

***Consultative Workshop on Enhancing Social Protection Governance through
Grievance Redress System (GRS)
Meeting Minutes***

Project title:

- Social Protection Policy Support (SSPS) Programme

Meeting date: 27 September 2018

Venue: Cabinet Division Conference Room (Room-1005), Transport pool, Building.

Chair: Mr. A K Mohiuddin Ahmad, Additional Secretary (Coordination), Cabinet Division

Participants: Attached in annex - A

Mr. A K Mohiuddin Ahmad, Additional Secretary (Coordination), Cabinet Division chaired the Consultative Workshop on Enhancing Social Protection Governance through Grievance Redress System (GRS). Mr. Mohammad Khaled Hasan, Social Protection Specialist of SSPS Programme, welcomed Grievance Redress System (GRS) focal points from different ministry/divisions, and the staff members of the SSPS Programme and invited Mr. Mohammed Jahedur Rahman, Deputy Secretary (Good Governance) from Cabinet Division to present the 2nd Generation Grievance Redress System and how it can redress grievance related to social protection. After a brief presentation by the Deputy Secretary, participants actively participated in the discussions. After the discussion, Mr. A K Mohiuddin Ahmed invited Mr. Mohammad Mahfuzul Bari, ICT Specialist of SSPS Programme, to present an outline of a planned piloting for assessment of redressal of social protection related grievances at grassroots level by the SSPS Programme. The presentation was followed by an open discussion on the outline for the pilot. The succinct part of the presentation and key queries which arose from the discussion and policy directions are all mentioned below:

1. Presentation on Enhancing Social Protection Governance through Grievance Redress System (GRS):

The presentation began with Mr. A K Mohiuddin Ahmad, Additional Secretary (Coordination), Cabinet Division welcoming Grievance Redress System (GRS) focal points from different ministry/divisions, and the staff members of the SSPS Programme and other participants. He briefly explained the objectives of the workshop and invited Mr. Mohammed Jahedur Rahman, Deputy Secretary (Good Governance) from Cabinet Division to present the 2nd Generation GRS and how it can address social protection related grievances at grassroots level.

The floor was then passed to Mr. Jahedur Rahman, then began presenting the 2nd generation GRS. At the beginning, Ms. Keya Khan, Joint Secretary from Ministry of Industries inquired if the 2nd generation GRS is ready to use to which Jahedur Rahman replied affirmatively. Jahedur Rahman then explained that the GRS will use the login credentials of 'Nothi' system of the government which would allow the officials to use the single sign-in mechanism across different systems of the government and thus eliminating any confusion that might arise as to which account to use to login to GRS.

Mr. Rahman also mentioned Grievance Redress Officers (GRO) will see the grievances in their inbox once any grievances are submitted against their offices allowing quicker notification of any grievance submission. Mr. Md. Motahar Hossain, Joint Secretary from Ministry of Water Resources, reported he has been having some issues with the GRS and contacted a2i about resolving the issue and even sent screenshots of the problem but could not get any remedy. Mr. Jahedur Rahman, suggested to contact him directly which would allow for quicker resolution of any such matter. He also requested the GROs be patient with the system suggesting any new system is bound to have issues and these issues will be fixed over time. Mr. Md. Motahar Hossain mentioned the requirement of GROs being at least Joint Secretary level makes it difficult for smaller sized ministries as these ministries have lower number of Joint Secretaries compared to Deputy Secretaries. Mr. Jahedur Rahman responded saying this requirement is outlined in the guideline and reasoned that it may be difficult for Deputy Secretaries to make decisions compared to Joint Secretaries.

Mr. Rahman then gave a quick demonstration of the Grievance Redress System. He explained some of the advantages of the new system. He said the 1st generation GRS did not allow to redress any grievances from subordinate offices of the ministry but the new system allows ministries to forward the relevant grievances to its subordinate offices. This forwarding would also result in notification being sent to complainant about his/her grievances being forwarded to appropriate office. He also requested the lists of Grievances Redress Officers (GRO) from the participating ministries in this workshop as the new GRS will need to be updated with the GRO information for it to be able to redress grievances at those levels.

