis on the issue of women and gender

²⁹ Minutes of Social Protection Focal Points held on 17 December 2023 | Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme

³⁰ Minutes of 4th Meeting of Project Steering Committee (PSC) held on 2 November 2023 | Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme (socialprotection.gov.bd)

empowerment to achieve better equity and social justice. Therefore, it recommends comprehensive measures to be taken to tackle all gender-related socio-economic discrimination. Around two dozen social security programmes in the budget of FY 2022-23 have a primary focus on women, directly or indirectly. There has been an increasing trend in both gender budget and beneficiary over the years as mentioned in NSSS. It currently stands at 10 per cent of the total SP budget, which is a significant rise. The specific needs of women and girls at various ages have been considered in the NSSS, and women have been identified as a group with specific needs. Old allowance covered a higher percentage of women due to age definition (women at 62, Male 65). The NSSS encourages transformative social security by promoting the social empowerment of disadvantaged groups, including women. Due to women's lower level of participation in formal employment, they tend to have less access than men to contributory social protection systems. Therefore, all these hard realities and predicaments of women were kept in consideration while designing NSSS Action Plan Phase 2. The action plan suggests actions to integrate gender perspectives and address strategic gender interests by utilising the transformative potentials of the programmes.

The areas for focus include the following addressing gender perspectives: strengthening support for vulnerable women; introducing Child Benefit Programme and Vulnerable Women's Benefits programmes; workplace childcare services; Maternal Health Care; Maternity Insurance; empowering workfare programmes; addressing social norms; expanding social allowance; skills enhancement and such others.

In addition, the Action Plan focused on gender-responsive planning, use of sex-disaggregated data, and effective grievance redress mechanism.

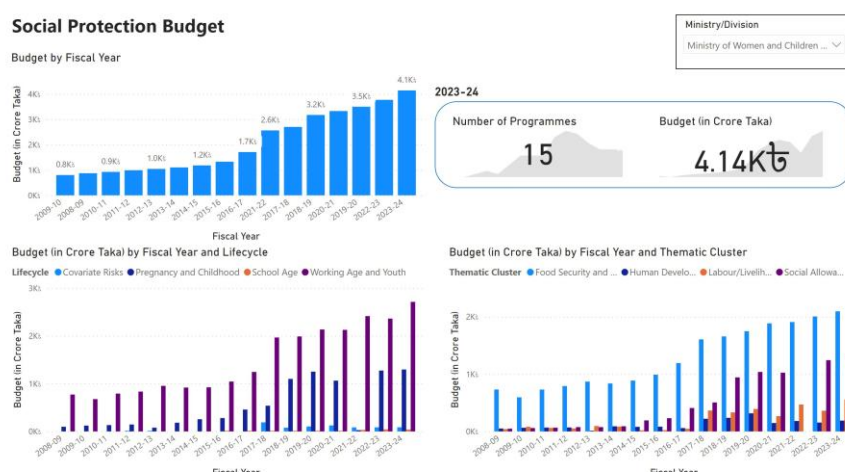


Figure 3: Social protection budgets of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, including overall allocations and allocations within the lifecycle and thematic areas

From FY 2022's Safety net budget data - Maternity Allowance Programme for

the Poor (The Maternity Allowance for Poor Mothers and the Maternity Allowance for Working Women have been merged into a single programme called 'Mother and Child Benefit Programme, and the Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programme has been renamed as 'Vulnerable Women Benefit' (VWB) programme from FY 2023 as suggested in Action Plan for social protection programme consolidation or harmonization. Based on the policy guidelines of the NSSS and according to a series of action plan workshops, the NSSS Action Plan 2 incorporates a range of activities such as maternity insurance, strengthening social allowance (financial support/assistance/benefits) for the migrant workers and their family members (particularly women), etc. to address gender issues in social security. These actions are exclusively related to the social security of women and girls, but other programmes deal with both genders with embedded principles of ensuring gender equality in the delivery system. In short, social security aiming at gender equality needs multi-dimensional initiatives and cannot be achieved by only pursuing economic gains for women.

Recognizing women's pivotal role in the nation's building, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) has aligned its efforts with the government's goals, focusing on poverty reduction, gender equality, and prevention of violence against women and child rights protection. All these have been addressed by the MoWCA through its different programmes and legal frameworks. Besides its regular

programme on women and children, the MoWCA recognizes the need for increased investment in human, technical, and financial resources to achieve the objectives as outlined in the NSSS. The ministry's social protection budgets, including overall allocations and allocations within the lifecycle and thematic areas are outlined below for the past 16 years.

As the digital landscape continues to evolve, cyberspace has become both a treasure and a trap, especially for women and girls. While the proliferation of the internet has facilitated unprecedented connectivity, during the pandemic, cyber-criminals took advantage of the world shifting towards the digital space. Since then, cyber-attacks globally increased by 125% through 2021. Gendered cyber-attacks further widen the pre-existing gender-related digital divide. A study by the European Union (EU) suggests that 73% of women globally have been targeted for online abuse. The United Nations (UN) estimates that 95% of aggressive behaviour, harassment, and violence online. The nature of harassment includes but is not limited to sexually suggestive comments, sending explicit pictures in Messenger, WhatsApp, IMO, and scams. While 65% of women admitted that cyber harassment had a severe impact on their lives, including psychological trauma, depression, and anxiety, only 14.9% of women submitted formal complaints against online violence. Women and girls facing severe online harassment have far-reaching consequences. It not only limits women's private sphere but also their engagement in politics, activism, journalism, and other social aspects, therefore, posing a significant barrier to their freedom of expression.

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an international campaign observed every year to raise visibility around the call for the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence. This year's theme was "UNITE! Activism to End Violence against Women & Girls". The SSPS programme provided TA support to the UNDP country office in coordinating national media interactions, use of social media to reach 12 million using Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, and others with the key message "No Excuse – Investing in preventing violence against women is not just a moral imperative, it is a necessity. Without addressing this global issue, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals remains elusive. Empowering women is the linchpin for a truly sustainable and equitable world." "Tales of 16 women who defied the odds," was an audio-visual campaign to observe 16 days activism against gender-based violence. Two national dialogues on Secure the Cyber Space for Women and Girls, and Empowering Youth to Combat Cyber Violence Against Women with a message #Unite: Investing to Secure Cyberspace for Women and Girls, followed by an exhibition to highlighting key messages: Dress is Not Consent, and Clothing is never an invitation for gender-based violence under the banner of #No Excuse.

Several issues emerged from the national dialogue, and included major legislative reforms, an overhaul of the justice response and essential services, improved data collection and monitoring, comprehensive sexuality education in our schools, and the strengthening and expanding of institutional partnerships to prevent impunity, well-designed social protection systems that can narrow gender gaps in poverty rates, enhance women's income security and access to personal income, and provide a lifeline for poor women, especially single mothers.

4.3 Progress Output 4

Output – 4: Broadened knowledge base and influence of NGOs working for marginalized and excluded groups, including persons with disabilities in social protection decision-making		
Indicators	Target	SSPS Programme Contribution in Progress
Influence of non-state actors working for marginalized and excluded groups, including persons with disabilities in the social protection decision-making.	Non-state actors and Disabled Persons' Organizations produce a citizens' report on social protection and needs of marginalized and excluded groups.	The report titled "Non-state Actor Report on Social Protection: A Mapping of Social Protection Needs for the Marginalized

Output – 4: Broadened knowledge base and influence of NGOs working for marginalized and excluded groups, including persons with disabilities in social protection decision-making		
		Communities in Bangladesh³¹ is available in the SSPS Programme website for national dialogue. Based on a keynote presentation titled “United in Action to Rescue and Achieve the SDGs for, with and by Persons with Disabilities – Bangladesh Context” - A report has been drafted, which will build the case for developing a social protection framework for PwDs in Bangladesh.

Key Activities and Results

4.4 Disability Inclusion

Observance of International Day for Persons with Disabilities (IDPD)

The theme of the International Day for Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) is an annual observance event first proclaimed in 1992 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 47/3. The theme for 2023 was “United in Action to Rescue and Achieve the SDGs for, with and by Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).” The SSPS Programme jointly organized the day with UNPPRD, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, UNFPA, ILO, and SightSavers - Disability Alliance on SDGs, Bangladesh and 27 prominent international and national organizations of and for people with disabilities working for the rights of people with disabilities in Bangladesh in alignment with the SDGs on 2nd December 2023.

