

Minutes of the ISPAT ProDoc. Review & Discussion on Implementation Modality

Date: November 18, 2025

Project Title: Institutional Strengthening for Promoting Accelerated Transformation (ISPAT) Project

Venue: UNDP, 19th Floor, IDB Bhaban, Dhaka

1. Attendance:

- 1) Sonali Dayaratne, Deputy Resident Representative and Chair of Project Board, UNDP Bangladesh
- 2) Md. Daud Miah ndc, Director General (Additional Secretary), NGO Affairs Bureau, Chief Adviser's Office
- 3) Dr. Ahmed Ullah FCMA, Director General-1, Chief Adviser's Office
- 4) Mohammad Razibul Islam, Joint Secretary, UN Wing, Economic Relations Division (ERD)
- 5) Md. Anwar Hossain, Director, [Joint Secretary], NGO Affairs Bureau, Chief Adviser's Office
- 6) Syed Haider, First Secretary and Head of Development Cooperation, Australian High Commission, Dhaka
- 7) Asif Kashem, Senior Program Manager, Australian High Commission, Dhaka
- 8) Sheela Tasneem Haq, Senior Governance Specialist, Democratic Governance, UNDP Bangladesh
- 9) AZM Saleh, Monitoring & Evaluation Analyst, UNDP Bangladesh
- 10) Dragan Popovic, Senior Programme Advisor – Governance, UNDP Bangladesh
- 11) Md. Monzurul Islam Kamal, Programme Associate, Democratic Governance, UNDP Bangladesh
- 12) Md. Gausul Alam, Administration and Finance Associate, Democratic Governance, UNDP Bangladesh
- 13) Sharmin Islam, Gender Analyst, UNDP Bangladesh
- 14) Azizul Haque Sarder, Project Manager, ISPAT, UNDP Bangladesh
- 15) Prosun Chowdhury, Project Analyst, ISPAT, UNDP Bangladesh
- 16) Fatema Jinia, IT Associate, ISPAT, UNDP Bangladesh
- 17) Narayan Chandra Das, Admin & Finance Associate, ISPAT, UNDP Bangladesh
- 18) Sabbir Ahmed Nahid, National Consultant - IT Expert, ISPAT, UNDP Bangladesh.

2. Opening Remarks:

On 18 November 2025, UNDP Bangladesh arranged the 2nd Board Meeting on the IP-ISPAT with the aim to discuss and review the Institutional Strengthening for Promoting Accelerated Transformation (ISPAT) Project. The meeting was chaired by Ms Sonali Dayaratne, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP Bangladesh, and attended by senior representatives from the Chief Adviser's Office (CAO), NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), Economic Relations Division (ERD), Australian High Commission, and UNDP Bangladesh. Ms Sonali Dayaratne dedicated her sincere thanks to the distinguished participants for their leadership in the implementation of the IP-ISPAT, underlining that cordial partnership between UNDP and the government will continue during the implementation of the ISPAT project.

This Board meeting served also as a Local Project Appraisal Committee meeting for the ISPAT project, which is a necessary step in the approval process, aiming to get additional feedback and recommendations to improve the suggested project proposal, before submitting it to the ERD for its endorsement. The ProDoc was built based on the learned lessons from the implementation of the IP-ISPAT and comprehensive external consultations with different stakeholders and internal dialogues within UNDP to ensure relevance and coherence.

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3. Project presentation: Ms. Sheela Haq presented Project Document (ProDoc.), covering its background, objectives, outcome and outputs, budget, management structure, implementation modality, , duration, implementing partner, etc.

She highlighted that the pro-doc was built on the legacy of the IP-ISPAT and that the project needs to be expanded, noting the improved capacities of both NGOAB and NGO staff as well as achievements in digitalisation process and policy work led by NGOAB. The upcoming ISPAT Project (running through 30 June 2027) aims to promote evidence-based policymaking and better coordination between service providers and recipients. Ms. Haq stressed the importance of achieving SDGs and fostering a strong policy environment via strategic engagement with NGOs, local administration, departments, and stakeholders.

Key project outputs include:

- Strengthening NGOAB's institutional capacity for transparent, gender-responsive, and accountable service delivery.
- Enhancing NGOAB personnel's ability to coordinate and deliver services in line with the Citizens' Charter and gender-responsiveness principles.
- Supporting policies that facilitate responsive service delivery and align NGO-led innovation with national priorities and SDG targets.