Mr. Rahman then demonstrated the dashboard structure of the GRS. He explained any ministry will have the view of all the grievances submitted to the ministry and its subordinate office. Cabinet Division, on the other hand, will be able to view all the grievances submitted to the Cabinet Division and all other ministries. He also mentioned guidelines for redressing grievances has also been published with flowchart.

Mr. Rahman mentioned currently the GRS does not permit attaching videos to grievances as there is a scope of manipulation of videos which could result in complicating the grievance redressal process. He also mentioned if grievances are not redressed within the specified timeframe as specified in the citizen charter, it will be highlighted thus prompting the need for immediate attention. He also mentioned, officials who work abroad such as some officials of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas can also submit grievances from overseas.

Mr. Md. Motahar Hossain, Joint Secretary from Ministry of Water Resources, inquired if the officials are required to redress complaints submitted anonymously. In reply, Jahedur Rahman said it is not obligatory to redress complaints submitted anonymously and officials should consider the type and severity of such complaints in redressing this kind of complaints.

Mr. Rahman then demonstrated the the Dashboard feature of the GRS. He showed three tabs under the dashboard: 'Citizen', 'Official' and 'Anonymous' using his administrative credential of the Cabinet Division. In the Dashboard, official logged in can see the number and types of grievances submitted, resolved and unresolved grievances.

He then talked about the redressal of social protection related grievances. He said to properly address such kind of grievances, ministries need to update their citizen charter with social protection related grievances. Beneficiary, if they have any complaints related to social protection, can then select the appropriate social protection related service from the GRS to file their complaint against. Updating the citizen charter with social protection related services under the category of 'Social Protection' would result in all the social protection related grievances to be displayed under a single category in the dashboards which would result in effective redressal of social protection related grievances.

Mr. Md. Motahar Hossain, Joint Secretary from Ministry of Water Resources, inquired if grievances related to social protection is sent to a ministry by mistake, can these grievances be forwarded to appropriate ministries to which Mr. Rahman replied affirmatively. Mr. Hossain asked if ministries would be held accountable if these grievances are not forwarded to which Jahedur Rahman said they could as these grievances would add to the tally of unresolved grievances for that ministries if not forwarded to appropriate ministries. This was the end of Jahedur Rahman's presentation on GRS..

After the discussion, Mr. A K Mohiuddin Ahmed invited Mr. Mohammad Mahfuzul Bari, ICT Specialist of SSPS Programme, to present an outline of a planned piloting for assessment of redressal of social protection related grievances at grassroots level by the SSPS Programme. At the beginning of his presentation, Mr. Bari gave a background on the GRS and especially the 2nd Generation Grievance Redress System. In this presentation, he mentioned that the 1st generation GRS had certain limitations such as inability in analyzing the general trend of grievances and citizens' level of satisfaction from the system. He then mentioned, in 2015 Coordination & Reform Unit of Cabinet Division published a guideline on GRS and formed a technical committee to develop a comprehensive, integrated and client friendly GRS by putting together initiative of different GO-NGOs. A rapid mapping survey as by the SSPS Programme to understand existing GRSs available and used in public and private sectors to provide a fact findings analysis on GRS system in Bangladesh by the request of the technical committee. The findings of the mapping exercise was published on 06 April 2016 as a report and was shared with different ministries, NGOs. One of the recommendations made by the mapping exercise was to thoroughly test the GRS at national and sub-national levels and focus on getting complaints from potential recipients of SSNP and vast majority of this population living in rural areas. It's urgent, the level of user friendliness of the system needs to be tested using different types of clients. Based on the recommendations of the technical committee, 2nd Generation GRS has been developed to overcome the limitations of the previous version.

Mr. Bari then explained the objective of the proposed pilot exercise is to evaluate whether grievances related to social protection at grassroots level are redressed and reflected. The specific purpose is to find out if an aggrieved person at grassroots level can file grievance using the 2nd generation GRS and his/her grievance is redressed and reflected at the appropriate level.

