



**Report on**  
**The Proceedings of**  
**The Workshop**  
**on**

**Sharing Implementation Plans of**  
**Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme**

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Hotel Tulip, Cox's Bazar



Report on the Proceedings of the Workshops on  
Sharing Implementation Plans of Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme

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## Executive Summary

In line with Bangladesh's national goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh is prioritizing on successfully implementing its newly launched National Social Security Strategy (NSSS). The General Economics Division (GED) and Cabinet Division are spearheading the implementation.

Through its joint project, Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme, GED and the Cabinet Division have been collaborating to address Bangladesh's social development issues from a coordination and reform perspective; SSPS has been rolling out the NSSS reform in 35 ministries. Recently the project, with Technical Assistance support from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has been extended for two years till 2019.

To facilitate smooth implementation of the NSSS for the next two years, SSPS arranged an implementation plan sharing workshop at Royal Tulip Sea Pearl Beach Resort, Cox's Bazaar from 27-28 March 2018. The workshop focused on SSPS' progress, future action and implementation plan and key issues for NSSS reform. Considering the ongoing Rohingya crisis, the workshop also included a special session on understanding social protection needs of the host community and Rohingyas in Cox's Bazaar.

Mr. Mohammad Shafiul Alam, Cabinet Secretary, Cabinet Division, Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, presided as Chief Guest. 33 participants including Mr. N M Zeaul Alam, Secretary (Coordination and Reforms), Mr. Dilwar Bakth, Additional Secretary (Administration), Mr. A K Mohiuddin Ahmed, Additional Secretary (Coordination), Mr. Khurshid Alam, Assistant Country Director, UNDP; Ms. Angela Naumann, First Secretary of Australian High Commission, and officials from the Government, UNDP and DFAT attended the workshop.

As outcome of the workshop there came up a number of recommendations which include approval of the yearly Action Plans of the SSPS Programme, directives for meaningful integration of the NSSS action plan with the Annual Performance Agreement (APA); utilization of the second generation of Grievance Redress System of the Cabinet Division for better governance in social protection sector; enhanced social protection programmes for the host communities in Cox's Bazar affected by the influx of the Rohingya refugees; and instructions for early finalization of the M&E framework for social protection programmes.



## Important Statements

Mr. Mohammad Shafiul Alam  
Cabinet Secretary



The NSSS is a detailed work plan for updating the social security system of the country. This is a multi-dimensional measure, encompassing social protection design and delivery system. To address these issues, the relevant ministries will have to work in coordination with each other till the vision of the NSSS is realized.

N M Zeaul Alam Secretary  
Coordination and Reforms



The social security sector is more potential than it actually performed. Therefore, the Government has taken up a more comprehensive approach to reform social security system by adopting the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS). This is a long-term roadmap for setting up a lifecycle based social protection system.

Mr. A K Mohiuddin Ahmed  
Additional Secretary (Coordination)



We are happy that members of the development partners, UNDP and DFAT have been providing continuous supports to implementation of NSSS, especially through the SSPS Programme.

Mr. Md. Faizul Islam  
National Project Director



The collaborative efforts of relevant ministries, development partners and the field administration is required for proper implementation of the NSSS. The present workshop would pave way for such collaboration.

Mr. Khurshid Alam  
Assistant Country Director, UNDP



Bangladesh is on its way to become a developed country and the NSSS will significantly contribute to reach its goal in time. The UNDP is committed to continue its supports to the Government of Bangladesh in reforming the social protection system along the lifecycle framework

Ms. Angela Naumann,  
First Secretary of Australian High Commission



The efforts of the government of Bangladesh to implement a comprehensive social protection system are really encouraging and the DFAT is proud to become a part of these initiatives.

## Proceedings of the Workshop

The Workshop on Workshops on Sharing Implementation Plans of Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme was organized by the SSPS Programme of Cabinet Division and the GED of Planning Commission supported by the UNDP. The main objective of the workshop was to brief the key officials of the Cabinet Division, GED, UNDP and DFAT on the activities of the SSPS Programme and, specially to share with them the yearly action plans of the project. The list of the participants is attached as the Appendix - A.

It was a two-day long workshop in the serene atmosphere of the Hotel Tulip at Cox's Bazar, where the officials participated with much enthusiasm and shared views on different issues of the Social Protection in Bangladesh. The workshop became more significant as the officials of the district administration joined the discussion on various issues of the aspects of social protection in the region.