The Prime Minister’s Principal Coordinator for SDGs, former Coordinator, Additional Secretary of the Prime Minister’s Office, and Ministry of Social Welfare looking after the Disability portfolio, the UN Resident Coordinator, Bangladesh, the UNDP Resident Representative, the UNWOMEN, ILO Country Directors, Child Protection Chief of UNICEF, SightSaver’s Country Director, Chairmen of renowned NGOs working for PwDs, and Programme Heads of GoB, Development Partners, NGOs and others attended the day-long observation programme. The observance of the day initiated a dialogue based on the keynote paper jointly prepared by the SSPS programme and SightSaver. The paper addresses the commitment made by the head of state and government; disability movement call for action principles, aligning between UN CRPD and SDGs; statistics and data collection on the 2030 agenda and CRPD; communicating with disability-inclusive lenses; disability and poverty nexus; the NSSS suggested reform, and disability reflection in 8th Five Year Plan including in the national budget; decade of disability rights act enactment – progress and challenges; rights enshrined in the constitution; development landscape – last 10 years; legal instruments; national action plan on disability; challenges and way forward. The participants in the dialogue identified the following broader observations and made some suggestive recommendations mentioned below:

- The SDG dashboard indicates that Bangladesh has already achieved two goals – responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), and climate action (SDG 13). Bangladesh ranks 101st among 166 countries in the SDG index, with a score of 65.9 out of 100 according to the UNSDGs Report 2023. In comparison among the SAARC region countries, Bangladesh is ahead of India (112th), Pakistan (128th), and Afghanistan (158th). The Spillover Index indicates Bangladesh

³¹ socialprotection.gov.bd/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Non-State-Actor-Report-on-Social-Protection.pdf

ranked 46th with a score of 97.8, indicating the country has significantly more positive and fewer negative impacts in achieving its sustainable development goals.

- The discussions during the day centred on visually impaired and severely disabled persons, severely lag and nondisabled persons due to the mindset of different stakeholders like employers, higher education due to lack of accessibility. Within this, women and children with disabilities are even more vulnerable. Awareness of disability inclusion is important. It should begin within the family and then spread across the nation.
- This is high time to review all the policies/guidelines/action plans/strategies relating to persons with disabilities since many were developed a decade ago.
- The Government has sincerely been working for the betterment of women with disabilities, and good intention to empower them by meaningful engagement in developmental activities for addressing the SMAT Citizens of future Bangladesh development theme SMART Bangladesh. However, achieving an inclusive and disability-friendly society needs focused efforts and initiatives to address the future of digital Bangladesh, and the PwDs must not be lagging.

The audience attended in the dialogue had made the following collective recommendations with the expectation that there has been room for further improvements:

- *Women empowerment and need-based and inclusive skills development and employment* - In Bangladesh, women with disabilities are emerging as powerful agents of change, breaking down social barriers and advancing empowerment. These resilient women are actively participating in various fields. The Bangladesh government is working relentlessly on the above recommendations. From the discussion, it has come to light, that the empowerment of disabled women is not only reshaping perceptions, but also fostering a sense of community and support. Women with disabilities will increasingly act as leaders, advocates, and catalysts for change in Bangladesh, if all opportunities can be ensured. It is essential to create more opportunities for women with disabilities in Bangladesh to advance in education, skill development, employment, and community engagement. By providing need-based and easily accessible education initiatives, vocational training programmes, and employment opportunities, women with disabilities can acquire the necessary skills, become more independent, and contribute to the economy of their country. Overall, it was recommended that irrespective of gender, ensuring quality education and needs-based skills development and employment is essential for the empowerment and economic development of persons with disabilities.
- *Digital accessibility* - Digital accessibility is essential to guarantee that everyone, especially individuals with disabilities, can access online information effortlessly. It is crucial to uphold the rights of all individuals by embracing digitalization with inclusivity in mind. To achieve this, we need to design websites, applications, and digital content that cater to diverse needs.
- *Monitoring*: It is crucial for the government and non- government organizations to closely monitor activities that support persons with disabilities. This requires strengthening the monitoring system and framework to ensure better tracking of the progress of disability-related projects and programmes. By doing so, all parties can improve the support provided to persons with disabilities and make a positive impact.
- *Safeguarding the rights of persons with disabilities* – Ensuring the safety and security of persons with disabilities is a major concern that limits their ability to move independently. It is crucial to address this issue in all sectors to ensure that individuals with disabilities have the freedom to move and work without any hindrance. Though the government and non-government

organizations are working on this issue. There is still much scope of work in this regard. To achieve this, it is necessary to review policies and conduct extensive awareness programmes as required.

- *Research and Data* - In conducting surveys, especially for persons with disabilities, it is crucial to integrate the Washington Group of Questionnaires and related indicators to address specific needs. It will support the development of a well-structured plan that respects individual rights. Additionally, the collection of disability-segregated data is essential for developing advocacy efforts rooted in data and evidence. Furthermore, specific information helps in reassessing various activities and plans, serving as a guide for the inclusion and support of persons with disabilities. It is imperative to boost research on persons with disabilities to better understand their unique needs and challenges. Increasing research in this field can also help to create more effective inclusive policies, support networks, and initiatives. In addition, research not only enhances understanding but also opens the door to a more inclusive society. It is also a step towards creating a world where everyone, regardless of ability, can contribute to their fullest potential.
- *Information portal* – Journalists and others believed that there should be an online portal that will have various types of information, research, etc. on disability issues to raise awareness, which would increase their sensitivity and greatly assist in reporting on disability issues.
- *Accessible Infrastructure* – During the discussion, it was discovered that most buildings in Bangladesh are inaccessible to persons with disabilities. This workshop recommends that schools, offices, colleges, institutions, hospitals, and markets be made accessible to everyone. Our goal is to create a Bangladesh where everyone can navigate freely without facing any difficulties.
- *Political Representation* – One of the speakers said that if he had the opportunity to participate in the election process, he would have been able to better represent their needs and wants, as he is a direct representative of persons with disabilities community.

The observance of the day ended by two calls for actions: a social protection framework for the PwDs in Bangladesh by the end of this year available and shared for wider stakeholders' consultation; and a reporters forum working in the field of disabilities for policy advocacy.

4.5 Inclusion of Non-state Actors in Social Protection

Non-state Actor Report on Social Protection – A Mapping of Social Protection Needs for the Marginalized Communities in Bangladesh

The SSPS Programme has prioritised gender and disability as key focus areas in its design. Creating and implementing social security programmes with a gender focus can play a crucial role in addressing poverty and vulnerabilities faced by women. The SSPS Programme has supported the development of the NSSS Gender Policy, Strategy, and Action Plan, which directly fed into the NSSS Action Plan Phase II (2021-26). The Action Plan duly acknowledges the unique challenges faced by women and carefully considers their specific needs at different stages of their lives. On the other hand, the SSPS Programme is also supporting the establishment of an M&E dashboard for age and sex-disaggregated data. It is expected that a prototype M&E dashboard will be in place on a trial basis and fully functional by 2024.

The SSPS Programme has undertaken a series of workshops, dialogues, and consultations in different settings with non-state actors across Bangladesh with diverse groups of people which includes transgenders, youth, marginalized, women and PwDs. These consultative workshops helped to identify the major gaps in social protection and engage of all stakeholders to further strengthen social protection programming under the purview of 'Leave No One Behind.'

The Programme collaborates with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and the Centre of Disability in Development (CDD) to enhance their capacities and engagement with governments and mobilize targeted and concrete commitments on disability inclusion and inclusive development.

The observance of International PwDs Day 2023 provides insight on progress in indicators, action plan, and international commitments for PwDs, as well as ensuring the present commitments both from the GoB and UN Agencies in Bangladesh. The consultative dialogue recommended a need for an inclusive social protection framework for the PwDs, and media engagement to boost up the policy advocacy.

The “Non-State Actors Report³² on Social Protection: Mapping Social Protection for Marginalized Communities in Bangladesh” offers a comprehensive examination of Bangladesh’s social protection system regarding marginalized communities. The report begins by providing an overview of the social protection landscape in Bangladesh, analysing the legal and policy frameworks, institutional arrangements, and the array of social protection programs for marginalized communities implemented by various stakeholders, including the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other entities. The mapping exercise identified 11 major marginalized groups and their distinct challenges. Recognizing and addressing their unique social protection needs is an important aspect of a good social protection policy. The report emphasizes the importance of a multifaceted approach to address the vulnerabilities and challenges faced by marginalized populations, including specific recommendations. The report highlights the need for an inclusive and comprehensive strategy for social protection targeted at marginalized communities considering the intersectionality of these vulnerabilities. It emphasizes the importance of refining targeting mechanisms and improving coordination among stakeholders to ensure efficient resource allocation and reaching the intended beneficiaries. Robust monitoring and evaluation systems are also advocated to assess the impact of social protection interventions and guide evidence-based policymaking. In addition, the report underscores the importance of strengthening institutional capacity and governance mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of social protection programs. It calls for enhanced coordination and collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and civil society organizations to leverage their respective expertise and resources, which will further help the Government in developing an inclusive social protection framework for them.