In the outline plan of the pilot, Mr. Bari proposed the pilot to be conducted in 1 or 2 unions in Kurigram and Satkhira districts. He specified that the reason for proposing Kurigram district is because Kurigram is a poverty prone district and many social protection programme has operation in that district. In addition, Satkhira and Kurigram will both have support from District Managers of LGD's project SWAPNO, supported by UNDP.

Mr. Bari, mentioned from demand side, SSPS programme will utilize the services of Union Digital Centres (UDC) for this pilot as these centres are highly accessible by union residents. He mentioned SSPS Programme also plans for awareness campaigns such as distributing leaflets, miking, other means of raising awareness and capacity building programme of UDC entrepreneurs. The planned pilot will be exercised for 3 to 4 months. The pilot will make use of dummy data to simulate the testing of grievance redress. The officials at Upazila, district and ministry levels will be informed and coordinated in advance of the sudden influx of data from this Unions under this pilot so that they are not alarmed of the simulated grievance submissions. Mr. A K Mohiuddin Ahmed, the Chairperson of the workshop, also emphasised on focusing grievance submission using multiple options such as using computers, smartphones, paper based and any other. O. N. Siddiqua Khanom, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, emphasised on the need for developing a mobile app to submit grievances and on the need for eliminating the middle man. Md. Faizul Islam, National Project Director of SSPS Programme, mentioned that the reason for highlighting the services of UDC is because of lack of accessibility of computers and internet in remote areas by the complainants. Mr. Farid Ahmed, Communications Specialist from SSPS Programme, suggested on having a toll-free number where complainants can call and file their grievances as part of this pilot as they might not have access to computers, smartphones. Mr. A K Mohiuddin Ahmed said different departments are now using different toll-free numbers for giving their services. For example, there is an emergency service '999' that provides services such as emergency services such as police, fireservices and ambulances. There is also a different hotline number for preventing child marriages and a number for reporting violence against women by the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs. More than one numbers are complicating matters and there should be ways to ingetrate these numbers. He proposed to have a all the social services to have a single number where people can receive these services.

Mr. Bari explained this piloting will attempt to find out if the 2nd Generation GRS is capable of responding to these social protection related grievances and how these greivances are reflected in dahsboards of relevant offices. The piloting will provide improved understanding of reporting structure of ministry/divisions and how social protection related grievance redressal is reflected in the reporting structure of the Cabinet Division. Above all, this pilot will provide an overall understanding on the readiness of the GRS, possibly for a subsequent national launch, he mentioned.

In conclusion, Mr. Bari said capacity building of Public Officials, UDCs are needed in order for effective grievance redress. He mentioned massive awareness and confidence building on GRS among citizens is urgent and suggested an effective means of raising awareness are TV scrolls, radio programs, write up on National Media. Mobile data operators can play a vital role in raising awareness using SMS, data services as suggested by Ms. O. N. Siddiqua Khanom, Additional Secretary of Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs. A national launch of the 2nd Generation GRS, possibly by the Prime Minister would be a massive advocacy boost foe GRS. Pilot exercise such as this one to be conducted by SSPS Programme can act as a major confidence building measure.

Mr. Bari then concluded his presentaion saying further scope for cooperation with Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme can be explored and asked for suggestions on improving the outline plan for

the pilot and any measures that can improve redressal mechanism of social protection related grievances.

Mr. Khaled Hasan then discussed about Grievance Redress System and specially talked about the Grievance Redress System in neighboring country India, which is an exemplary grievance redress system. However, research findings showed that most of the grievances do not come from people of lower income country. Findings shows that they are afraid of being oppressed if they file grievances. He emphasised the GRS should ensure people from all levels of the country be able to file grievances without fearing any negative consequences. For this reason, the proposed pilot plan included Kurigram and Satkhira as these two districts are poverty prone area and SSPS programme and would motivate people from these districts to file any grievances they have by means of online, offline or any other means feasible.

