

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
**Cabinet Division**  
**Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme**

**Minutes of the third meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) of Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme**

Chairperson : Mr. Mohammad Shafiul Alam, Cabinet Secretary  
Date & Time : 16 August 2018, 10:00 am  
Place : Cabinet Room (Building-1, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka)  
Attendance : **Annexure-A**

The Chairperson opened the meeting with heartiest welcome to all the participants. In his opening remarks he stated that Bangladesh is progressing towards a lifecycle based inclusive social security system for various age-groups with emphasis on the most vulnerable segments of population in line with the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS). As the country has been approaching towards sustainable Middle-Income Country (MIC), the NSSS and its action plan implementation is critically important to continue reform until ensuring a comprehensive social security system for Bangladesh. Then the Chair requested the National Project Director to present the agenda of the meeting.

**Agenda – 1 Confirmation of the Minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting and progress of implementation**

2. The National Project Director (NPD) made a power point presentation on different agenda items of the meeting. The first agenda was to confirm the minutes of the second meeting of the SSPS Project Steering Committee (PSC) that was held on 30 July 2017. The Chair suggested that discussion might take place if the members indicated any points for revision. The PSC members unanimously confirmed the draft minutes of the second PSC meeting. As part of the same agenda the NPD updated PSC members on progress status of decisions taken in the last PSC meeting.

3. On recent development in NSSS reform, the NPD apprised the PSC members that the Central Management Committee (CMC) – an inter-ministerial committee on Bangladesh Social Security Programmes approved the NSSS Action Plan by the end of last year. He mentioned that the NSSS Action plan is a composition of plans of NSSS implementing and coordinating ministries / divisions, which also incorporates five thematic clusters' plans, and gender-focused action plan as well as NSSS monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework. This action plan has been developed with the active participation of the ministries / divisions under the guidance of CMC constituted Action Plan Preparation Sub-committee. In its last meeting, the CMC approves Sub-committee's additional responsibilities to oversee the progress of implementation of the action plan, and this plan will be aligned with respective ministries' Annual Performance Agreement (APA), he further added. The NPD also informed that as part of intensification of the coordination and implementation at the sub-national level, the CMC also approved the formation of Divisional, District and Upazila Management Committees for social security programmes, which will facilitate CMC to effectively conduct bottom up coordination, in future.

### **Agenda Item-3: Work Plans and key activities of the SSPS Programme**

4. In presenting the SSPS Programme Work Plan and key activities for January 2018 and fiscal year 2019-2020, the NPD informed the PSC members that a number of vital reform initiatives will make NSSF implementation effective. These are: NSSF M&E framework and reporting, single registry MIS, formulation of an action plan on NSSF gender policy, NSSF urban inclusion, advocacy and communication, strengthen Grievance Redress System (GRS), orientation and capacity building of the trainees in BPATC, setting up of an GO/NGO/Civil Society Platform, social security programme review and consolidation, a number of studies on different issues of social security in Bangladesh, including mid-term review/evaluation of NSSF. In this regard, the NPD of SSPS Programme applauds DFAT crucial support as a good gesture to NSSF reform in the gap period 2018-2020, when Bangladesh has been progressing towards achieving the sustainable Middle Income Country (MIC) status and when NSSF reform would not only play the crucial role, but also help bring changes in policy, plan, coordination, and monitoring and overall social security system under the guidance of the Cabinet Division along with General Economics Division (GED) of Planning Commission, Finance Division, and other thematic lead Ministries.

