

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme
Cabinet Division
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Minutes of the 2nd Project Implementation Committee (PIC) Meeting of Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme.

Chair	Md Shamsul Arefin, Secretary, Coordination and Reforms, Cabinet Division
Co-chair	Dr. Md. Kawser Ahmed, Member (Secretary), General Economics Division (GED)
Date & Time	3 November 2022, 11.00 pm in Zoom Platform.
Attendance	Annexure-A

The chairperson Md. Shamsul Arefin, Secretary, Coordination and Reforms, Cabinet Division inaugurated the meeting with his warm greetings to the presence followed by a round of short self-introduction of the participants. He mentioned that the government of Bangladesh formulated the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) for reforming the social protection of the country. The social protection objectives have been aligned with the development goals of the country. He then highlighted the importance of regular meetings of the Project Implementation Committee (PIC) in effective implementation of the Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme agenda. The chair categorically mentioned that the SSPS Programme is one of the flagship projects of the Government of Bangladesh in rolling out reforms of social security system of Bangladesh as stipulated in the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS). Then the Chair requested Ms. Murshida Sharmin, Deputy Secretary, Social Security, and the National Project Director of SSPS Programme, Cabinet Division to brief the meeting on the progress of the SSPS Programme.

2. Ms. Murshida Sharmin, Deputy Secretary, Social Security, Cabinet Division shared a power point presentation highlighting the progress of the SSPS Programme. She said that the project is being implemented jointly by the Cabinet Division and the GED of Planning Commission. She further mentioned that the project commenced in 2014 and continued up to June 2020 (in 1st phase) with the technical assistance from FCDO, DFAT, and UNDP. The project was revised and extended for the period from July 2020 to June 2023 with funding from DFAT. It has the objective of enhancing the overall governance of the social protection programmes and strengthening the delivery system.

3. Ms. Sharmin then pointed out that the goal of the project is to build an inclusive social security system for all deserving Bangladeshis to strengthen the social contract, enhance stability, and build resilience. The expected outcome of the project is that the poor people are less vulnerable to external shocks through greater access to financial and insurance services, and social security with clear graduation strategies. She also shared that component one of the projects is better governance of social protection by strengthened coordination, M&E and reporting functions, more substantial research and analysis, and capacity building for a more effective evidence-base for policy development. And the component two is modern social

protection infrastructure developed with capability of supporting a nationally integrated delivery system for reliable, transparent, and developmental social transfers while preventing leakages, and ensuring effective coordination. She then requested Mr. Mohammad Khaled Hasan, Joint Secretary, Civil Registration and Social Security Branch, Cabinet Division to brief the meeting on the NSSS Action Plan and progress of the activities of the SSPS Programme.

4. Mr. Mohammad Khaled Hasan then explained that the SSPS project revision has been built based on the progress made by the project during 2017 to 2019 in consideration of critical lessons from the project and mid-term review of National Social Security Strategy (NSSS). The revision also has considered the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, discussion inputs from former Member of GED (now honourable State Minister for Planning), SDGs Coordinator, Member, SEID and Secretary, Coordination and Reforms of Cabinet Division. The project has reflected the lessons learned from the study tours in Turkey, Indonesia, India and Thailand, and recommendations from Bangladesh Social Security Conferences held in 2018 and 2019.

5. Furthermore, the revision also renewed the commitment of the reform agenda outlined both in NSSS and the 8th Five-year Plan (2020-2025). The revision is significantly informed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), UNSDGs, and the common narratives on Bangladesh social protection reforms by the Development Partner's including UN Agencies, EU, ADB, WB, DFAT, FCDO and others, and response to climate and COVID-19 inducive shocks. He then mentioned that the project already has a number of achieved milestones which include Pilots on G2P, GRS on social protection, Capacity Building of the government personnel, Orientation and Engagement, Policy Dialogues, Governance (institutionalization and coordination, Social Protection System Strengthening, Strengthening G2P and GRS, COVID-19 Response, Communication and Visibility, Bangladesh Social Security Conference etc.

6. Mr. Hasan then explained that assigned by the Central Management Committee (CMC) on National Social Security Programmes, the NSSS Action Plan Sub-committee, led by the Secretary, Coordination and Reforms of the Cabinet Division, has formulated the NSSS Action Plan, Phase – II (2021-2026) successfully. The sub-committee conducted a series of consultative dialogues, meetings, and workshops with the concerned stakeholders and finalized the draft NSSS Action Plan. Then the first draft of the Action Plan was placed before the CMC in its 15th meeting on 27 June 2021. As per decision, the draft was sent to the concerned 39 ministries/divisions for their further review and feedback. Following the review comments and input of the ministries/divisions the final draft of the NSSS Action Plan 2021-2026 was thoroughly reviewed by the Action Plan preparation and monitoring Sub-committee and then placed before the CMC. In the 16th meeting held on December 23, 2021, the CMC finally approved the NSSS Action Plan, Phase – II (2021-26). The Action Plan has also been vetted by the Honourable Prime Minister and has been disseminated among all the ministries and divisions through a five day long workshop which was inaugurated by the Cabinet Secretary on October 6, 2022 at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, Dhaka.

7. Mr. Mohammad Khaled Hasan, Joint Secretary mentioned that the SSPS Programme has been supporting the policy reforms efficiently with the support from a very skilful, experienced and technically sound project management. He said that the oversight of the project is provided by a Project Board/Project Implementation Committee (PIC) which is the

group responsible for consensus management decisions for the project when guidance is required including approval of project plans and revisions. The Project Board/PIC ensures accountability, transparency, effective project management and value for money of the SSPS Programme. He added that the annual reviews, work plans and budgets are prepared and presented by the Project Management to the Executive and other members of the Project Board/PIC for review and approval by the Project Manager, under the guidance of the National Project Director, and submitted to UNDP. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) which is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary is responsible for policy guidance and co-ordination between all institutions and groups involved in the Social Protection Programme.