4. Summary of discussions:

- Mr Mohammad Razibul Islam, Joint Secretary, UN Wing, ERD, emphasised the need to implement the project in line with the national project implementation guidelines. Mr. Islam also highlighted the importance of engaging NGOs and CSOs in the project implementation, recognizing their critical role in achieving the SDGs and contributing to future policy formulation.
- Dr. Ahmed Ullah FCMA, Director General-1, Chief Adviser's Office (CAO), highlighting the importance of the initiative, inquired about the proposed implementation modalities and their effectiveness. He also suggested sharing the Project Document (ProDoc.) with the CAO and NGOAB for their final comments and expressed his interest to facilitating the approval process from his office.
- Mr. Md. Daud Miah ndc, Director General, NGO Affairs Bureau, Chief Adviser's Office, recommended sharing the Project Document with the relevant stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive review and alignment. He reaffirmed the Bureau's strong commitment to support the project and facilitate the subsequent steps in coordination with other Government entities, underscoring the importance of collective ownership for smooth and effective implementation.
- Mr. Syed Haider, First Secretary and Head of Development Cooperation, Australian High Commission, thanked all stakeholders for their active engagement in the project development and reaffirmed Australia's strong commitment to align with the ISPAT initiative. He emphasized several critical policy issues that emerged from the dialogues with CSOs, emphasizing the need that those insights inform the project's strategic direction. Mr Haider also commended NGOAB and UNDP for their effective coordination and dedicated efforts in advancing this important initiative.

5. Project Implementation Modality: Closing Remarks by Distinguished Participants from CAO, ERD, and NGOAB

At the end of the presentation representatives from CAO, ERD, NGOAB and Australian High Commission emphasized the importance of selecting an appropriate implementation modality for the project. The officials thoroughly reviewed and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of both the National Implementation Modality (NIM) and the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM). The DRR emphasized that both modalities are in line with UNDP's rules and procedures, elaborating on principles linked to NIM and

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DIM, stressing also that UNDP for this particular initiative suggests DIM modality. However, UNDP will be guided by the government's preference, to secure ownership.

In the end the representatives of the government recommended that DIM is the most appropriate modality for the implementation of this particular project. .

Namely, IP-ISPAT that was initiated in June 2024 has been implemented through DIM modality. Consequently, government representatives stressed the importance of maintaining this modality to ensure consistency and uninterrupted operations highlighting the following:

- **Limited Human Resources Within NGOAB:** NGOAB currently operates with limited staffing, and many of the officials are not familiar with managing a technical project of this nature. Transitioning this project from DIM to NIM would significantly increase their workload and operational burden.
- **Capacity Constraints:** Several NGOAB officials continue to adhere to conventional work practices and may lack the technical expertise necessary to manage the project efficiently under NIM.
- **Progress Achieved Under DIM:** Under the DIM modality, the IP-ISPAT (June 2024 to November 2025) has accomplished several key milestones. These include developing NGOAB's online system by digitizing substantial manual data, facilitating the signing of two MoUs between Bangladesh Data Centre Company Limited (BDCCL) and Sonali Bank, procuring server services and issuing a Purchase Order (PO) for monthly payment processing through December 2026, providing digital equipment to NGOAB, and engaging a training institute (IPTM) to deliver 14 training courses to NGOAB and NGO officials. Additional achievements involve revision of policies through eight policy dialogues and consultations, as well as recruiting a Policy Expert to support the review of NGOAB's legal frameworks—including acts, rules, and guidelines. Many of these initiatives are ongoing and require uninterrupted progress to ensure their sustainability and successful completion.
- **Project Budget Size:** The total budget allocated for the ISPAT Project is AUD 2,950,000, equivalent to USD 1,921,304.56 (BDT 233,726,699.37). To date, approximately USD 644,793.19 (BDT 78,439,091.56) has been spent under IP-ISPAT since 2024. The tentative expenditure up to 31 December 2025 is estimated at USD 215,560.08 (BDT 26,222,883.73), bringing the total projected cost to USD 860,353.27 (BDT 104,661,975.30) through December 2025.

The approximate remaining funds—USD 1,060,951.29 (BDT 129,064,724.43)—will be transferred to the upcoming IP-ISPAT II phase. Given the relatively modest overall budget, continuing with the existing Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) has been assessed as the most efficient and appropriate approach.

6. Major Recommendations

The Board agreed on the following:

- In view of the project's scope, limited human resources within NGOAB, the modest scale of the project budget, and ongoing digitalization progress utilizing the DIM approach, the Board has agreed, in principle, to continue with the Direct Implementation Modality for the remaining of the project period. This decision ensures a practical balance between maintaining the momentum achieved during the IP-ISPAT and equipping NGOAB for future institutional capacity building.

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- UNDP will submit the draft ISPAT Project Document to NGOAB and CAO by 27 November 2025 for their review and comments.
- By 04 December 2025, CAO will submit the final Project Document to ERD, formally requesting the approval under the DIM modality.

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