5. The NPD briefly mentioned the SSPS Programme's contributions in two ways: project's own initiatives in developing policy, plans, governance, diagnostics, research, capacity building, and others; and apply those initiatives in social security overall reform in terms of programmatic reform, and institutional reform. While updating some of the upcoming important initiatives and progress of works, the NPD informed the PSC members that a strong M&E Committee has been formed based on guidance depicted in the NSSF Action Plan. The composition of the NSSF M&E Committee is: representatives from the Cabinet Division, Finance Division of Ministry of Finance, Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED), Statistical & Informatics Division (SID) / Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Registrar General Office, and General Economics Division (GED) as Chair. Besides, this committee is also responsible for providing guidance to develop a Master Plan for Single Registry MISs at Statistics and Informatics Division (SID) / Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) on the basis of a diagnostic / situation study. He further explained that this MISs will establish a link to GED for national policy and plan making, Cabinet Division for Social Security Programme policy guidance on reform and coordination including management guidance, and Ministry of Finance for Social Security Budget Allocation and Management. SSPS NPD further informed that according to the spirit of the NSSF, a concept paper on Single Registry MIS, a paper on NSSF M&E framework, and a business case for national social security programmes/schemes consolidation have already been developed under the auspices of Member, GED. All these drafts will be placed before this committee for further actions.

### **Agenda Item-4: Strengthening Social Protection for the Host Communities in areas of Cox's Bazar**

6. The NPD reminded that the issue mentioned in the agenda – 4 was discussed in SSPS Planning Workshop at Cox's Bazar in March this year. UNDP Country Office Bangladesh has recently conducted a study on Rohingya refugee and impact on the host community and social protection. He then presented a proposed model for taking special initiatives for host community in two upazilas (Ukhiya and Teknaf) of Cox's Bazar district. He briefed on the



background issues responsible for disruption of social cohesion of the affected areas due to huge refugee influx. He pointed out several key issues impacted on host communities in several ways: diminished economic and commercial opportunities, increased unemployment and increased price of essential items, reduced land and food security, health and pollution including water contamination and scarcity of safe drinking water, education and health services associated with distance and poor road infrastructure and disturbed law and order situation, infrastructural and environmental damage and overall social deprivation. He further pointed out that numerically the host community turned into minority as they constituted only one-third of the local population; the economy now accommodates about one million people, while market and existing socioeconomic infrastructure have the capacity to serve one-third of the total population. The changing scenario has brought under spotlight the immediate intervention for reinforced social protection for the host community in the Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas, he emphasised. He solicited for the suggestion of the committee if a programme should take the issue as one of the component of the project considering the presented model: upscaling existing evidence based best social security schemes/programmes in affected areas; advocacy and communication; capacity building, livelihood programmes; NGOs and Civil Society engagements; and private sector engagement for employment opportunity creation in informal and formal sector with linkage to formal sector in private agencies and entrepreneurs development with establish market opportunities considering the refugee issue for mid and long-term perspectives. He further opined that the issue of the host community may be incorporated in the SSPS Programme as a separate identity considering a pilot reform under SSPS Programme's two outcome: 1) better governance; and 2) strengthening social protection system, for host community. In that case, the Project's Technical Assistance Project (TPP) proposal needs to be amended. Or the PSC committee may think about it otherwise.

**Agenda Item-5: Organization of social protection conference/fair and launching of NSSS Action Plan**

7. The NPD informed that the NSSS Action Plan has been approved by the Central Management Committee (CMC), which decided on launching the NSSS Action Plan along with other publications related to NSSS reform in a formal ceremony by inviting Honourable Finance Minister as the Chief Guest. But it was found that securing his schedule was challenging and difficult. SSPS Programme has therefore been proposing a number of alternate proposals. The NPD proposes alternatively, if PSC agrees, the Honourable Speaker to National Parliament may be invited as Chief Guest to grace the launch programme, while ministers from other ministries and dignitaries from development and donor agencies will be invited as special guests. The book launch programme will also inaugurate the two-day-long national social security conference, SSPS NPD further added. He clarified that the launch programme will be followed by two-day-long conference on review of National Social Security schemes/programmes implemented by the Government Agencies, and last day will be kept for NGOs and Private Sector's social security programme review. A small fair will also be organized in the premises of the conference. NPD further informed that a business case for review of the social security programmes has been developed, which will help in preparing the National M&E Report 2018, and support to social security programmes' consolidation. The Cabinet Secretary will chair the launching and inauguration programme; and he will be Chief Guest in the closing session.