The workshop covered a number of issues including the gender equality, monitoring and evaluation, grievance mechanism, local situation of social protection and so on. These are burning issues requiring collective deliberation for way forwards.

“The social protection reforms that Bangladesh is putting in place matter greatly for today and for the country's future”

## Opening Session

The first day of the workshop was mainly an opening session where the SSPS Programme personnel briefed on the objectives and the overall design of the workshop. Then the senior official including the chief guest of the workshop Mr. Mohammad Shafiul Alam, the Cabinet Secretary delivered their speeches.



(L-R): Mr. Dilwar Bakht, Additional Secretary (Administration); Mr. N M Zeaul Alam, Secretary (Coordination and Reforms); Mr. Mohammad Shafiul Alam, Cabinet Secretary; Mr. Khurshid Alam, Assistant Country Director, UNDP; Ms. Angela Naumann, First Secretary of Australian High Commission; Mr. A K Mohiuddin Ahmed, Additional Secretary (Reforms)

### **Speech of the Cabinet Secretary:**

In his speech the Cabinet Secretary informed that Cabinet Division has undertaken a number of programmes for governance reforms like National Integrity Strategy, GRS, CRVS and so on. Another important reform initiative is Annual Performance Agreement (APA). He explained that it is a format of Government Performance Management System (GPMS). The objective of the system is to improve the performance of different sectors of the government in line with national goals. The APA enforces an effective system of monitoring and evaluation which ensures accountability.

He also mentioned that the Cabinet Division is coordinating the implementation of National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) which is a mechanism to enhance performance and returns from huge investment in social security. It introduces a system of M&E to ensure accountability. The spirit and function of NSSS are consistent with the APA. Any poor performance in NSSS implementation is supposed to be reflected in the APA. Therefore, he pointed out that the APA of relevant ministries should properly incorporate the activities and targets of NSSS. However, he expressed surprise that there is no formal arrangement in

place for coordination between NSSS and APA. Some coordination mechanism should be established between the two. He expected that the issue would be discussed in detail in the sessions of next day.

The Cabinet Secretary added that the NSSS is a detailed work plan for updating the social security system of the country. This is a multi-dimensional measure, encompassing social protection design and delivery system. To address these issues, the relevant ministries will have to work in coordination with each other. Even, within the Cabinet Division many different branches and sections are involved. Effective coordination among them is also necessary. He expressed his satisfaction that the officials of the relevant branches have been invited in the present workshop along with GED officials and development partners. He was optimistic that this measures would initiate a strong foundation for cooperation in future.

He stated that the Cabinet Division promotes a culture of continuous learning and innovation in administration. Sometimes brainstorming labs are arranged outside the office environment for generating innovative ideas in governance. He termed the present workshop as such a lab for sharing experiences and encouraging innovation.

### **Speech of Secretary (Coordination and Reforms)**

In his speech Mr. N M Zeaul Alam, the Secretary, Coordination and Reforms, Cabinet Division said that the month of March is very significant for the people of Bangladesh as this is the month of our independence. We celebrated our 48th anniversary of independence just yesterday. Only one week before Bangladesh achieved a great milestone of graduating from LDC status to the rank of developing countries. This glorious achievement is the result of the collective efforts of all of us. He stressed that our hard struggle may not end before we can register the name of Bangladesh as a developed country.

He opined that the brilliant success of us was possible by contribution of different sectors of the country. The sector of social security deserves great credits in this regard, as it accelerated poverty reduction and development of human capital. However, the social security sector is more potential than it actually performed. Therefore, the Government has taken up a more comprehensive approach to reform social security system by adopting the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS). This is a roadmap for setting up a lifecycle based social protection system which is more efficient and effective than the traditional social safety net programmes. He elaborated that the NSSS has been designed to tackle poverty, vulnerability and marginalization. More importantly, it targets to enhance economic progress by human development beginning from childhood.

He apprised the audience that the NSSS is a long-term strategy of the country till 2026. In the meantime, an action plan of NSSS has been formulated. However, implementation of different activities is very complicated, involving many issues of governance. Therefore, he urged that we should go through continuous brain storming exercises for finding out newer ideas for effective implementation of NSSS. He appreciated the initiatives of the SSPS Programme for arranging the workshop which will pave way for collective efforts of all concerned.