5. Reflection of 2023

Overall Progress

Despite challenges, Bangladesh has made strides in social protection in 2023. The expansion of programmes, focused on vulnerable groups, and digitization efforts represent positive steps. However, addressing budgetary limitations, ensuring equitable and efficient delivery, and adapting to climate change will be crucial for further progress in the future.

Based on recent developments, here is a reflection on the progress of Bangladesh’s social protection programmes in 2023:

Positive Developments

- *Expansion of social safety nets:* The Government allocated a significant budget towards social protection programmes in FY 2023-24, aiming to expand coverage and improve targeting. This indicates a continued commitment to social protection as a poverty reduction strategy.
- *Focus on vulnerable groups:* Programmes like the targeted safety net programmes, food assistance, food commodities in subsidized price and employment generation programmes for

³² [Non-State-Actor-Report-on-Social-Protection.pdf \(socialprotection.gov.bd\)](#)

the extreme poor, universal allowance to elderly, widowed, disserted and destitute women, PwDs provide crucial support to vulnerable populations, new poor in urban settlements including the elderly, PwDs and those living in disaster-prone, and poverty-prone areas.

- *Digitization efforts*: Initiatives to integrate digital technology into social safety net delivery improved the efficiency, transparency, and accessibility for beneficiaries.

Challenges and Considerations

- *Budgetary shortfalls*: While the allocation increased, some argued that it still falls short of the NSSS target of 3% of GDP. This raises concerns about the adequacy of resources reach the most deserving beneficiaries.
- *Equity and efficiency concerns*: Questions remain about the effectiveness of targeting mechanisms in ensuring resources reach the most deserving beneficiaries. Additionally, streamlining bureaucracy within delivery systems can further enhance efficiency.
- *Climate change impact*: The increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters highlight the need for disaster-proof social protection programmes that can adapt and respond effectively during crises.

6. M&E system with sex-disaggregated data and indicators to measure gender equality outcomes

UNDP's approach to strengthening partnerships with various bilateral and multilateral development partners has helped attract support for the SSPS Programme, currently supported by DFAT. The Programme is strongly backed by DFAT's development priorities for building economic resilience and improving social inclusion. In supporting the Programme, -aims to advance and intensify social protection reform efforts undertaken by the GoB, aligning with the Common Narrative of Social Protection of Development Partners (DPs). Strengthening support for social protection is considered a critical tool to address poverty, vulnerability, and inequality, especially post-COVID-19. DPs are urged to continue supporting the GoB's Central Management Committee for social protection governance to drive effective governance, monitoring, and accountability within the social protection system.

The current approaches and methods of engagement employed by the SSPS Programme align well with its goals and objectives. Close collaboration between the SSPS Programme and the government machinery is crucial for implementing such a complex project. High-level government buy-in and ownership make the SSPS Programme a vehicle for generating informed inputs and regular reviews through analytical, CMC meetings, and workshops. The formulation and adoption of the NSSS Action Plan 2021-26 demonstrate the Government's proactive initiative to continue NSSS reforms, facilitated by the SSPS Programme's ownership.

The SSPS Programme's knowledge management support has been instrumental in providing an overview of reform backgrounds and. Successful implementation of the Gender Strategy and Action Plan 2 hinges on interpreting strategies into actions by ministries/divisions within their operational areas. Collection of sex-disaggregated data, gender analysis, and gender-focused indicators in Action Plan 2 are prioritized to measure the impact of social protection interventions on women's empowerment. The web-based M&E Dashboard comprises the reform dashboard, and the programme dashboard. The reform dashboard reports overall progress depicted in the NSSS Action Plan, with gender programmes integral. The Programme dashboard will be effective once ministries agree on data system interoperability. Interoperability is challenging due to varying platforms among ministries, hindering integration. Consultation workshops with 25 ministries aim to build consensus on interoperability, data sharing and data security for the dashboard.

Regarding gender indicators, ministries currently generate administrative data, with potential for sex-disaggregated data post-interoperability. There are concerns regarding the absence of a robust data collection system, which is a prerequisite for reliable gender, age and geographically disaggregated data. Also, there is lack of a targeted and practical capacity building and sensitization exercise targeting the local government level amongst union parishads to effectively and efficiently manage and supervise pro-poor and gender sensitive safety net programmes. the SSPS Programme developed the M&E dashboard will include gender analytics in 2024. Ministries are expected to share their data and use gender-based result indicators in their respective M&E framework for achieving better results in gender equality. Cluster Coordination Committees will oversee disaggregated data collection, with a budget allocated for gender equality-related outputs.

6.1 UNDP Corporate Compliance

As per the UNDP's Country Programme Document (CPD) for Bangladesh 2022-2026, the SSPS Programme is also aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). The activities within the SSPS Programme directly address Outcome 1 of the UNSDCF: 'Pathway to inclusive and sustainable economic development, envisioning that by 2026, more people in Bangladesh, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalised from all gender and social groups and those from

lagging districts, benefit from sustainable and decent work opportunities resulting from responsible, inclusive, sustainable, green and equitable economic development (UN, 2021). The activities specifically respond to Output 1.3: 'Policy and regulatory frameworks enabling greater access to and utilization of inclusive, gender-responsive and resilient basic social and protection services are strengthened.'

Social and Environmental Screening (SES): The SSPS Programme provided support in conducting Social and Environmental Screening (SES) of all UNDP projects. This screening helps the UNDP country office to ensure the projects and programmes are aligned with compliance. The SSPS programme along with other UNDP projects participated in a couple of SES workshops. The SSPS Programme identified SES compliance with only one indicator, which falls under the sub-category 'Stakeholders Engagement' due to the frequent relocation of the GoB officials, and the policy reform based on the SSPS Programme.

Result Oriented Annual Report (ROAR³³): The SSPS Programme's contribution to the Result Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) as follows:

UNDP Country Programme Documents (CPD) Outcome – 1: The SSPS programme contributed to UNDP CPD Outcome – 1 which is pathway to inclusive and sustainable economic development, envisions that by 2026, more people in Bangladesh, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized from all gender and social groups and those from lagging districts, benefit from sustainable livelihood and decent work opportunities resulting from responsible, inclusive, sustainable, green and equitable economic development.

UNDP Country Programme Documents (CPD) Output – 1.3 The project also the helped UNDP to achieve the CPD Output – 1.3 Policy and regulatory frameworks enabling greater access to and utilization of inclusive, gender-responsive and resilient basic social and protection services are strengthened through its interventions.

6.2 SSPS Programme Mid-term Review

Lessons Learned and Key Policy Recommendations

The implementation of the SSPS programme has yielded valuable lessons that can offer crucial insights, knowledge, and experience to enhance social protection programmes and effectively achieve desired goals and objectives. Several lessons are learned from different perspectives as part of the current evaluation exercise:

- One crucial lesson from the SSPS Programme is the significance of government commitment and ownership in the development and delivery of programmes aligned with policy documents. The government's strong commitment and ownership are essential for successfully initiating and implementing programmes that align with strategic pronouncements. The SSPS Programme stands out as a prominent illustration of this principle, and it can be extrapolated to other developmental endeavours with the goal of improving economic and human development standards in Bangladesh.
- The strong ownership has contributed to the continuity of the reform process as reflected in the adoption of the NSSS Action Plan 2021-26. The midterm review of the NSSS did suggest

³³ The Result Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) is country reporting mechanism to UNDP regional and global offices that reflects a country's progress in achieving the Strategic Goals of the UNDP Global Office, meeting the targets in achieving UN strategic frameworks and also the country's strategic approaches towards SDGs and UNDP strategic priorities.

various reform targets not being achieved in the backdrop of which the Action Plan for 2021-26 has now incorporated revised and updated timeframes.