#### **Agenda Item-6: Revision and extension of the SSPS Programme**

8. He pointed out that the last PSC meeting discussed the project activities and its performance at length and showed satisfaction that the project has made remarkable contributions in many reform areas. The PSC felt that many areas still required extensive support from this project. However, they expressed concern that closure of DFID fund support and UNDP's current fund scenario will impede the progress of reform. In the meeting, the UNDP Representative suggested this critical support must be continued to augment Bangladesh progress in social sector and assured for funding support for 2018 on limited scale, until mobilizing resources from new development partners. The PSC members therefore agreed on extension of SSPS Programme for 2018 with the provision of no cost. Accordingly, SSPS Programme fulfilled all formalities to get awarded one year no-cost extension. Meanwhile, after PSC recommendation, UNDP joined with DFAT (AusAid of Australian Government) and arranged necessary fund support to meet the budget gap of Pro Doc and TPP. Hence, the DFAT co-finance ensures to expedite the NSSS reforms for the fiscal period 2019-2020 with no cost.

9. NPD added that DFAT is one of the leading development partners in Bangladesh social security reform and has been providing support since 2013 in NSSS background documents preparation and NSSS development under Strengthening Government Social Protection (SGSP) of DFID. The UNDP supported reform initiatives guided by NSSS and to see the long-term benefits through transformative change in better governance of social security through NSSS gender policy and action plans, M&E framework, and Grievance Redress System (GRS); evidence of reform future development plans; increase budget as percentage of GDP; evidence of action plans being implemented; capacity building of government officials through Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre; policy decisions on single registry MISs to address target errors; and consolidation of social security programmes in terms of delivery and schemes. The NPD mentions that the CMC Focal Points' Coordination meeting has endorsed SSPS Programme plan for 2018 – 19 in early March 2018; and SSPS Programme Planning Workshop participated by the Cabinet Division and GED of Planning Commission has also endorsed 2018 – 2019 Activity Plan in end March 2018. Considering the rolling out of NSSS and its Action Plan 2016 up to 2021, SSPS Programme needs further no-cost extension of the project for fiscal year up to June 2020. The representatives of the UNDP and DFAT informed that the fund for the project has already been secured by the Government of Australia till 2020. Therefore, it was agreed that funding for the project will not be any issue in extending the project period. Therefore, it was unanimously agreed that the project will be extended till June 2020.

#### **Discussions**

10. After presentation, the Chair invites comments from the PSC members. Secretary, Coordination and Reform indicates that PSC members could focus on agenda 3, 4, 5 and 6, which will require decisions.

On agenda 3, the Additional Secretary, SID thanked the NDP for his comprehensive presentation. He recalled that there was a communiqué by the end of 2017 between SID and UNDP by the end of 2017 about establishing social security single registry MISs at BBS, and SID agreed on UNDP concept note. He inquired about the progress on the concept note, thereafter. The NPD briefly stated the progress of work and mentioned that recently constituted M&E Committee will oversee the preparation of Single Registry MIS, where SID/BBS are the members. National Project Manager added that development of single registry at BBS is an integral part of



NSSS and its Action Plan, which will provide support to Cabinet Division, IMED, Finance Division as well as other implementing ministries under the auspices of GED. In this regard, M&E Committee will provide guidance and oversee the overall process not limiting on M&E, but also single registry and other research works, and a file on concept proposal has been approved by the Member, GED, he informed. Mr. N M Zeaul Alam, Secretary, Coordination and Reforms of the Cabinet Division suggested for inclusion of two important ministries: Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs in the M&E committee, since they did some progress in NSSS MISs. The PSC members also argued that the Ministry of Primary and Mass education should also be included in the committee as they have extensive MIS for primary school stipend programme. The Chair of PSC at this point agreed to include these ministries in the M&E committee.