## **Speech of Additional Secretary (Coordination)**

In his speech he expressed gratitude and sincere thanks to all for making time to attend the two-day long workshop of SSPS Programme. He informed that as a member secretary of the Central Management Committee on Social Security the implementation of NSSS is one of his major responsibilities. This is a challenging task as it involves many organizations. He expressed hope that the workshop will enlighten him and his team in carrying out our responsibilities more effectively.

He pointed out that Government is committed to perform well in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). His wing is also involved in implementation of some goals of SDGs which are linked with social protection. In order to create more intensive atmosphere of collaboration among officials, the SSPS Programme took initiative for arranging the retreat programme. He expressed gratitude to both Cabinet Secretary and Secretary (Coordination and Reforms) for their kind presence.

## **Speech of Other Special Guests**

Among others, the workshop was participated as special guests by Mr. Dilwar Bakth, Additional Secretary (Administration), Mr. Khurshid Alam, Assistant Country Director, UNDP and Ms. Angela Naumann, First Secretary of Australian High Commission. In their respective speeches they expressed satisfaction for arranging such an excellent workshop on social protection. They thanked the organizers and wished the workshop a success. The gist of their speech is as follows:

On the eve of marking 47 years of independence, Bangladesh has met all criteria for graduating out of 'Least Developed Country' (LDC) status by 2024. It is a significant achievement for Bangladesh that is pillared on both extraordinary economic growth and huge gains in human development; the prospective graduation also highlights the Government's high political commitment to alleviating poverty and becoming a developed nation by 2041.

Bangladesh's social protection sector has contributed significantly towards these aims. In 2015, it launched NSSS to holistically address the triple problems of poverty, vulnerability and marginalization; accordingly, 35 ministries have already drawn up and endorsed Action Plans that align with the Strategy.

But implementing the new reform agenda will be challenging. Furthermore, Bangladesh faces present challenges such as the ongoing Rohingya crisis that can likely deepen poverty. Higher inequity can also result from the emerging 4th Industrial Revolution that can spur jobless growth through automation and reverses in demographic dividend that can strain Bangladesh's social protection system.

Bangladesh will have to carefully navigate these pitfalls to achieve the country's long-term goals. As the social protection reforms are also linked to achieving the SDGs, strong coordination across the Government and with development partners is critical for the country's continued economic growth, development and success.

## Working Sessions

The working sessions of the workshop were held on the second day. A number of issues were covered in these sessions by different resource persons. A brief summary of the sessions are given here while the power pint presentations are attached as appendix – B.

## 1. Overview: SSPS achievements, future action and plan



**Presentation:** Aminul Arifeen  
Project Manager, SSPS Programme, UNDP

### Introduction

In line with Bangladesh's national goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Government approved its National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) in 2015 to frame and implement a comprehensive approach for addressing poverty, vulnerability and marginalization. NSSS has been developed under the joint leadership of the Cabinet Division and General Economics Division, Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh; For rolling out NSSS across 35 ministries, the two Divisions are collaborating through its Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme in partnership with UNDP and DFAT. The Government and partners are taking stock of the Programme's progress over four years, achievements and future plans for implementing the Strategy.

### Highlights

The presentation provided an overview for SSPS including: i) major outcome, key achievements and national support to NSSS iii) initiatives to strengthen Government-to-Persons (G2P) system and iv) planned activities for 2018-19.

SSPS aims to ensure that the Government develops a fully functional social protection system through which the poor are less vulnerable to external shocks by gaining greater access to financial and insurance services and social safety nets with clear graduation strategies. The Programme is pillared on two components—'Better Governance' and 'System Strengthening'. With the NSSS as the guiding document for project related support, SSPS contributes expertise on four fronts—evidence-based technical assistance, evidence-based research, evidence-based policy guidance and by building capacity through training and communication to implement effective reform.

#### ▪ **Major outcomes, key achievements and national support to NSSS**

SSPS developed, approved and launched NSSS in 2015 and oriented officials of 35 Ministries/Divisions, 130 Members of Parliament and key local government officials on the Strategy. It has also facilitated evidence-based research by commissioning 11 background papers to prepare the NSSS. Following

approval, key achievements for SSPS span across three areas: i) institutionalizing and coordinating NSSS governance ii) drafting and approving NSSS Action Plans and iii) supporting diagnostics and research.