- The SSPS Programme has been recognized by senior policymakers as a prudent investment, thanks in part to its proactive approach and open interaction with ministry officials. The project's association with UNDP, known for its extensive experience in Bangladesh and track record of working with the government in policy reforms in governance, human development, and poverty alleviation, has further bolstered its credibility.
- The SSPS Programme has exemplified the value of convening diverse stakeholders, leading to improved outcomes. Workshops, consultation meetings, and dissemination events brought together a wide array of participants, including senior government officials, policymakers, non-state actors, marginalized groups, development partners, and NGOs. This inclusive approach has fostered meaningful discussions on social protection issues, avoiding a disjointed approach to research and analysis. The Programme's success in bringing together stakeholders from various sectors and backgrounds underscores the importance of inclusive engagement in similar initiatives. This lesson underscores the power of collaboration and inclusive decision-making in driving positive outcomes in social protection efforts.
- Another major lesson learned from the SSPS Programme is the significance of undertaking innovative analytical work. This is exemplified by the recent passage of the Universal Pension Management Bill 2022 by the Parliament. The background work for the bill was facilitated by a comprehensive study conducted by the SSPS Programme in the area of social insurance, on which the existing knowledgebase in Bangladesh is limited. The insights gained from this process can be applied to inform the development of other social protection policies and bills, highlighting the Programme's role in driving evidence-based policymaking and shaping national social protection strategies. This lesson emphasizes the value of rigorous research and analysis in informing policy decisions and underscores the importance of leveraging innovative approaches to address social protection challenges effectively.
- While progress has been made in expanding coverage for allowances for the elderly and persons with disabilities (PWDs), areas such as NSIS, M&E framework establishment, and development of a single registry MIS have faced lacklustre progress. These reforms require technical knowledge and discussions to address barriers effectively. Many key informants have reported that discussions among senior members in high-level committees have often been unfocused, resulting in unresolved issues. Additionally, designated focal points have sometimes lacked substantive knowledge on the inputs required from them. Thematic cluster ministries have also not met regularly or as frequently as needed. To address these challenges, building capacity of relevant officials could be a potential intervention area for the SSPS Programme. This lesson underscores the importance of addressing institutional challenges and capacity building for effective implementation of social protection reforms.
- Another key lesson from the SSPS Programme is the challenge of policy approval delays. Many public officials perceive social protection strategy and plan development as additional responsibilities on top of their regular assignments, resulting in overburdening and time management challenges. This often leads to social protection-related assignments being given on short notice, with officials having to attend multiple policy meetings without dedicated attention. As a result, timelines for policy approvals are often extended, as seen in the example of the NSSS Action Plan Phase II, which was initially supposed to be approved before July 2021 but was eventually approved in February 2022 and launched in October 2022. This lesson highlights the need for effective coordination and timely decision-making to

address policy approval delays and ensure the smooth implementation of social protection initiatives.

- It is becoming clear that financing could be a major issue in further fulfilling the social protection objectives. While policy pronouncements remain strong, they are not backed by adequate budgetary resources. The NSSS Action Plan 2021 projects only a modest change in resource allocation until 2026. This can be problematic for increasing coverage, let alone raising the amount of allowances or providing inflation adjustments. The SSPS Programme should sensitize senior policymakers about this apparent mismatch between policy intent and inadequate resources.
- The recent experience further suggests that generating meaningful data has proven to be more challenging than previously anticipated. The non-materialization of the National Household Database is an example. Furthermore, while the SSPS Programme has commissioned an M&E dashboard, it is not certain that there will be enough meaningful data to make the dashboard effective. It is high time for the SSPS Programme to work closely with BBS and other relevant agencies and departments to build capacity to generate data and explore financial resources.

Major recommendations

In the social security landscape of Bangladesh, the SSPS Programme has emerged as a flagship initiative for sustaining the momentum of the reform process underlying the NSSS. This evaluation exercise provides several recommendations to enhance the Programme's impact and effectiveness in advancing the reform agenda.

- Complete the current work programme effectively and prepare for the next phase of the NSSS beyond 2026, commission a review NSSS implementation, and coordinating with stakeholders for future strategy development *to consider both consolidation* and strengthening of core systems and programmes and positioning social protection to respond to changing needs, including in the context of changing demographics, urbanization, climate change/disaster risks, and gender equality, disability and social inclusion.
- Ensure regular monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of NSSS Action Plan Phase II to identify gaps, adjust measures, and achieve desired outcomes. SSPS Programme should play a critical role in helping ministries report progress on a quarterly basis.
- Assess fiscal space for social protection, explore options for tax-financing, social insurance schemes, and development partners' assistance to create adequate fiscal space, and provide informed assessment to support policy direction for resource requirements in line with the ambition of social protection support.
- The SSPS Programme can help develop a proper M&E framework for NSSS implementation. It should partner with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) to conduct a survey on social protection to assess the shortcomings of various programme coverage, and pilot proxy means testing, and gather SDG-related data to generate externalities effects for informed policy analysis.
- Develop a clear roadmap outlining the current situation, progress, and next steps for establishing a fully functioning single registry Management Information System (MIS) for social protection and consider conducting a dedicated survey to assess eligibility verification methods and pilot Proxy Means Testing (PMT) exercise complemented by local-level verification.

- Finalize the draft strategy on urban social protection and develop a practical action plan through extensive consultations to strengthen social protection for the urban poor, which can contribute to the development of a national social protection strategy for the post-2025 period.
- Set realistic timelines for the implementation of social protection schemes, taking into account the need for awareness building, training of officials, database development, and planning for eventualities to ensure effective and sustainable implementation, as rushing the process without addressing challenges can result in the programme being unsustainable.
- Reinvigorate the capacity-building role of the SSPS Programme by providing support to various ministries, departments, and stakeholders in developing skills, knowledge, and a knowledgebase for effective implementation of social protection programmes, based on a robust assessment of capacity needs.
- Strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Social Welfare should be one key consideration, as it will be the lead ministry by 2026 for all lifecycle programmes. Boosting the in-house capacity of the SSPS project is also critical.
- Commission high-level policy engagement initiatives on specific issues by forming expert groups consisting of respected personalities to prepare concise notes and facilitate discussions with senior policymakers, aiming to provide clear policy directions on technical issues related to social protection, and make the inputs widely available to promote a knowledgebase.
- Improve the project design and results framework by carefully planning and specifying short-term and/or intermediate outcomes and outputs, establishing a proper and SMART Results Framework, and developing concrete impact stories to complement the reporting of activities and demonstrate the project's impact.
- Foster efficient information exchange with relevant stakeholders enhancing communication channels, and facilitating a robust feedback mechanism to improve coordination, avoid duplication of efforts, and enhance collaboration among stakeholders.
- Deepen collaboration with development partners and other stakeholders through joint work, coordinated efforts, regular coordination meetings, and consultations, seeking technical expertise and support, and develop medium- to long-term interventions.

7. Financial Summary, Effectiveness and Value for Money

Financial Progress:

The total Budget for August 2023 – June 2026 is AUD 5,000,000 equivalent to approximately US\$ 3,328,895.00.

UNDP Bangladesh received 1st *payment* on 1st August 2023 of AUD 2,000,000 equivalent to US\$1,291,714.24.

The expenditure up to the end of December 2023 AUD 551,970 (USD 367,490), was 28 % of the total received against the 1st payment.

Item	Budget		Expenditure	
	August 2023 – June 2026	August 2023 – June 2026	August to December 2023	
	AUD	USD	AUD	USD
1.1: Technical Units to Support 5 LMs to Implement the Reforms Plan	559,680	372,623	30,040	20,000
1.2: Knowledge and Policy Innovation for Advancing Social Protection Reforms	350,000	233,023	34,546	23,000
1.3: COVID-19 Policy Response	240,320	160,000	150,200	100,000
Subtotal	1,150,000	765,646	214,786	143,000
2.1: Research Fund	362,499	241,344	30,040	20,000
2.2: Stakeholder Engagement and Dissemination on Research and Evidence	220,598	146,870	23,431	15,600
2.3: Pilot on Old Age Allowance and Persons with Disabilities	300,400	200,000	67,590	45,000
Subtotal	883,497	588,214	121,061	80,600
3.1: Improving NSSS M&E	250,000	166,445	30,040	20,000
3.2: Gender Mainstreaming Social Protection Reforms	120,000	79,893	15,124	10,069
3.3: Support to CMC Coordination for Strengthening Accountability	222,000	147,803	15,921	10,600
3.4: Stakeholder Engagement on Development of NSSS 2026+	201,800	134,354	4,506	3,000
Subtotal	793,800	528,495	65,591	43,669
4.1: CSO / DPO Platform for Influencing Social Protection	466,740	310,746	15,020	10,000
Subtotal	466,740	310,746	15,020	10,000
Human Resources	746,883	497,259	52,570	35,000
Operations	325,421	216,658	30,040	20,000
Subtotal	1,072,304	713,917	82,610	55,000
Project Monitoring	188,189	125,292	12,016	8,000
Project Evaluation	75,100	50,000		
Subtotal	263,289	175,292	12,016	8,000
All Subtotal	4,629,630	3,082,310	511,084	340,269
GMS Subtotal	370,370	246,585	40,887	27,221
Total	5,000,000	3,328,895	551,971	367,490

Effectiveness

The SSPS Programme was highly efficient and effective to support the achievements of results with management capacities and governance arrangements that were put in place. The SSPS Programme had instituted a management arrangement that appears to be strong and at par with some of the good global practices concerning the management of complex and highly ambitious undertakings such as the SSPS. The management arrangements have met with a varying degree of capacity constraints impinging on the continued commitment and ownership at various levels of the government.

Value for Money

The SSPS represents a good example of Value for Money based on economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity, and judicious use of resources. The project has been consistently maintaining close to 100 percent delivery rate every year while maintaining strong Value for Money (VfM) by utilizing UNDP's global procurement system and entering negotiations for service providers offering competitive prices. The resources, by adhering to the principle of VfM, have economically converted the resources/inputs (funds, expertise, and time) into many results that are well demonstrated and acknowledged. Dozens of social security programme reforms have been made, as laid out by the NSSS, and now enacted, Action Plans Phase 2, for each line ministry have been developed.

