



## Local Project Appraisal Committee (LPAC)

### Record of Discussions

#### Project title:

- Social Protection Policy Support (SPPS)
- Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO)

Meeting date: 21 November, 2013

Venue: UNDP (Village Well, 19<sup>th</sup> Floor, IDB Bhaban)

Chair: Ms. Pauline Tamesis, Country Director, UNDP

Participants: See attached annex

#### **1. Opening:**

The Chair of the meeting began by welcoming the LPAC participants, especially, the government counterparts to UNDP's offices. In her introductory remarks, she informed that UNDP has been supporting GED in formulating the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) for Bangladesh. The two proposed projects will allow us to support the NSPS after completion of the current initiation phase and ensure its successful functioning. There is urgency having these two documents approved as the Initiation Plan soon expires. The planned projects will allow us to assist the implementation of NSPS, with oversight to be given by the Cabinet Division. She informed that the policy support project document (SPPS) has been prepared in close consultation with GED, while the delivery project (SWAPNO) has been produced in close coordination with LGD.

Project Documents were prepared by the Poverty Reduction Cluster. Presentations of the projects were made by Ms Majeda Haq (Programme Analyst) and Mr Göran Jonsson (Senior Programme Adviser).

#### **2. Presentation on the Social Protection Programmes:**

The presentation began with an overview of the future social protection programme addressing UNDAF (United Nations Development Assistance Framework) Outcome 2.1. The programme on social protection has three components to be implemented through two projects, namely (1) Social Protection Policy Support (SPPS) Programme; and (2) Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO). SPPS project will be implemented through Cabinet Division and General Economics Division (GED) combining 2 components: (a) better governance, and (b) system strengthening. The third component will be implemented through Local Government Division (LGD) as the project SWAPNO where LGD has a commitment to share 25% of the total cost. The current features of social protection have significant scope for improving effectiveness and cost efficiency.

SPPS programme will work on ensuring coordination structure charged with development and oversight of the system, a policy research facility, an innovations & research challenge fund, broad cross-party ownership, micro-insurance piloting. SPPS will also include developing platforms of direct electronic G2P payments, and field M&E for coordination and local compliance. The policy outputs are to build better and effective evidence base policy development of social protection by strengthened coordination, M&E and reporting functions and stronger research and analysis capacities, building a more effective evidence base for policy development. Similarly, a modern nationally integrated delivery system for reliable, transparent and developmental GoB social transfers will be developed.

The SWAPNO project will incorporate a state-of-the-art graduation strategy aiming at beneficiaries' sustainable exit from extreme poverty, with focus on future employability (skills, market linkages, job placement, access to service & social inclusion). Entry point is cash-for-work employment and building human capital of extreme poor women. Innovative features include IT based channels of social cash transfers, micro-insurance delivery, climate adaptive measures and building employment skills via PPP arrangements like apprenticeship. The SWAPNO project has six

specific outputs focusing on food and livelihoods security, human capital in terms of nutrition, health, education and voice, public assets for the benefit of poor local communities and their reduction of disaster risks, and local government capacity to implement social transfer projects and provide essential public services with accountability, transparency, gender sensitivity and pro-poor approach.

### **3. Record of discussion:**

After the presentation, substantive points were raised during the discussion, as outlined below:

- Mr. Md. Nazrul Islam, Additional Secretary of Cabinet Division, addressed the role of Cabinet Division as overseeing but not implementing. Therefore, in the SP steering committee, the Cabinet Division should be placed in a supervisory role. He emphasized having support from Union Information & Service Centres (UISC) functioning across the country. Regarding the name of the project 'SWAPNO', he informed that the Department of Women Affairs is in the process of developing a project having the same name, SWAPNO. An identical name of two separate projects implemented in the same geographical area by two different agencies might raise confusion among the beneficiaries. Mr. Islam noticed that the Election Commission (EC) has recently become flexible, allowing other bodies to use their database; e.g. Bangladesh Bank has recently signed a MoU with the EC in order to use their database. Mr. Islam suggested using EC's database, if possible. He also raised question whether the government is in a position to share 25% of the total cost of SWAPNO.
- Ms Shabiha Pervin, Deputy Secretary of Cabinet Division, asked to keep a provision to increase capacity of district and upazila social protection committees as well. She raised a reservation against phrasing of a line in both project documents (page 9), on increased allocations for social protection as a 'political good'. She recommended wording sensitive issues carefully, especially those having a political connotation. Like Mr. Nazrul Islam, Ms Pervin also addressed the importance of UISCs, which need to be taken into consideration.
- Md. Ashadul Islam, Additional Secretary of Economic Relations Division (ERD), opined that the role of the Cabinet Division is more than merely playing an overseeing role. The Cabinet Division has a role to steer the whole process of social protection implementation as well. His concern was also about participation from all relevant ministries in the LPAC. He opined that participation of all relevant ministries could add value as all the ministries have their own best experiences. Wider participation would also ensure government ownership over the interventions from different angles. He found no problem with the SWAPNO project since LGD has been engaged in consultation throughout the process of project formulation. About the policy support project, Mr. Islam wanted to know what new and innovative elements the project would add to the existing system. He also emphasized identifying critical areas with a need for intervention. He expressed his concern that the policy support project, having a long list of activities, might be too ambitious.
- Swapan Kumar Sarkar, Director General of Local Government Division (LGD), referred to the learning gained from the South Africa study tour. He preferred to have a ministry on social protection that has applicability over all relevant ministries. He highlighted the fact that, working with A2I project will ultimately link UISCs with the proposed projects. He reconfirmed GoB 25% cost share of SWAPNO, demonstrating Government ownership over the project.
- Md. Eakub Ali, Joint Chief of GED, expressed his full endorsement of the proposed steering committee structure. He recommended following 35 indicators mentioned for M&E in the Five Year Plan. Mr. Ali also highlighted the importance of taking poverty mapping into consideration while selecting districts for piloting as well as full scaling up.
- Mr. Md. Moinul Islam Titas, Deputy Chief of GED, appreciated policy support initiative within GED that will ultimately provide a permanent platform for policy support. He promised to send feedback in writing over email.
- Mr. Satya Ranjan Mondal, Deputy Secretary of Statistics and Informatics Division (SID), informed that they have a project on database on poor and hardcore poor. At the same time, a national population register can be helpful in relation to the projects. Linking to national population register, government departments can produce their own databases. He mentioned that UISCs are now under-utilized. These centres can be used properly under the proposed projects. The economic census that has been conducted this year can also be used for the proposed projects.
- Mohammed Tasharef Hossain Farazi, Deputy Chief of MoDM&R, proposed renaming the steering committee as 'advisory committee'.
- Newaz Hossain Chowdhury, Senior Assistant Secretary of Bank and Financial Institution Division, shared information that Shadharon Bima Corporation is planning to implement a weather index based crop insurance project. Similarly, he recommended engaging with PKSF since they have long and diversified experience on micro-insurance. He also emphasized that the projects should be in line with FYP, Perspective Plan and other relevant plans.