The Additional Secretary of Finance Division inquired about clarification on social insurance and emphasised on sharing the concept note with Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (IDRA). Secretary, Coordination and Reform of the Cabinet Division was also emphasised on sharing concept note. The National Project Manager of SSPS Programme reminded the decision of last CMC and mentioned that social insurance is crucial for Bangladesh social security programmes transforming from assistance to contributory schemes in line with MIC and recent Finance Minister's declaration on Pension for All. Mr. Momammad. Khaled Hasan, Social Protection Specialist (Deputy Secretary on lien) of SSPS Programme informed the recent progress that a tripartite meeting was held following up the decision of last CMC meeting. The meeting decided to organise a national dialogue on social insurance problem and prospect in Bangladesh. He mentioned that the meeting had decided that IDRA would provide the concept note, and SSPS Programme would provide necessary supports in organizing the workshop. A side meeting was also held with the Additional Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, and Deputy Secretary, Finance Division in CMC focal points' meeting on 13 August, and both agreed to take measures in securing date for the said workshop, Mr. Hasan informed. The Additional Secretary, Financial Institution Division expressed his satisfaction and commented that without delay SSPS Programme should develop the concept note and coordinate with IDRA.

**On agenda 4,** on host community social protection in Cox's Bazar district due to Rohingya influx, was discussed by the members in detail and the majority was of the opinion that the matter can be dealt with by a separate programme from the Cabinet Division. The Assistant Chief of Planning Wing of Cabinet Division opined that if host community social protection is included in the existing TPP of SSPS Programme and DFAT inclusion as new co-financer beside DFID and UNDP, then the project will need a revision. In reply to a question from the Chair, the NPD informed that the TPP revision is subject to recommendations of this committee, and revision will not take much time. The Secretary, Coordination and Reforms of the Cabinet Division took the floor and informed that a long discussion was held with CMC focal point committee, where suggestion came for a separate project. In this regard, the Additional Secretary (Coordination) of the Cabinet Division took the floor and briefed the decision of CMC Focal Points' meeting, where members of the meeting opined that dealing with host community social protection is a complex issue, which demands multi-sectoral engagements, and it requires good coordination under one umbrella ministry, i.e. Cabinet Division as lead to overcome the complexity. Mr. Khurshid Alam, UNDP Assistant Country Director (ACD) intervened in this regard and informed about recently UNDP conducted impact study, where preliminary findings showed

that due to Rohingya influx - 1) there is impact not only on the Cox's Bazar district, but also on overall Bangladesh economy, when government is considering social protection is a tool of overall poverty reduction; 2) new poorer populations have emerged which demand review of existing social protection programmes and scope of new programmes; and 3) the social protection delivery capacity of the local administration and institutions are already reached in critical position, which demands new needs of capacity to augment the social protection. Considering the findings of the study, UNDP's perspective is to mobilise adequate resources from various donors to support Cabinet Division's project under re-scoping opportunity for additional support to host community in terms of cash assistance, which also fall into the reform arena for a particular geographic area, not matched with existing schemes or programme, and the current SSPS Programme could provide support making thing easily done if this meeting provide consent on this important agenda, he suggested. Mr. Khurshid further suggested that whether possible host community social protection could be a part of SSPS Programme as unfunded considering the needs of capacity, emerging new poor and expansion of coverage through existing social security programmes, and additional support when donor's commitment is still uncertain at this moment, but with an expectation that by December 2018, donor's commitment will be available. The Additional Secretary of Finance Division in this regard opined that if donors fund is available , it could be easily utilised directly under separate modus operandi through this project, or Cabinet Division may take host community social protection as a Programme initially with an amount of around one hundred million Bangladesh Taka, and keep open unfunded areas for donors, and the Division can alone approve this new Programme without delay as non-ADP (Annual Development Programme). Additional Secretary, Coordination of the Cabinet Division strongly argued for a separate programme, which is supported by the Additional Secretary of ERD as she was mentioning a separate programme for host community will be best for resource mobilisation, and ERD could extend its support if such a proposal is shared with them. The Chair sought out a time period to accomplish the formulation of proposal for approval. Since host community issue demands urgent actions, in this regard, UNDP ACD opined that SSPS Programme on urgent basis could assist developing the proposal. The Chair then intervened and opined that host community social protection issues demand a separate discussions and separate Programme, and a proposal needs to be available for Cabinet Division's approval within two-month.