Indicator	Evidence
a) % Of spending	UNDP Bangladesh received 1 st payment of 2 nd phase on 1 st August 2023 in the amount of AUD: 2,000,000 equivalent to USD 1,291,714 as the total budget for August 2023 – August 2024. The financial progress against the released fund for the period August – December 2023 was 28 percent. The remaining balance up to the end of December 2023 was AUD 1,448,030/USD 924,224.
b) Committed to eliminating inefficiency and duplication and applying lessons learned to enhance VfM	The personnel structure of the project is reviewed regularly by the Project Manager who guides staff on their expected deliverables, ensuring each team member has specific duties related to the project. No duplicate roles exist. Internally, every UNDP project has a mid-year and end-year review, where among other information, Lessons Learned are recorded and analysed. These lessons learned are taken into consideration when planning the subsequent Annual Work Plan in August 2023 up to 2026 (i.e., 2023 first phase lessons learned to inform the 2 nd phase AWP).
c) Delivers defined services within budget (predicted budgets compare well to actual expenditure)	Same as the above-mentioned indicator a.
d) Scrutinises costs to pursue the most cost-effective options and considers proportionality in planning/allocating resources	The project Annual Work Plan is developed at the beginning of the year and budgets are allocated based on the level of service delivery required under each output based on internal estimates of market rates based on previous contracts issued by UNDP. The Annual Work Plan is revised throughout the year when required. All expenses are planned for in line-by-line budgets to ensure every component of an output expenditure is in line or below-market rates. For the NSSS Action Plan phase 2, all expenditures for meetings and workshops were scrutinised minutely. Additionally, the UNDP Procurement Unit went back to the selected vendor on multiple sub-budget lines requesting an explanation and/or reduction, which was successfully obtained for international and national consultants. This type of rigorous mindset is held for all project expenditures.
e) Robust systems and procedures in place to	All procured goods and services run through the UNDP Country Office Procurement Unit ensuring competitive, cost-effective procuring. UNDP Country

Indicator	Evidence
monitor and manage VfM during implementation	Office conducts annual audits ensuring compliance and proper record/receipt keeping. The project considers VfM via economy (ensuring the right procurements), efficiency (monitoring economy against achieving results), and effectiveness (effect of all inputs toward achieving results).

8. Lessons Learned and Way Forward

8.1 What worked well

- Dissemination workshop on NSSS Action Plan, Phase - II (2021-26) and Baseline Assessment and Way Forward was organized with an aim to disseminate the newly formulated NSSS Action Plan, Phase-II (2021-2026) within the social protection implementing ministries, departments, and relevant agencies along with the baseline assessment of the Action Plan. This workshop was a wider consultative workshop that would pave the way to implement the NSSS Action Phase-II which is already in implementation for further reform in the social protection portfolio of Bangladesh in line with national social development goals and set targets for SDGs 2030. Through the workshop, a Baseline Assessment of the NSSS Action Plan, Phase-II has been developed that will help evaluate the implementation status and progress of the action plan. The HPM approves the whole plan, meaning now mandatory for all to implement. No need for higher approval, rather inform the progress of the reform and take guidance.
- The Project Steering Committee (PSC) and Project Implementation Committee (PIC) of the Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme discussed the Implementation Progress of the project and its' milestones and the Annual Work Plan (AWP) 2023-26 of the project, and showed the strong government ownership. The project will regularly organize meetings, workshops, dialogues, communication activities for the visibilities of social protection reforms. It will also conduct review meetings for monitoring the progress of the NSSS Action Plan, 2021-26 and sharing experiences of NSSS implementation with relevant ministries and divisions.

8.2 What did not work well

Delay in policy approval

- Most public officials perceived working for social strategy and plan development as additional responsibilities, beyond their regular assignments. On the other hand, many policy-level officials were overburdened and had trouble with time management and meeting the accomplishment deadline. Due to the overburdened nature, the policy always redistributes or shortly gives assignments related to social protection to different officials and to attend different policy meetings. This heterogeneous nature impact reform coordination within the ministries as well as inter-ministerial coordination and decision-making. Regular postings, re-postings, transfers, attending departmental and project-based different training programmes, tours, and retirements from the public services associated with lack of decisions and progress of reform work sharing system and practice (both individual and formal) for the successor official(s) and understanding of the complex nature of social protection and capacity of implementing reform (individual, organizational, and fund) slower the reform efforts against the set target(s). This has been evident, in preparing the NSSS Action Plan, Phase – II, which was supposed to be approved before June 2021, but actual approval happened in February 2022 and launched in October 2022, developing the road map of single registry MIS finalization decision-making happened in September 2022; Grievance Redress System (GRS) in social protection using the hotline '333' piloting started in 2020 under EU supported Platform for Dialogue (P4D) Project of Reform Wing of the Cabinet Division implementing by British Council, and the result is unknown.
- There is possibility to improve the coordination mechanism to further enhance the thematic clusters - some are working well, and some clusters are not updated. Also need to enhance the coordination of

social operation in field level. The focal points are continuously changing, an induction toolkit has been developed and social protection module has been developed. More focus should be given on the usage of the toolkit and a process in place for whoever comes in is kind of briefed.

8.3 Way Forward

The SSPS Programme will act in the coming months on and complete implementation of some outstanding issues to make a further impact:

- **Midterm Evaluation:** The objective of this assignment, in alignment with DFAT-UNDP agreed policy to conduct midterm evaluation to assess and evaluate the performance of the project delivery against its planned outputs and results and what was achieved. The successes and lessons learned of Phase – I at the purview of Theory of Change (ToC), current baseline assessment of NSSS Action Plan Phase – II. The mid-term evaluation will review the current socioeconomic development narrative of Bangladesh and determine the course of action, if any change is required. This evaluation will examine, through a policy-lens focus, and in an independent manner, the project's delivery of objectives in relation to the project document and its intended purpose. It should consider how activities have contributed to advancing, if at all, to the reforms and implementation of the NSSS. The project evaluation will consider effectiveness, efficiency, delivery of outputs, and any support to Government institutions (such as committees, coordination, policy, logistics). The evaluation will consider the entire working period of the project's duration up until the present time. The assignment will be carried out using a public policy model for evaluation.

The project will take measures to revise the RTAPP and Project Document (ProDoc) to accommodate necessary changes in the project with extended timeline and costs. The Cabinet Division may request IMED to conduct the project evaluation which is necessary for initiating such revisions.

- **National Conference on National Social Insurance Scheme NSIS in Bangladesh 2023** is in the consultation process with Govt. counterparts. The workshop would follow both participatory and virtual basis a on Govt. approval. The conference will give the opportunity of stakeholders on SSPS Programme's next phase reform actions. Workshop modality: The workshop will be participatory dialogue basis attended by both public and private sector. The national conference is a good forum for stakeholder participation, knowledge sharing, dissemination, and buy-in.
- **CODI Workshop 2023.** Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI) 3 to be held to social protection policy with CMC focal points. Re-assessment of collected data for 2017 and 2022 completed. Second round assessment to be completed with the active participation of the concerned ministries. It creates more enthusiasm among the concerned ministries on progress at the result-based indicators, and active participation in CODI assessment matrix to see the changes from baseline. Also, better understand the progress of reform at individual ministry level.

9. Major Risks and Mitigation Measures

Risk	Assumption	Update on controls/ mitigation strategy
Government commitment for universal old age, persons with disability, and social insurance is affected due to fragmented DP support; difficulty in building consensus with labour unions	Stable economic growth provides for fiscal space; the private sector willing to participate in NSIS implementation	UNDP plays a lead role in Poverty LCG to build consensus on social protection policy
Government policy priority areas shift to economic recovery measures at the expense of other critical social protection national policy objectives pre-pandemic.	Government spending will increase for economic stimulus, however, increases to critical areas such as social protection will also follow suit	- Advocate for the adoption of the 9th Five Year Plan which includes strong measures for social protection response in light of the COVID-19 pandemic - Utilize GO-NGO and LCG and DPs Common Narrative as tools to build the political economy for social protection issues
Delayed reform implementation by line ministries due to capacity constraints and/or inter-ministerial complexities	Sub-committee able to use APA incorporation as an appropriate tool to hold line ministries accountable to reforms implementation	- Incorporate coordination duties into the Annual Performance Agreement (APA) (completed) - Focus on key ministries instead of 35 - Identify 2 champions within each (senior and junior) - Ensure junior's term is at the start - If the senior role shifts, the junior becomes the senior and identifies a new junior to specifically mentor Targeted capacity-building efforts
Govt. may decide to adopt an incremental approach rather than an immediate shift to universal old age, persons with disability, and social insurance; administrative delay due to leadership change in the ministry; request for repeated revisions	Fiscal space is available; political parties taking opportunities of election year to adopt universal old age, persons with disability, and social insurance)	- Engage UNDP senior leadership at critical stages of key policy development - Special focus on MoF and on building the case for fiscal space - Providing technical units to strengthen institutional memory
overwhelms Bangladesh to the point of devastation and the government lacks the capacity to respond	COVID-19 expands throughout Bangladesh, but remains manageable to a degree; social cohesion remains stable in the country	Bring stakeholders together to discuss and come up with consensus responses to short-term and long-term policy development in response to COVID-19
Lack of consensus with private sector and government stakeholders	A realistic insurance model feasible based on the Bangladesh context	Ensure a realistic timeline for dialogue and consensus-building