NSSS governance was institutionalized through the Central Management Committee (CMC) on Social Security Programmes at the Cabinet Division (re-constituted with increased authority from monitoring to management) and newly established five thematic clusters. For NSSS Action Plans, an Action Plan Sub-committee was formed under the CMC Technical Committee; the Plans were developed for 35 Ministries/Divisions and five Thematic Clusters and approved by the Government. SSPS has carried out policy diagnostic studies on issues such as the political economy of NSSS implementation, gender, NSSS research needs, measures to enhance urban inclusion in the NSSS and adaptive social protection.

Additionally, SSPS has developed a draft Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework for monitoring performance of NSSS implementation, including mapping into SDG and 7th Five-Year Plan indicators. In partnership with Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC), training curriculum has been revised to incorporate NSSS social protection training for all cadres of civil servants.

#### ▪ **Strengthening G2P system**

Noting big inefficiencies in delivering social security cash transfers across Bangladesh, the NSSS calls for significantly improving G2P delivery mechanisms.

Following the joint micro study between SSPS and sister project, 'Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities' (SWAPNO), on transferring social security cash transfers to SWAPNO women through digital payments, project team members presented proposals to both UNDP's regional iData Studio and global Innovation Facility. As a result, a combined amount of USD 100,000 was awarded for the specific purpose of carrying out further digital cash transfers research. The findings will be presented to the Government's Planning Commission for policy guidance.

#### ▪ **Planned activities**

For 2018-19, priority initiatives under Component 1('Better Governance') cover seven areas: i) policy guidance for implementing NSSS Action Plans ii) strengthening NSSS M&E Framework to improve efficiency and effectiveness iii) formulating NSSS gender strategy and action plans iv) conducting diagnostic studies v) building consensus for NSSS advocacy and communication needs strategy and plans and NSSS urban strategy and action plan vi) developing government capacity on social security and vii) developing capacity of Cabinet Division's GRS1 unit and of ministries (that are providing social protection) for redressing grievances.

Under Component 2 ('System Strengthening'), priority initiatives include: i) developing capacity for single registry MIS ii) strengthening capacity for direct G2P and Person-to-Person (P2P) electronic payments and iii) conducting NSSS mid-term review and formulating future programme.

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<sup>1</sup> Grievance Redress System

## Discussion

Two key issues emerged relating to: i) present status of strengthening G2P system ii) and coordinating for evidence-based research.

For strengthening G2P system, while some line ministries have their own initiatives, SSPS and partner project, SWAPNO, are testing digital payments of social security cash transfers. Through a Randomized Control Trial (RCT) setup, it is testing BKash and Rocket services. Over an 18-month study, regular surveys will be carried out for data, GIS mapping and for behavioural insights. These will be compiled, analyzed and presented for supporting policy on further roll-out and scale-up of mobile money for cash transfers.

For evidence-based research, participants requested for lessons to be shared widely to help develop government capacity and institutionalize evidence-based policy making.

## 2. Aligning NSSS Action Plans and APA: The way forward



**Presentation:** Mohammad Khaled Hasan  
Deputy Secretary, Cabinet Division

### Introduction

In Bangladesh, social protection accounts for an estimated 14% of the national budget and ministries allocate the majority of financial resources towards social protection. With 35 newly approved NSSS Action Plans in place, these will be financed by the national budget and it will take about BDT 12,000 crore for implementing them in the next fiscal year.

The Government has recently introduced Annual Performance Agreement (APA) for managing public sector performance in line with national goals and it is linked to the national budget. APA reviews the ministries' progress on fulfilling strategic objectives over five years. Given that allocation for social protection is a vital share of the national budget, it is critical to align the NSSS Action Plans and APA and build necessary coordinating mechanisms so that social protection measures are well- reflected and evaluated in the APA.

### Highlights

The presentation provided overviews of the NSSS Action Plans and APA.

- The NSSS Action Plans align social protection programmes with lifecycle approach, the NSSS' core strategy; it will bring both poor and near-poor<sup>2</sup> populations under social protection coverage. Moreover, with more than 100 existing social protection programmes, the Plans will evaluate numerous small programmes to check if these fit into lifecycle approach; the programmes will either be integrated into bigger ones or discontinued.