### UNDP response to the LPAC discussion

- The role of the Cabinet Division is not limited to oversight, but their role, as advised by ERD, is also to provide strategy and policy advisory services under the leadership of the Cabinet Secretary. Capacity development of the Cabinet Division, including institutionalization of current arrangements for NSPS formulation, are envisaged under the Policy Support Programme. Annual Work Plans will delineate details of such activities.
- The range of activities under the Policy Support Programme may be wide, but covers interventions required in strengthening governance and systems for upcoming implementation of the NSPS. The interventions can be broadly grouped as:
  - Policy research through a facility within the Government system and through a Challenge Fund
  - Capacity building through training, workshops, study tours, knowledge management, etc.
  - Establishment of linkages – international, with other sectors, with the planning machinery, between localities
  - Engagement with Parliament and Civil Society
  - Introduction of micro-insurance to complement social protection
  - Creating platforms for direct electronic benefit transfers
  - Design and roll-out of social protection M&E and MIS systems, ensuring coordination and local compliance and harnessing information for programme/sector planning

All of the above reflects value-added to the existing system, which will strengthen capacity and coordination. However, UNDP will review the Project Document for possible exclusion of some less vital sub-activities.

- Support from UISCs would be essential in case of both MIS and electronic payment platforms; reference to UISCs will be included in both Project Documents.
- The name SWAPNO for the delivery project was endorsed by an LGD committee in 2011, after careful consideration. The project, with similar name, of Department of Women Affairs referred to is a PPP arrangement with the NGO DORP, which uses the overall programmatic label SAPNA for a package of five different interventions related to maternity allowance.
- The Policy Support Programme remains open to use of databases, and the option of using the EC database will be subjected to feasibility scoping. Forthcoming Annual Work Plans will be more specific on database use. Utilization of the SID/BBS database is envisaged and the Project Document has a full section describing interaction with this database, including the use of the SID/BBS database for sectoral planning.
- The text on page 9 of both Project Documents will be revised to avoid political sensitiveness.
- The Social Protection M&E system envisaged in the SPPS Project Document explicitly includes linkages to the SFYP M&E goals and its indicators.
- The selection of districts for both pilot and scaled up delivery under the SWAPNO project has been guided by poverty mapping; and in addition to UNDAF priority mapping and UNDAF vulnerability mapping.
- It would be for the Government to decide whether to call the oversight committee Steering Committee or Advisory Committee.
- UNDP is aware of the leading role of PKSF in the provision of micro-insurance and is interacting with PKSF on this, including during project formulation.
- One of the most crucial issues of the Policy Support Programme is keeping Social Protection in line with the Five-Year Plan and other relevant plans, and this consideration has been kept in mind also in the preparation of these two Project Documents. They have been formulated in close interaction with GED/Cabinet Division and LGD respectively.
  - UNDP believes that Government participation in the LPAC – as reflected in attached list of participants – was substantial and appreciates the broad participation, in spite of the meeting being called at short notice. However, feedback from relevant ministries that were unable to attend will be solicited and their views taken into consideration
  - UNDP later received supportive feedback from Ministry of Women & Children Affairs and Finance Division (attached).

### Conclusions

- With the above observations, the LPAC meeting recommended endorsement of the two projects with necessary reflections on the issues raised above. From UNDP, it was ensured that feedback from all the relevant ministries will be taken into account in the project documents. At the end, the chair thanked all participants for their contributions.

**Prepared by:**

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**Reviewed by:**

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Mr Göran Jonsson, Senior Advisor, UNDP Bangladesh

**Approved by:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pauline Tamesis', written in a cursive style.

Ms Pauline Tamesis, Country Director, UNDP Bangladesh.

**Attachment:**

**Annex 1:** UNDP Environmental and Social Screening Checklists (These are mandatory checklists for UNDP assisted project, which are signed and attached)

**Annex 2:** Participants list

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