Risk	Assumption	Update on controls/ mitigation strategy
Natural disasters that affect availability of high-quality experts	Recommendations from the research are within the capacity of the government for short-medium term implementation	• Revise timelines at annual project reviews • Accommodate alternative remote work policies in alignment with UNDP policies • Advertise in all mediums in Bangladesh to find suitable national experts
Securing Govt. co-finance is delayed due to administrative Govt. procedures	Govt. allocates the funds for the transfers for the Universal Old Age and Persons with Disabilities pilot area; the Govt. continues the Universal Old Age and Persons with Disabilities pilot area indefinitely after the UNDP case study is finished	• Involve champions + other senior members in the research and proposal process from the concept stage • Invest in effective communication products to disseminate results • Adapt pilot parameters in the context of GoB's targeted expansion of OAA in select Upazilas
The line ministries outside of the project support may lack the capacity to fully utilize the dashboard	Current commitment to social protection reforms is resilient to changes in leadership	• Targeted capacity building on usage of the dashboard • Engage CMC sub-committee for facilitator role
Frequent changes in line ministry officials limit institutional capacity building	Development partners remain committed to combined and coordinated capacity-building efforts	• Backstopping by technical units • Timely re-orientation for new senior representatives • Orientation for new govt officials with a Social protection toolkit
Fragmentation of CSOs and DPOs may limit their ability to build consensus on core social protection issues and agenda-setting	The current commitment to CSO participation in policymaking remains intact throughout the project life	• Ensure adequate notice is given to stakeholders to participate and contribute, both at physical events and through digital communication • Showcase a transparent structure for feedback consideration into research and policy proposals • Invite key partners to co-host and facilitate engagement • Incorporate appropriate timeline for multi-stakeholder feedback into design DPO / CSO platform • Ensure realistic timeline for building consensus toward key joint policy statements / documents (i.e. citizen's report)

Annex – A: Some important policy decisions /report in 2023

SL	Events	Date	Link of the Evidence
1.	Workshop on Social protection need assessment for Women	24 Jan 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1M0YxBh9EH-B_ZGz9d2Sv_wbQYjnBxn5/view?usp=drive_link
2.	SPPS reflection workshop	13 Feb 2023	-
3.	Singel Registry MIS Workshop	28 Mar 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rfQclF1b3ScDcrvLrVch2LXAg2ld0z7p/view?usp=sharing
4.	17 th CMC Meeting	5 Apr 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sNTv_8Ea6sPJwNrX-yJwHNQ8gyoE2nFW/view?usp=sharing
5.	11 th M&E Committee Meeting	27 Apr 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yhdBpN1M9JHa5CW10grBtS8GcnzRFhnB/view?usp=sharing
6.	National Dialogue on NSSS	7 May 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sIMKwtvi-FMcuC0mJNlK93M2YbaDCY_b/view?usp=drive_link
7.	Workshop on Climate-induced Shock Responsive Disaster Resilience (Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Shaban Dhaka University)	9 May 2023	
8.	2 nd LCG Meeting	25 May 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1d9YBySr4CHegN5-eetNlX1SFRQz7cUr-/view?usp=sharing
9.	Coordination Meeting with Dhaka University	3 Jun 2023	
10.	15 th Meeting on SDG Implementation and Review	14 Jun 2023	
11.	NSSS Action Plan Progress Review Workshop	21 Jun 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NojiF6jivs5c_9MlqwlykFPZYyNX_gVL/view?usp=sharing
12.	NSSS Action Plan Progress Review Workshop	22 Jun 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rmLJhRCcb_uABNXySQYtwiuHZP1miSWv/view?usp=sharing
13.	3 rd LCG Meeting	18 Jul 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1d9YBySr4CHegN5-eetNlX1SFRQz7cUr-/view?usp=sharing
14.	Regional Dialogue on Climate Induced Shock Responsive Disaster Resilient Adaptive Social Protection at Barishal	23 Jul 2023	
15.	Regional Dialogue on Climate Induced Shock Responsive Disaster Resilient Adaptive Social Protection at Bhola	24 Jul 2023	
16.	Workshop on Strengthening Poverty and Livelihood Wing of BBS, SID	6 Aug 2023	
17.	Workshop on Capacity of Strengthening Poverty and Livelihood wing of BBS, SID	22 Aug 2023	
18.	Regional Dialogue on National Social Security Strategy and Lifecycle Based Social Protection at Mymensingh	2 Sep 2023	
19.	Progress Stock-taking Consultation 'Climate Induced Shock Responsive Disaster Resilience Adaptive Social Protection Study' With GED	4 Sep 2023	
20.	Meeting on Draft Report of SDG Localization Action Plan (Nazia Salma)	5 Sep 2023	
21.	Dialogue on SDG Localization (NEC-1)	18 Sep 2023	
22.	Regional Dialogue on SDG localization of Baseline Study Key Findings and Draft Action Plan	20 Sep 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pljTYsl9QJmFrlS45b1hy5nUYrEu5KZ2/view?usp=sharing
23.	Workshop on Orientation & Crossmatching with Startup (Khulna)	20 Sep 2023	
24.	Project Implementation Committee (PIC) Meeting	8 Oct 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Lkibxw-meAU3hKkm1U37We9Asgrl0LkQ/view?usp=sharing
25.	Singel Registry MIS Workshop	15 Oct 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hwfhLwLb1Vmnz3MqmJsv5klCvugup3Ni/view?usp=sharing
26.	NSSS Action Plan Review and way forward (BICC)	15 Oct 2023	
27.	Workshop on SDG Progress Report	18 Oct 2023	

SL	Events	Date	Link of the Evidence
28.	Project Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting	29 Oct 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VgfWwHoN06u8OPQ4kH7bKQ4nsMRm0-b5/view?usp=sharing
29.	Singel Registry MIS Workshop	13 Nov 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GuMxoVgqHm0kzCJn8RuidFRJaMoobzxc/view?usp=sharing
30.	4 th LCG Meeting	19 Nov 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uO2cTho3HgLo1nFXK-bqF0Y3VL_PeUN-/view?usp=sharing
31.	Workshop on National Social Security Strategy (Khulna)	25 Nov 2023	
32.	Observance of Int. Day of Persons with Disability	2 Dec 2023	
33.	2 nd International symposium One Health, One World (Intercontinental)	5 Dec 2023	
34.	16 Days of Activism	10 Dec 2023	
35.	Workshop on National Social Security Strategy (Cumilla DC Office)	12 Dec 2023	
36.	Workshop on National Social Security Strategy (Chittagong)	13 Dec 2023	
37.	Workshop on National Social Security Strategy (Coxs-Bazar)	14 Dec 2023	
38.	Focal Point Meeting	17 Dec 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Mr3lh6WazhT_rN4K6jm7u9F2Clu3MdIm/view?usp=sharing
39.	Social Protection Year in Review and way forward	17 Dec 2023	
40.	18 th Central Management Committee (CMC) Meeting	21 Dec 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1m8c8nXmp8HK6IoFY_200SVIulApiB8yO/view?usp=sharing

Annex – B: The SSPS Programme: Significant Achievements To date

- National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh.
- Social Protection Chapter in 6, 7 and 8 Five Year Plan.
- Formulation of the NSSS Action Plan 2015 -2021; and the NSSS Action Plan 2021-26 involving 39 ministries.
- Enabled the Govt. to introduce Universal Private Pension and Social Insurance.
- Single Registry MIS, M&E Dashboard, GRS, and G2P piloted in a selected district integrated with GoB financial inclusion system.
- Mid-term review of the NSSS, background studies, diagnostics, impact assessments.
- Set up the social protection governance structures from the national to the upazila (sub-district) level.
- Policy Advocacy with the Members of Parliament on social protection issues.
- Orientation and capacity building of the UP Chairmen and Secretaries, including District and sub-district government officials.
- Political economy analysis: SP framework, Urban SP, and revisit SP addressing COVID-19.
- National capacity building on social protection integration with public service foundation training curricula and Local Government orientation curricula under BPATC and NILG.
- Knowledge products: ABCD of social protection, background papers, and compendium of social protection, and Shock-responsive guideline.
- Shock-responsive SP framework, PwDs SP Framework, Marginalized Groups SP Framework under the purview of LNOB.