Major new initiatives include a child benefit scheme targeting 0-4 years age group with an estimated BDT 4500 crore in allocation towards the programme and national social insurance scheme to help Bangladesh transition from social allowance system. Work on introducing unemployment accidental

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<sup>2</sup> As per NSSS, "near-poor" is defined as those whose incomes are 25% above the poverty line. Currently, 22% and 48% of Bangladesh's population fall within "poor" and "near-poor" groups respectively.

sickness insurance and private voluntary pension has also started. Following learnings from India, an alternative child protection scheme for abandoned children under consideration as child benefits usually go to mothers or guardians. Additionally, programmes to be scaled up will focus on increasing both the number of beneficiaries and stipends including in urban areas.

Reform plans include introducing Proxy Means Test (PMT) tool to grade poverty levels for selecting eligible beneficiaries; those scoring higher with PMT will be included in the social protection programme. Plans are also in place to digitize all social security cash transfers made under the G2P delivery system by 2021.

- APA is the Bangladeshi model for performance management system in the public sector is aligned with national goals. It addresses three key issues: i) the respective Ministry's main strategic objectives for the year ii) activities proposed to achieve these objectives and; iii) relevant performance indicators and targets for measuring progress in implementing these activities. It accounts for the Ministry's performance over five years i.e. two years of past achievements, targets for the current year and targets for the next two years.

## Discussion

Three key issues emerged that reflected on: i) greater coordination between NSSS and APA focal points for aligning NSSS Action Plans and APA ii) addressing double-dipping and iii) building ministerial capacity for effectively implementing NSSS action plans and aligning these with APA.

- Greater coordination between NSSS and APA focal points: The upcoming APA technical review committee meeting in May was highlighted during discussion on the issue. Participants suggested that the ministries' Action Plans and APA should be reviewed simultaneously to align the objectives and address any likely gaps; colleagues working on social protection within the Cabinet Division should also be consulted on the Plans during the APA review.

The Cabinet Division is also setting up its Policy Research and Reform Management Unit to monitor all ongoing reform initiatives. It plans to request all ministries to send in the names of all focal points and this can further support coordination between the respective NSSS and APA personnel.

- Need for unique identifier database to address double-dipping: Noting the challenges double-dipping pose for social protection programmes, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) is already collecting data using PMT and the aim is to complete collection by December 2018. While suggestions arose for incorporating the data into National Identity (NID) for addressing double-dipping, this will be an inadequate measure as many use alternatives for NID for identification purposes. Rather, under the CRVS initiative, the Cabinet Division is building a unique identifier database that will be linked to the national budget; this system will also be aligned with Citizen Core Data Structure (CCDS).
- Building ministerial capacity: As both the APA and NSSS Action Plans have been newly introduced, are ambitious, and interlinked, there is need for building ministerial capacity for aligning the Plans with

the system while also designing and implementing appropriate programmes that can realize NSSS' goals.

### 3. NSSS: Research Needs



**Presentation:** Daniel Winstanley  
M&E Specialist, SSPS Programme, UNDP

#### Introduction

With the NSSS in place, knowledge gaps in terms of social security in Bangladesh must be outlined and addressed for improved implementation. Furthermore, to effectively monitor and evaluate the NSSS, results based on operational and programmatic data from a set of Social Security Programmes (SSPs) must be regularly reported; this includes implementation at the activity and results produced at the output level.

#### Highlights

The presentation focused on: i) potential research areas and ii) challenges for developing and implementing an effective NSSS M&E framework.

There is need for identifying, agreeing on and conducting evidence-based research for informing policy on social security. Potential areas can include: i) targeting and selection ii) accessibility iii) value-for money iv) coordination and implementation and v) monitoring and evaluation.

For developing and implementing an effective M&E framework, structuring data collection across line ministries is key as current collection methods are not uniform. Data is collected irregularly, can be outdated and often limited to financial delivery. Results-indicators are missing, making it difficult to evaluate impacts of the NSSS reforms especially on those receiving social security benefits.

Going forward, SSPS can identify the tools available for implementing digital MISs, capturing data and measuring for results. It is also important to explore newer and cost-effective approach for collecting more relevant data. Also, using the SDG framework can be a good start for helping ministries identify the goals they aim to align with and for building in the targets and supporting results-based indicators for social protection accordingly. In the process, SSPS can work with flagship programmes to methodologically design and implement systematic impact evaluations that can be used as a proxy for measuring change across the social protection portfolio.

