



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Division

Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives

**Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO)
Phase II Project**

2nd PIC Meeting Minutes

Chair : Abul Khair Mohammad Hafizullah Khan, Joint Secretary, Local Government Division & National Project Director, SWAPNO II
Venue : SWAPNO II Meeting Room, DPHE Bhaban, 8th Floor, Shahid Mansur Ali Sarani, Kakrail, Dhaka
Date and time : 18 November 2024, Monday; 11:00 AM
Participants : Annexure A

At the start of the meeting, Mr Abul Khair Mohammad Hafizullah Khan, Joint Secretary of the Local Government Division and National Project Director of the SWAPNO II Project extended a warm welcome and expressed gratitude to all members from various ministries who participated, both in person and via the Zoom platform. He then invited everyone to introduce themselves, later he asked Ashish Kumar Baksh, the National Project Manager of SWAPNO II, to start the discussion. With the Chairperson's consent, the National Project Manager proceeded to present on the Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO Phase II) project, in accordance with the agenda.

Presentation:

The National Project Manager, SWAPNO II thanked all the meeting participants and gave a brief presentation on the SWAPNO II project, following the agenda.

Agendas:

1. Project Updates
2. Upcoming Major Activities
3. Status of GoB Funding
4. AoB (Any Other Business)

1. Project Updates

1.1. The National Project Manager stated that SWAPNO Phase II aims to support poor and extremely poor women by enhancing their employability and ensuring sustainability. The project focuses on skill development to generate income for 10,188 households. The project began in July 2023 and will continue until June 2026, covering 283 Union Parishads and 32 Upazilas across 12 districts in poverty-prone and climate-vulnerable regions of Bangladesh. The Local Government Division is implementing the project with support from the UNDP, the Embassy of Sweden and Marico, Bangladesh.

The overall objective of the SWAPNO Phase II is sustainable poverty alleviation for ultra-poor rural women focusing on future employability. The aim is to enhance human capacity, productive skills, employment, resilience ability, financial inclusion, responsiveness and accountability of local government and the private sector.

The project has three (3) major outputs which are as follows:

- Output 1: Strengthen Institutional Capacity for Sustaining SWAPNO benefits
- Output 2: Increased Income and Assets Engaging Local Economy and Skill Development
- Output 3: Strengthened Human Capabilities and Resilience Capacity

1.2. The project has made significant strides during the second phase, from July 2023 to November 2024. A transparent selection process identified and selected 10,188 women beneficiaries based on clear criteria. In all

283 unions across the participating districts, 12,380 public work schemes were started. A total of BDT 21.50 crore wages was disbursed for 79 workdays, with 100% of transactions conducted digitally through mobile wallets.

Comprehensive life skills training was provided to all women beneficiaries, covering seven modules that included health, disaster preparedness, and financial literacy. Additionally, USD 50,000 was secured from UNDP to support a micro health insurance initiative for 100% of Phase II beneficiaries. Two batches of Training of Trainers (ToT) on gender-responsive Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) & Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) were organized, empowering project staff to train 8,490 UDMC members. Furthermore, an online Management Information System (MIS) was developed and implemented to track progress and monitor results in real-time.

2. Upcoming Major Activities:

The National Project Manager outlined key upcoming activities for the PIC participants, including quarterly UDMC meetings to strengthen gender-responsive DRR and CCA, reform committees as needed, advocate for women's involvement in disaster management, and monitor public asset maintenance with a focus on plastic-free initiatives. Training will be provided to 283 UDMCs for better disaster response and resilience. Additionally, 10,188 women will receive livelihood training, while 1,500 women will gain employment through apprenticeship programs. Aiming to support 3,000 women (aged 18-30) with training and placement in formal sector (RMG, Leather & Food processing) jobs and develop 300 women-led enterprises by 2025. The program will also ensure micro-insurance for 10,188 households and raise awareness of malnutrition across 283 unions. Collaborations with the DAE and Livestock Department will scale adaptive livelihood technologies, while advocacy efforts will involve Union Parishad chairs and the Violence Against Women (VAW) Standing Committee Chairperson. The NPM stated that a total of 160 trainers from District and upazila level various GoB line departments, including agriculture, livestock, and fisheries, will be engaged as core trainers/master trainers for SWAPNO II's livelihood training facilitation. The NPM requested a letter or Government Order (GO) from the National Project Director to the respective DCs and relevant departments at the district and upazila levels to ensure the engagement of agriculture, livestock, and fisheries departments in conducting the training for SWAPNO II.