Annex – C: The SSPS Programme: Expected Results by 2026

- National Social Protection Strategy 2026+
 - Next generation NSSS 2026+ - Concept note shared in 2022 and 2023.
 - Discussion and writing on content and frameworks in 2024 and 2025.
 - Revisit NSSS Gender strategy in 2024
 - National dialogue in 2025.
- Unemployment, Gender and disability-responsive National Social Insurance Scheme (NSIS).
 - Two studies completed in 2020, 2022.
 - Orientations, dialogues, pilots by different agencies started in 2023.
 - National consensus building dialogues in 2024.
 - Writing NSIS, dialogues, and placed for Cabinet approval in 2025.
- Build capacity of key social protection ministries based on needs assessment for establishing social protection programme leadership.
 - Capacity needs assessment and social protection programme review tool development process started in 2023.
 - Tools finalization in 2024.
 - Key ministries capacity building on automated data sharing, interoperability, and troubleshooting in 2024.
 - Capacity needs assessment of key ministries and social protection programmes by 2025.
- Establishment of a single registry MIS.
 - Situation study, and platform design and dialogues completed in 2022.
 - Broader roadmap with ICT solution done in 2023.
 - Detailed implementation roadmap including budget in 2024.
 - Implementation of single registry MIS with key partners and agencies in 2024 and 2025.
- Functional and utilized web-based social protection M&E dashboard for improved monitoring of social protection reforms and population with gender and sex-disaggregated data.
 - Situation analysis and platform design completed in 2022.
 - M&E dashboard functional populated with reform and programme data at the GoB website in 2023.
 - The social protection programme data interoperability with social protection agencies, consensus building, and automated data sharing, key ministries capacity building in 2024 and 2025.
 - M&E dashboard reflects non-cash transfer social protection programmes, and troubleshooting in 2025.
- Research and Pilot models of universal, target-based social protection addressing SP errors, Urban and shock-responsive social protection, and Persons with Disabilities (PWD).
 - Concept notes developed and shared in 2021.
 - Proposal developed in 2022.
 - Analytical framework design completed in 2023.
 - Pilot will be tested in selected areas including testing the local level single registry MIS, programme M&E, and better targeting with programme efficiency, along with secondary analysis of primary data with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) of Statistics and Informatics Division (SID) in 2024.
 - Data analytics, dialogue on results, and reflection in national policy and plans in 2024 and 2025.
- Broadened knowledge base and influence of NGOs working for marginalized and excluded groups, including PwDs, in social protection decision-making and disability and marginalized population inclusive social protection programming.
 - Field visits and dialogues with non-state actors in 2022 and 2023.
 - Report on non-state actors' social protection needs assessment drafted and reviewed in 2023.
 - Social protection framework for PwDs partnering with OPDs, UN agencies, and ILO and dialogue in 2024.
 - National dialogues on social protection framework for PwDs and inclusion in NSSS 2026+ in 2025.
- Shock-responsive (adaptive social protection) national framework.
 - Study on gender responsive adaptive social protection in 2019
 - Shock-responsive social protection under flash flood-prone areas in 2023.
 - A model of shock-responsive urban social protection report drafted in 2023
 - Shock-responsive social protection national framework, and dialogue in 2024.
 - Shock-responsive social protection inclusion in NSSS 2026+ in 2025.

- Social protection diagnostic and research, including briefs and papers.
 - Progress report of NSSS Action Plan 2021-26; climate-induced shock responsive disaster resilience mapping for adaptive social protection programmes; strategic guidelines for adaptive social protection for Bangladesh; report on PwDs; policy support and institutional arrangement of blue economy in Bangladesh, a model of urban social protection in Bangladesh and report on Non-state Actors on social protection needs in 2022 and 2023.
 - Social protection research, diagnostics using the BBS generated primary data, and dialogues in 2024 and 2025.

SPPS Programme Key Deliveries in 2024

1. Policy implementation review (Washington Consensus, Disability Act 2013, National Plan of Action on Disability, UNCRPD, and others) to build a national social protection framework for persons with disabilities in Bangladesh in collaboration with ILO.
2. The National Social Protection M&E Reform and Programme dashboard, linked to the IBAS++ platform of the Finance Division, supports the Central Management Committee (CMC) for effective social protection decision-making.
3. Build a national Consensus on National Social Insurance Scheme (NSIS) act in collaboration with ILO.
4. National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) Action Plan 2021-26 mid-term review provides policy on the progress of the NSSS guided institutional and programme reforms.

Annex D: DFAT Support to SSPS Programme under Phase – II (August 2023 to June 2026)

Goal

To continue supporting the Government of Bangladesh established and implement a more effective and efficient social protection system.

Objectives

Supporting the Government of Bangladesh's commitments to the reform agenda outlined in the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) and other major policy documents and to build on progress made up to 2023 in consideration of critical lessons from the mid-term review of first phase of the SSPS Programme.

The expected end of programme outcomes would be strengthened social security governance systems and the Government of Bangladesh's adaption of gender and disability inclusive National Social Insurance Schemes (NSIS) and increased coverage of old age persons and person with disability through categorical universal approach. This will be achieved through:

- A new national insurance scheme, building on NSIS framework, policy proposals and piloting plans.
- Developing and piloting universal old age and disability allowances.
- A medium term COVID-19 response plan and a new national strategy from 2026 that adopts a gender and disability responsive universal approach; and
- Strengthening the ability of central agencies to set the reform agenda and to enforce accountability for progress.

Delivery expectation

- Supporting the ongoing workplan and preparing for developing the next phase of the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS).
- Policy advocacy to create adequate fiscal space and budgetary resources for fulfilling the social protection objectives.
- Building capacity to generate meaningful data and explore financial resources.
- Identifying best practices and lessons learned that can be applied to future programmes to enhance their effectiveness.
- Completing the development of a comprehensive M&E and a data base for the social protection system.
- Establishing a single registry management information system and next steps for developing a social registry.
- Strengthening the social protection system for the urban poor.
- Extending capacity-building support to other ministries, departments and stakeholders based on robust assessment.
- Commissioning high-level policy engagement initiatives on specific issues to effectively reach senior policy makers.
- The UNDP will also develop and action a management responsive to the Mid-term Evaluation of the SSPS Programme in consultation with DFAT.

Annex – E: Revised TAPP-based SSPS Programme Activities by Ministries/Divisions

Activity	CD	GED	MoSW	MoF	MoLE & MoEW	SID	ICT	PMO (SDGs)	Implementation Status
Objective – 2: Strengthening governance of social protection by strengthened coordination, M&E, and reporting functions and stronger research and analytical capacity building for a more effective evidence base for policy development									
Facilitate Central Management Committee (CMC) for National Social Security Programmes, led by the Cabinet Secretary	X								39 implementing ministries with 8 policy dialogues/seminars
Inter-ministerial core committee (CMC focal points) meetings on social security, led by the Cabinet Division's Secretary, Coordination and Reforms.	X								39 implementing ministries with 12 workshops
NSSS Action Plan Preparation and Implementation Monitoring Committee link to APA, LCG, CRVS, GRS headed by Secretary, Coordination and Reform	X								45 implementing ministries 20 consultative dialogues/seminars deepening collaboration, efforts, development partners and other stakeholders.
NSSS M&E Committee headed by Member, GED		X							20 implementing ministries Consultative dialogue, 6 dialogue/seminars
NSSS Five Thematic Clusters: Social Allowance, Social Insurance, Food Security, Labour and Livelihood, and Social Empowerment	X								5 thematic leads of NSSS Orientation workshops
NSSS Action Plan 2021-2026 reviews (Mid-term, Final, CODI, Annual)	X								39 implementing ministries through research (8)
Provide TA support to social security programme and key policy proposal development from best practices internationally ((PwDs capacity building and employment, Shock-responsive SP institutional capacity building, shock-responsive urban and gender-inclusive social protection, demand-focused social protection programming for the marginalized population, employment opportunities focusing on circular economy)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	SID, MoSW, CD-GED, LGD, MoDMR, MoEWOE, MoLE, Institutions (5 proposals/concept notes)
Provide policy support to the GO-NGO platform.	X	X						X	25 NGOs including SDG Alliance and OPDs (8 workshops)
Policy support to the platform for social security programme Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) for supporting key policy proposal development on social protection and influencing decision-making for marginalized and excluded groups, including persons with disabilities.	X	X	X			x	X	X	12 workshops/dialogues
Promoting and sharing the best experiences, and lessons learned through national, regional/international conference, dialogue, workshop, paper presentations.	x	x	x	x					25 dialogues, 8 national visits, 6 international workshop participation