Mr. A K Mohiuddin Ahmed emphasised on redressal of anonymous grievances. However, Md. Humaun Kabir, Joint Secretary of Financial Institute Division, indicated that according to the guideline on GRS published by the Cabinet Division, officials should consider types and severity of such complaints in redressing this kind of anonymous complaints.

Mr. Shafiq Ahmed from Reve Systems, the software development company involved in developing the GRS software, then demonstrated the 2nd Generation Grievance Redress System to the audience.

Mr. Khaled Hasan then sought opinions from the audience on some of the important aspects relevant to the specific objectives of this workshop.

2. Recommendations

- Everybody agreed, to enhance social protection governance, a strong Grievance Redress System that can redress social protection related grievances, is imperative.
- Piloting for assessment of redressal of social protection related grievances is required for effective redressal of social protection related grievances at grassroots level.
- Citizen Charter of all the relevant ministries needs to be updated with services related to social security programmes of these ministries, allowing beneficiaries to submit grievances easily and to ensure effective grievance redress.
- It was recommended the union selected for the pilot should be in remote areas of the districts, possibly far from Sadar Union.
- It was recommended that the pilot be implemented for all social security programmes, not limiting the focus on few specific programmes only.
- The participants recommended including UDC entrepreneurs, local representatives and administrative personnel in capacity building programme.
- It was emphasised that sensitization programme should be an important part of this pilot.
- Special focus should be given on G2P related grievances.

- An Action Plan should be developed for effective implementation of the pilot.
- The participants recommended including a provision for submitting offline grievances when designing the pilot.

The workshop ended with thanks from the Chair for excellent support provided by all present and officials from SSPS Programme.

Annex – A: List of Participants

1. A K Mohiuddin Ahmad, Additional Secretary (Coordination), Cabinet Division, Bangladesh.
2. O. N. Siddiqua Khanom, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, Bangladesh.
3. Kajal Islam NDC, Additional Secretary, Planning Division, Bangladesh.
4. Goutom Kumar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh.
5. Mohammad Shahidul Islam, Deputy Secretary, Cabinet Division, Bangladesh.
6. Md. Belayet Hossain Talukdar, Additional Secretary, Secondary and Higher Education Division, Bangladesh.
7. Md. Mizanur Rahman, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, Bangladesh.
8. Khalid Parvez Khan, Joint Secretary, Rural Development and Cooperatives Division, Bangladesh.
9. Md. Motahar Hossain, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, Bangladesh.
10. Keya Khan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Industries, Bangladesh.
11. Bidyut Chandra, Deputy Secretary, Post and Telecommunication Division, Bangladesh.
12. Md. Tarikul Alam, Joint Secretary, Statistics and Informatics Division.
13. Md. Faizul Islam, Joint Chief, Joint Chief, General Economics Division, Planning Commission and National Project Director, SSPS Programme.
14. ASM Suja, Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Bangladesh.
15. Mst. Kamar Jahan, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Food, Bangladesh.
16. Momena Khatun, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Bangladesh.
17. G. M. Rafiqul Islam, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Bangladesh.
18. Ahmed Latiful Hossain, System Analyst, Health Services Division, Bangladesh.
19. Md. Elias Hossain, System Analyst, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, Bangladesh.
20. Md. Mohidur Rahman, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Bangladesh.
21. Dr. Md. Abul Hossain, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare, Bangladesh.
22. Md. Humaun Kabir, Joint Secretary, Financial Institute Division, Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh.
23. Al Mamun, Director General, Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division, Ministry of Planning, Bangladesh.
24. Mohammad Zakir Hossain, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Bangladesh.
25. Mohammed Jahedur Rahman, Deputy Secretary (Good Governance), Cabinet Division, Bangladesh.
26. Mr. Mohammad Khaled Hasan, Social Protection Specialist, SSPS Programme.
27. Md. Mohammad Mahfuzul Bari, ICT Specialist, SSPS Programme.
28. Ms. Raiqah Ripa Walie-Khan, Communication Officer, SSPS Programme.
29. Mr. Farid Ahmed, Communications Specialist, SSPS Programme.
30. S. M. Siam, Administrative Assistant, SSPS Programme.