## Discussion

Two key issues emerged that relate to: i) identifying emerging research needs and ii) developing M&E capacity of ministries.

- Emerging research needs: In line with ongoing NSSS initiatives, new and emerging research areas need to be taken into account and prioritized. This can include conducting research on capacity needs of ministries to implement the new reform agenda.
- Developing M&E capacity of ministries: Reflecting on weak capacity for monitoring and evaluation in ministries, suggestions arose for targeting and training 5 ministries with higher expenditures on social protection or with slighter better databases in M&E work.

## 4. NSSS Gender Policy, Strategy and Actions



**Presentation:** Aminul Arifeen  
Project Manager, SSPS Programme, UNDP

### Introduction

Women in Bangladesh lag behind men on almost all socio-economic counts due to discriminatory gender norms and practices. Building on a 2016 NSSS gender diagnostic study, to address the challenges women and girls face, NSSS has drafted a Gender Policy that aims to support them in exiting poverty through a gender-responsive social security system. NSSS also recognizes that for positive transformation, social protection aiming at gender equality needs multi-dimensional initiatives and it cannot be achieved by only pursuing economic gains for women; furthermore, it emphasizes on explicitly addressing the root causes of gender discrimination to facilitate women's empowerment as an outcome of social protection programmes.

### Highlights

The presentation focused on: i) guiding principles ii) policy priorities and iii) challenges to gender equality and social security.

The draft Policy is guided by seven principles. Promoting gender equality and promoting empowerment through a rights-based approach are key. Additionally, the Policy will ensure promote partnerships, ensure participation and decision-making, and build capacity at all levels for a gender-responsive social security system. It will also mobilize necessary resources and make appropriate investments for scaling and sustaining results.

For building a multi-dimensional approach that can support women exit poverty, policy priorities include: i) food security and nutrition ii) support for human development iii) access to livelihoods, income and transfer iv) promotion of active labour market participation v) productive financial inclusion vi) facilitating social empowerment vii) reaching women in urban areas viii) expanding coverage and ix) building resilience to shocks.

The Policy notes challenges for designing and operating programmes that ensure transformation and empowerment, addressing gender-based challenges in accessing social security and mobilizing resources and expanding coverage. To overcome these, the Policy proposes for actions to be overseen by the Central Management Committee (CMC), guided with technical and support by GED and receive support for gender-related data by BBS.

## 5. Improving public service delivery with GRS 2.0



**Presentation:** Mohammed Jahedur Rahman  
Deputy Secretary, Cabinet Division

### Introduction

Grievance Redress System (GRS) is an institutional platform that citizens can use to voice dissatisfaction about poor performance and hold institutions accountable. In Bangladesh, as per GRS Guideline, 2015, the Government introduced and tested a central GRS platform for improving public service delivery. The online system is now being modified by building on the lessons learned. For social protection, this will result in improved service delivery and build inclusion i.e. any eligible beneficiary excluded from the social protection system can lodge grievances for redressal.

### Highlights

Following an overview of what “grievance” means and what GRS aims for, the presentation highlighted four major lessons from launching the first online platform. These included: i) local government units were not integrated into the system ii) grievances could not be transferred to the concerned departments iii) spaces were not available to describe and provide solutions to grievances and iv) the system did not incorporate Citizen’s Charters.

In the updated version, GRS is addressing these issues and making additional improvements. First, a dashboard has been set up through which the central authority and concerned offices can view progress on redressing grievances; any grievance pending for more than three months will be flagged red on the dashboard. Second, GRS has been linked to APA and can provide feedback on the ministries’ service delivery performance. Third, the online platform provides complete information on how the system works. And fourth, using mobile phones, anyone can register, lodge and track grievances for redressal. Decisions can be appealed. The grievances can also be lodged through call centres and Union Digital Centres.

### Discussion

Two key issues emerged that relate to: i) promoting GRS and ii) building capacity to redress grievances

- **Promoting GRS:** With an updated system in place, the Cabinet Division is running a three-year parallel project that sensitizes citizens about GRS, including those at the union level. The project will also reach out to civil organizations, NGOs and development partners to support efforts. For social protection, the NSSS and GRS units will collaborate further to promote the system.
- **Building capacity:** As weak capacity for resolving grievance can create governance issues, there is need to build capacity at all levels and have supportive institutional arrangements in place. This strongly applies for field offices as these will be held accountable by higher levels of government and performance will be reflected in APA.