Activity	CD	GED	MoSW	MoF	MoLE & MoEW	SID	ICT	PMO (SDGs)	Implementation Status
Conduct research programme on cross-cutting and key social protection issues; and asses the needs of capacity of key ministries to inform policy reforms.	x		x						5 studies/research/assessments/ evaluations
Organizing workshops, seminars, and dialogues, dissemination on research and key policy proposal development among stakeholders	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		5 national level conference, 8 sub-national level conference
Social security information sharing platform through maintaining website	x	x		x		x	x		UPs of LGD digital centres, one platform, 3 digital centres, 39 ministries
Training/capacity building for government officials on evidence-based social protection [ministry specific]	x	x	x	x	x				One module incorporated the followings; SP budgeting, universal and targeted coverage, NSSS reforms, social insurance, private voluntary pension, M&E, Single Registry MIS, CRVS, GRS, social cohesion, life cycle models, multi-dimensional poverty, adaptive social protection, LNOB and inclusive social protection, demography, urban dimension in social protection, child sensitive nutrition, social empowerment, human development, workfare and livelihood programme, international best practices on social protection and SOP of social protection programmes, etc.
Develop a strategy for inclusive and shock-responsive social protection and policy (NSPS 2026 onwards) (39-line Ministries)	x	x							New SP strategy 2026+ approved by the cabinet and parliament
Objective – 1: Strengthening social protection system and capable of supporting a nationally integrated delivery system for reliable, transparent, and developmental GoB social transfers while promoting linkages to ensure effective coordination									
M&E reform dashboard and SP programme data collection from the ministries and populated with reform progress, individual programme, and sex-gender disaggregated data	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	M&E dashboard functioning and utilized by CMC
Developing a web based NSSS accountability dashboard, link to SDG Tracker	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	SP union parishad level pilot in SDG localization areas link to SID SDG trac
Shock-responsive national social protection framework and shock-hotspots-based models with DU	x	x						x	National shock responsive Social Protection framework for NSPS 26+
Secondary/extended analysis of HIES, SVRS, LFS, Population, and Housing Census with sex and gender-based data disaggregation, asses the post COVID-19 economic response	x	x				x		x	Gender based data disaggregation for SP policy proposals, post COVID-19 economic response and NSPS 26+ and 5 policy papers
Single Registry MIS Road Map finalization and support its implementation.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Single Registry MIS for programme use.
Support to policy decisions, reforms agenda and the decisions taken by SP policy committees (CMC, focal points, thematic clusters, action plan preparation and monitoring, M&E committees).	x	x		x	x				Need based technical support and analyse private pension impact on other SP programmes, decisions of SP policy committees.

Activity	CD	GED	MoSW	MoF	MoLE & MoEW	SID	ICT	PMO (SDGs)	Implementation Status
NSIS dialogue and Act preparation and approval	X	x		x	x				5 dialogues with policy and stakeholders
Pilot impact evaluation/case study of universal old age and persons with disability allowances and digital UP link to SVRS and GRS.	x	X	x		x	x	x	x	Pilot in 2 SDG localization areas
Develop and disseminate annual M&E and NSSS action plan progress reports and key findings briefs	x	x				x			3 annual reports available for policy dialogues.

Annex – F: SSPS Programme Implementation Gantt Chart July 2023 – June 2026

Sl. No.	Activity	2023		2024				2025				2026		Remarks
		Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	
Goal	<i>Build an inclusive Social Security System for all deserving Bangladeshis that effectively tackles and prevents poverty and inequality and contributes to broader human development, employment, and economic growth, that strengthens the social contract, enhances stability, and builds resilience</i>													
Intermediate Outcome - 1	<i>Bangladesh established the systems of universal pension, persons with disability, and social insurance schemes, and shocks, in line with the GoB's commitment</i>													
Output - 1	<i>Four policy proposals (OAA, PwD, NSIS, COVID – 19 policy response) and draft NSPS 2026+ tabled for Govt. approval</i>													
01.	Conduct research programme on cross-cutting and key social protection issues													12 Capacity needs assessments of key ministries (MoSW, MoLE, FID, FD, CD, GED, ICTD, SID, MoSW, MoEWOE, MoWCA, MoA and PMO)
02.	Develop a strategy for inclusive and shock-responsive social protection and policy (NSPS 2026 onwards) (39-line Ministries)													4 national and 8 sub-national dialogues for new NSPS 2026 for approval
03.	M&E data collection, including Sex and gender-disaggregated data													24 field visits 39 ministries' reform and programme data
04.	Secondary/extended analysis of SID data and, asses the post-COVID-19 economic response													12 field visits With the support of SID
05.	Single registry MIS launch													One launch event
06.	NSIS dialogue													5 dialogues
07.	NSIS preparation													One NSIS
08.	NSIS Act preparation and approval													12 dialogues, workshops
09.	Develop and disseminate annual M&E and NSSS action plan progress reports and key findings briefs Lead CD													4 lunching events, 12 policy/research briefs
10.	NSSS Action Plan 2021-2026 reviews (Mid-term, Final, CODI, Annual)													5 annual reviews, 5 CODI, 1 mid-term in mid-2024, and 1 final review in the end 2025.
11.	Provide TA support to social security programme and key policy proposal development from best practices, national and internationally													Five policy proposals developed
12.	Policy dialogues on key proposals													Policy proposals shared in 5 consultative dialogues
Output - 2	<i>Research and pilot-generated evidence available to and utilized by policymakers and other stakeholders</i>													
01.	Pilot upazila selection workshops (SDG Localization Areas of GED)													2 Upazilas pilot three models (control, better targeting, universal with community interventions)
02.	Pilot impact evaluation/case study of universal old age and PwDs allowances and digital UP link to SVRS and GRS.													7 field visits
03.	M&E integration in Pilot													7 visits with the support of ICTD, UP, LGD
04.	Digital UP and Single Registry MIS Pilot													7 visits with the support of ICTD, UP, LGD
05.	Community empowerment workshops													One UP control, One UP target, One UP universal
06.	Pilot Upzila census (link to SID)													18 thousand households cover 90 thousand population
07.	Pilot Union data collection by interval (link to SID SVRS)													5 surveys with 6 months intervals data collection
08.	Data analysis, and at least three models' and 'shock-responsive neighborhood' model analysis (link to SID)													Statisticians and economists
09.	Travel to pilot areas													24 pilot area visits
10.	Regular consultative dialogues with UP, and local stakeholders, others – FGD													24 FGDs

Sl. No.	Activity	2023		2024				2025				2026		Remarks
		Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	
Intermediate Outcome - 2	Governance systems strengthened and made inclusive to build the case for and manage an inclusive, lifecycle social security													
Output - 3	Gender-responsive policy advice and accountability tools are made available to the line ministries to demonstrate their accountability to social protection reform													
01.	NSSS Governance Committees' consultative dialogues, discussions, brainstorming, reflection, review, retreat, inception workshops and meetings													24 programmes NSSS guided reform review and access the guidance
02.	M&E reform dashboard launch													One event
03.	Web-based NSSS accountability dashboard													24 field visits Social security information sharing platform through maintaining website Link with SDG Tracker at SID, and GRS
04.	Single Registry MIS Road Map finalization													2 consultative dialogues Engagement with SID, ICTD, FD and other vital ministries
05.	Support for Single registry implementation													6 dialogues
06.	Ministry-specific capacity building													One training module on need assessment and training
07.	Consultative dialogues with CMC													8 dialogues
08.	Consultative dialogues with Inter-ministerial core committees													8 dialogues
09.	Consultative dialogues with 39 ministries link to APA, LCG, CRVS, GRS Lead CD													12 dialogues
10.	Consultative dialogues with NSSS M&E Committee													12 dialogues
11.	Consultative workshops with NSSS Five Thematic Clusters													25 dialogues
12.	Organizing workshops, seminars, and dialogues, dissemination on research and key policy proposal development among the stakeholders													5 Bangladesh Social Protection Weeks, and 8 Sub-national level conferences, 8 disseminations, 8 webinars, and 8 knowledge dissemination programmes
13.	National programme visits, and attended international conferences, workshops, dialogues, paper presentations													4 national programme visits, and 6 international workshops, conferences participation
Output - 4	Broadened knowledge base and influence of NGOs working for marginalized and excluded groups, including persons with disabilities in social protection decision-making													
01.	Policy support to the GO-NGO platform													8 consultative dialogues
02.	NGOs field visit programmes													8 field visits
03.	Policy support to the platform for social security programme Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs), marginalized groups, non-state actors													16 consultative dialogues
04.	Sub-national level dialogues with DPOs, marginalized and non-state actors													10 sub-national dialogues
05.	State of Non-state Actors Report preparation and dissemination													3 reports developed and disseminated
06.	SSPS Programme Workshops (inception, launch, dialogues, implementation plan, M&E Design, Gender, Risk log, 16 days activism, gender markers, gender credential to gender game changers, participation in social protection programmes, fair, communication, operations, and maintenance, others													Need-based activities