8. Mr. Aminul Arifeen, Project Manager, SSPS Programme explained that a lot of works to be done with in very short time along with the challenges induced from the pandemic that is very crucial for the project. He said that the project management is very hopeful to deliver all the activities in time in cooperation with the Cabinet Division and the GED of Planning Commission. He said that we have accomplished all of our planned consultation, dialogues with the ministries/divisions particularly with the Cabinet Division and GED. He informed the meeting about the progress of the piloting and studies which are under process with the Department of Social Services and the Institute of Social Welfares of the University of Dhaka regarding the designing and piloting of the Old Age Allowance and Disability Allowance. He also complemented to the statement of the chair of the meeting that SSPS programme will organize PIC meeting regularly and also support to organize other regular meetings and dialogues with other stakeholders particularly with the Local Consultative Group (LCG) on social protection.

9. Mr. Zahir Raihan, Additional Secretary, IMED said that the 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 paved 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.

10. Mr. Asif Kashem, Senior Programme Manager, Gender Focal and Social Protection Lead, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian High Commission, Bangladesh said that we are strongly committed to this project and understand that the progress of the project is excellent because of the strong commitment from both Cabinet Division and GED sides who are also playing crucial role for social protection in the country as well. He mentioned that the Single Registry MIS provides a single platform to store essential information sourced from MISs of different social protection programmes. He added that a Single Registry will help policy makers in appropriate decision making in the social security sector in Bangladesh and we expect that the Government will establish a national Single Registry that is based on programme-specific MISs that communicate with each other and deliver comprehensive information across government.

11. Mr. Anwarul Haque, Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP Bangladesh mentioned that Social protection is important not only for addressing vulnerability but also for solving the problems of entrenched poverty and reducing marginalization. He emphasized on the Urban Social Protection mandates along with Shock responsive and Inclusive social protection for all. The importance of a well-designed social protection system has increasingly been accepted within national and global policy circles for addressing triple problems of poverty, vulnerability and marginalization. Bangladesh's latest initiative in social protection the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) takes up the challenges through an inclusive, focused, and coordinated approach to poverty reduction.

12. The co-chair, Dr. Kaswer Ahmed, Member (Secretary), General Economics Division (GED) mentioned that the SSPS project has made an impressive progress with outstanding achievements amid the huge challenges amidst the global crisis and post Covid socioeconomic conditions. He then draws the attention of Development Partners particularly the DFAT regarding the importance of continuing the partnership with SSPS Programme to bring the social protection reforms in another height of success. He urged that we have to ensure further advancement of the NSIS, Single Registry MIS, GRS, Blue Economy and other issues while formulating the next phase of NSSS 2026+. He then explained that the Integrated Single Registry MIS is very crucial for social protection system. He expressed satisfaction that the SSPS project has a huge contribution in it. He added that Bangladesh now has a roadmap to a social protection system that is inclusive, focused, as well as coordinated enough to achieve the objectives and get the maximum value of public money. He emphasized that a comprehensive strategy with a detailed roadmap needs to be followed for further reduction in poverty.

13. The chair of the meeting opined that we need to focus on the coordination in the field level for implementing social protection programmes. He said that the Cyclone Sitrang caused a huge damage for the agriculture and cattle sectors in coastal areas. This disaster showed us the importance of the Cattle and Agriculture Insurance for the country. He said that Bangladesh has made significant strides in poverty and vulnerability reduction, and other socio-economic indicators like nutrition, life expectancy, and gender equality. So much so that Bangladesh met all three eligibility criteria for graduation from LDC status to lower middle-income country status in 2018. Finally, Bangladesh was favourably reviewed in February 2021 by UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP), which found the country on track to be included in the developing country grouping by 2026.

14. Decesion/Recommendatoins:

After detailed discussions the meeting made the following decisions/recommendations:

- a) The SSPS Programme, as a flagship project in social security sectors, should augment the supports to the Cabinet Division and the General Economics Division (GED) to intensify the coordination among the key line ministries for implementation of comprehensive social security agenda of the government.
- b) The reform-related research works need to be shared in the policy dialogues for facilitating the achievement of the project objectives which are aligned with the visions of the NSSS. These dialogues will also aim at supporting the formulation of the

National Sustainable Development Framework and the next phase of NSSS beyond 2026+ as was discussed in a recent dialogue at Sreemongal in September 2022 in presence of the Cabinet Secretary as the chief guest.

- c) The meeting approved the Annual Work Plan 2023 and revised Annual Work Plan 2022 which were presented in the meeting. The project will initiate the NSSS Action Plan Phase – II mid-term evaluation by the end of 2023, instead of mid-2024.
- d) 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 the IMED for conducting the project evaluation which is necessary for initiating such revisions. UNDP may take necessary measures for conducting a mid-term project review through independent reviewer(s) by the first quarter of 2023. The findings of this review may be taken into consideration by the IMED while conducting their evaluation.
- e) The contribution of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of the Australian Government is highly appreciated for their supports to the SSPS Programme through UNDP for formulation and implementation of the NSSS, 2015 which is a 10 year-long Bangladesh social security policy document. The DFAT is requested to continue their support for the ongoing social security reforms in Bangladesh.
- f) 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.

15. There being no further agenda items for discussion, the chair concluded the meeting with a vote of thanks to all the participants.



Dr. Md. Kawser Ahmed
Member (Secretary)
General Economics Division (GED)
Planning Commission



Md. Shamsul Arefin
Secretary
Coordination and Reforms
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