## 6. Special session

### Social protection needs of host community and Rohingyas: Problems, prospects, challenges and actions



**Presentation:** Shamsur Rahman  
National Economic Advisor, UNDP

#### Introduction

Since 25 August 2017, about 600,000 Rohingyas entered Bangladesh to flee persecution in neighbouring Myanmar. Speedy repatriation is unlikely and the majority is residing in camps in Cox's Bazaar district bordering Myanmar. This includes Rohingyas from the previous 1991-92 influx, bringing the total to an estimated one million refugees. The crisis and anticipated lengthy repatriation processes can prolong worrying impacts on Cox's Bazaar's host communities.

At the Government's request, UNDP has already conducted three impact assessments on host communities, social dynamics (with a focus on radicalization) and on the environment. It will now undertake three more studies including an assessment focused on host communities and Rohingyas' social protection needs and the government's capacity to roll out social protection accordingly. The findings will inform ministries on possible measures for expanding social protection in Cox's Bazaar.

#### Context

Bangladesh has registered impressive economic growth and development in the past decade. Like in many developing countries, however, the gains do not always reach the most vulnerable and many fall into poverty. This underscores the need for strong social protection measures and in Bangladesh, social protection accounts for 2% of national GDP. While the expenditure is less than in Sri Lanka and India, Bangladesh's social protection system also has fewer leakages and inefficiencies compared to other South Asian countries.

Considering the Rohingya crisis, there is urgent need to assess the impact on social protection measures in Cox's Bazaar. The district had already been identified as a lagging area in the Government's Seventh Five Year Plan even before the crisis hit. According to HIES 2016, the poverty rate stands at 35% while it is 24.3% nationally; extreme poverty rate in Cox's Bazaar is also higher at 25% whereas the national rate is 12.9%. As a disaster-prone district, previous studies highlight that more than 20% of populations are at disaster risk and are more likely to fall into poverty; the potential impact of disasters on poverty in Cox's Bazaar may have worsened with the Rohingya influx.

The potential study will focus on: i) mapping existing social safety net programmes in Cox's Bazaar ii) impact of crisis on the social protection framework iii) implications for modifying the framework to address host communities' needs iv) mapping vulnerabilities of both host communities and Rohingyas for targeting; v) assessing appropriate and feasible programmes and vi) assessing how UNDP can best support the Government in strengthening local government capacity in Cox's Bazaar.

## Discussion

Five key issues emerged relating to: a) disaster risks from deteriorating infrastructure and degrading environment b) limited government capacity c) limited employment opportunities and impact on education d) need for modifying social protection measures in Cox's Bazaar and e) need for mitigating social tensions.

With monsoon approaching, landslide risks resulting from environment degradation are increasing as forest land is being cleared for fuel<sup>3</sup>. If the risks are realized, road networks will be blocked and 150,000 people will be cut off from access to food and humanitarian aid. Infrastructure such as reserves are also in disrepair and need immediate attention before monsoon hits.

Government capacity is strained and understaffed. With the sudden influx in Cox's Bazaar's population, local government institutions are falling behind on service delivery with worrying implications for meeting APA and addressing grievances. Incentives for government officials to transfer to Cox's Bazaar remain poor. Also, local government institutions are competing with international organizations and NGOs for limited project spaces, driving up rent and making it difficult to expand services.

Employment of host communities has been hit hard. Labour wages have been driven down, fishing on the Naf River is suspended and agriculture land has been converted to land for housing Rohingyas; employment opportunities are scarce and highly competitive and borrowers are finding it increasingly difficult to pay back loans. The situation has also added to absenteeism in colleges as students are opting to earn BDT 400-500 by assisting with aid distribution in camps.

The compounding needs and risks are exacerbating social tensions within camps and between the Rohingyas and host communities. The situation requires critical attention and a holistic approach that accounts for the likely impacts on peace, poverty and for achieving the SDGs. At the same time, measures should also help prevent politicization within camps for continued good diplomatic ties with Myanmar for repatriation.