3. Status of GoB Funding:

The NPM also highlighted a critical challenge: a GoB funding shortfall of BDT 39 crore for FY 2024-2025, essential for wage disbursements vital to the program's success. He expressed gratitude for the strong support from GoB representatives and requested the relevant ministry to provide the necessary support to allocate the amount in line with the DPP for women's wages.

4. Discussion:

The Chairperson remarked on the project's swift field implementation and its achievements to date and then opened the floor for discussion.

Regarding the question of the participant on types of livelihood development training, the NPM clarified that the focus is primarily on agriculture, fisheries, livestock, poultry, and small businesses. A total of 6,000 women will receive training in various sectors based on their interests. The criteria for selection are women aged 31 to 45 who are interested and motivated to participate.

In response to a query about training certificates for participants and loan support for interested beneficiaries, it was noted that collaboration with financial institutions is required. The project will initiate the necessary steps to facilitate this. On the topic of skill development training for formal sector employment, it was emphasized that the NSDO Level 6 certification is essential for effective training. The project will address the quality training as a requirement. The need for a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) was also raised in the discussion to ensure more impactful of training results.

It was noted that correct targeting and beneficiary selection pose a significant challenge in Bangladesh. Therefore, the project needs to revisit the existing beneficiary data, as there may be overlaps with other GoB initiatives or



political biases. The project will conduct a cross-check and verify the beneficiaries on a sample basis to ensure the accuracy of the selection process and confirm that the right beneficiaries have been identified. The chair suggested conducting a random recheck of the beneficiary selection, even though UNDP's initial selection process is considered valid. This will confirm whether any significant changes are needed.

Regarding climate resilience and disaster mitigation activities, it was recommended that the project align its efforts with the relevant government ministry documents to ensure consistency and effectiveness. Given the political changes in Bangladesh and the dysfunctionality of most UP parishads, concerns were raised about the implementation of UP/UDMC training. The NPM clarified that consultations with UNOs are ongoing to facilitate the training, and the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD) and National Adaptation Plan (NAP) guidelines will be incorporated into the UDMCs training.

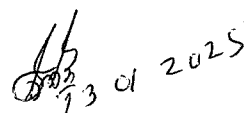
The Chair recommended that the project explore the process of obtaining NSDI certification for formal sector employment, identifying any existing gaps to ensure smooth implementation. He also proposed providing the training modules—particularly the enterprise development modules—to the NPD for review. The project is encouraged to collaborate with relevant experts and ministries to integrate their input where feasible.

Additionally, it was suggested that the PIC meeting minutes be included with the working paper for each participant, along with progress updates of previous meeting decisions. This should become a standard practice for all future PIC meetings.

5. Decisions:

After a thorough discussion, the meeting concluded with the following decision by the Chair:

- Revisit the beneficiary selection process to confirm whether the 10,188 women beneficiaries were selected correctly and without bias.
- The enterprise training modules should be shared with the NPD by February 2025.
- Starting from the next PIC meeting, provide updates on the decisions from the last two PIC meetings, along with progress, on the working paper.



Abul Khair Mohammad Hafizullah Khan
Local Government Division
Govt. of Bangladesh
&
National Project Director, SWAPNO II Project

Annexure A

Participant list: (not according to seniority)

1. Abul Khair Mohammad Hafizullah Khan, Joint Secretary, Local Government Division & National Project Director, SWAPNO II
2. Mohammad Nazmul Ahsan, Deputy Secretary ((Planning & Development-1 Wing), Ministry of Social Welfare
3. Farah Gul Nijhum, Deputy Chief, Socio-Economic Infrastructure Division, Planning Commission
4. Jesmin Parvin, Deputy Secretary, UN-1 Section, Economic Relations Division
5. Mostafijur Rehman, Deputy Secretary, Planning – 2, Local Government Division
6. Poly Kar, Deputy Secretary, Union Parishad-1, Local Government Division
7. Md. Anwar Imam, Director (Deputy Secretary) Monitoring and Evaluation Sector-3, Ministry of Planning.
8. Samsun Nahar, Senior Assistant Chief, Programming Division
9. Papia Sultana, Senior Assistant Secretary, Planning-1, MOWCA
10. Md. Rabiul Hasan, Senior Assistant Secretary, Cabinet Division
11. Ashish Kumar Bakshi, National Project Manager, SWAPNO II, UNDP
12. Mohammudul Hoque, District Manager, SWAPNO II, Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari & Gaibandha
13. MD Mahmood Hossain, District Manager, SWAPNO II, Bagerhat, Pirojpur, Patuakhali & Gopalganj
14. Mir Amir Ali, District Manager, SWAPNO II, Jamalpur & Sherpur
15. Mohammad Masum Miah, SWAPNO II, Cumilla & Chandpur