Under these circumstances, finding appropriate and feasible solutions is critical. Noting once again that Cox’s Bazaar is among Bangladesh’s lagging districts with an extremely high poverty rate, there is renewed need for assessing gaps in social protection delivery as well as expanding measures in the district. As a way forward, in addition to documenting the impacts through the intended study, it is important to explore how Cox’s Bazaar’s urban areas can be developed for faster economic growth and for building job opportunities. Also, with ongoing discussions on building livelihood opportunities for host communities, it is worth exploring if similar arrangements can be made for Rohingyas in camps to be gainfully employed to further diffuse social tensions.

**Photograph with Participants**



## Recommendations:

After elaborate discussion the workshop came up with the following recommendations:

- ❖ The yearly Action Plans of the SSPS Programme are approved for execution for effective implementation of the NSSS.
- ❖ Meaningful integration of the NSSS action plan with the Annual Performance Agreement (APA) is very important for creating a mechanism for transparency and accountability. Therefore, it is recommended that the social protection section and the APA section of the Cabinet Division will work in unison to ensure that the NSSS action plans are properly reflected in the Annual Performance Agreement.
- ❖ The second generation of Grievance Redress System of the Cabinet Division is an important tool to ensure governance in service delivery, especially in case of social protection. Therefore, the SSPS Programme is urged to work in collaboration with GRS section of the Cabinet Division to enhance wider access of the aggrieved beneficiaries to the grievance mechanism with ultimate goal of reducing leakage in social protection sector.
- ❖ The host communities of Cox's Bazar, particularly belonging to Ukhia and Technaf have been severely affected socio-economically due to accommodation of so many Rohingya refugees in their localities. The presence of Rohingya has created pressure on the limited resources of host communities of these areas while reducing opportunities for jobs and productive activities. The situation demands intensification of the existing social protection programmes for the local people. Therefore, it is recommended that the SSPS Programme would explore measures for reinforcing social protection programmes for the local people of Cox's Baza.
- ❖ The M&E framework as presented in the workshop will have to be further examined and an appropriate version of it will be introduced for social protection programmes.

## Conclusion

The workshop generated important discussion on ongoing NSSS reforms, achievements, challenges and the way forward. Notably, it highlighted Bangladesh's transition towards a right-based social protection system in line with long-term goals.

To fulfill the country's ambitions, the workshop reflected on the need for intensive investments in building capacity especially at the ministerial levels, better monitoring of outcomes and building uniformity in how ministries approach social protection. Given that the Government has undertaken a vast and comprehensive reform agenda, using the APA to drive accountability across all programmes was appreciated as a highly strategic approach. The workshop also strengthened partnerships between the Government and development partners, fostering greater commitment towards successfully implementing the reform agenda, alleviating poverty and supporting inclusive growth.

## Appendix A

### Participants From Cabinet Division

<b>Sl</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>
1.	Mr. Mohammad Shafiul Alam	Cabinet Secretary
2.	Mr. N M Zeaul Alam	Secretary (Coordination & Reforms)
3.	Mr. Md. Dilwar Bakth	Additional Secretary (Admin)
4.	Mr. A K Mohiuddin Ahmed	Additional Secretary (Coordination)
5.	Mr. Sultan Ahmed	Additional Secretary (Reforms)
6.	Mr. Md. Abdul Barik	Joint Secretary
7.	Md. Saidur Rahman	Joint Secretary
8.	Mr. Altaf Hossain Sheikh	Deputy Secretary
9.	Mr. Md. Rezaul Islam	Deputy Secretary
10.	Md. Kamrul Hasan	Deputy Secretary
11.	Mr. Ashfakul Amin Mukut	Deputy Secretary
12.	Mr. H. M. Nurul Islam	PS to Cabinet Secretary (Deputy Sectary)
13.	Mr. Mohammad Kaikobad Khandaker	Deputy Secretary
14.	Mr. Choudhury Muazzam Ahmed	Deputy Secretary (Attached) (Additional Charge)
15.	Mr. Khandakar Monowar Morshad	PS to Secretary (Coordination & Reforms) (Deputy Secretary (Attached))
16.	Mr. Mohammed Shahidul Islam	Deputy Secretary (Attached)
17.	Mohammed Jahedur Rahman	Deputy Secretary (Attached)
18.	Mr. Mohammad Nizam Uddin Ahammed	Senior Assistant Secretary & Council Officer
19.	Mr. Tawhid Ilahi	Senior Assistant Secretary

Participants from GED

Participants from the DP

Participants from the Local Administration

Appendix – B



**Cabinet Division  
and  
General Economics Division of Planning Commission  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*