**On agenda 5,** the PSC members praised the alternate proposal and agreed on the proposed programme. The Chair opined that Honourable Speaker may provide adequate time for launching the NSSS Action Plan and other books and inaugurate social security conference. The Chair commented that it would be easier to get time of honourable speaker than that of honourable Finance Minister. Therefore, he gave guidance on appropriate communication approach to Speaker's office for her confirmation on time and date.

**On agenda 6,** considering the nature of SSPS Programme in dealing social security reform in Bangladesh, the Additional Secretary, Economic Relations Division in this regard inquired about UNDP's fund assurance as proposed for extension; and fund for reform proposed in the action plan up to 2021 under first phase. She also emphasised on ensuring funding support for the first phase of NSSS reform 2021, and scoping for SSPS 2<sup>nd</sup> phase. In reply, UNDP ACD mentioned that UNDP is a part of a government and assist government with the support of the development partners, and with the permission of the Chair, he mentioned SSPS Programme has created a tremendous momentum in social protection reform in Bangladesh,



and there is no disagreement from any quarter bringing reform in social protection with the spirit of LDC graduation towards MIC to become social welfare country. Under the changing scenario, donors' perspectives have been changed to focus on strategic areas where supports are critically important, he added. ACD argued that social protection is very much strategic area, and DFAT has been providing support since long in this area where integrated efforts of the Cabinet Division and GED are remarkable. He opined that if the project goes for 2<sup>nd</sup> phase henceforth, then UNDP and ensured DFAT fund for stop gap for NSSS reform and donor as well as UNDP's internal commitment will be in deep trouble. He rather proposed that SSPS Programme should go for another round of extension up to mid-2020 to maintain the momentum of reform, and in the meantime will start dialogue and scope for next phase with bigger fund support from DFAT and DFID. Ms. Angela Naumann, First Secretary (Development Cooperation) and Head of DFAT of Australian Government in this regard took the floor and clarified DFAT current position in relation to SSPS Programme. She mentioned that the fund guarantee for this project is up to 2020, and DFAT is very pleased to support the Government of Bangladesh in social protection reform in implementing NSSS. She further clarified that the current fund is restricted to institutional strengthening initiatives as NPD presented in his presentation, but discussions and suggestions on host community social protection support in Cox's Bazar district is outside of scope of current funding arrangement, but she appreciated as government has guided through appropriate processes and DFAT will respect if government take any activities or initiative in relation to UNDP's efforts in any programme or investment on host communities. The Chair thanked to DFAT and Australian Government for supporting in social security reform in Bangladesh.

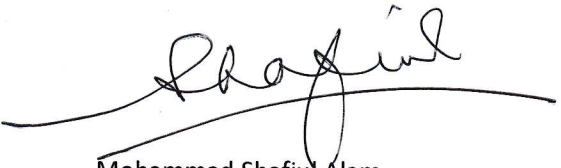
With the assurance of fund commitment, the Chair and PSC members agreed on SSPS Programme extension up to June 2020 with no additional cost; and host community social protection will be considered as a separate programme under Cabinet Division with new modus operandi. Additional Secretary, ERD in this regard assured the Chair that in case of any gap financing for host community social protection programme, her agency will provide support in resource mobilisation.

11. After the elaborative discussion the meeting decided as follows:
  - a) The minutes of the second meeting of PSC held on 30 July 2018 is confirmed without any amendment;
  - b) The work plan of the SSPS project for the year 2018 and 2019 as presented in the meeting is approved;
  - c) The General Economic Division is requested to incorporate Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education in the M&E Committee;
  - d) The proposal for reinforcing social protection for the host communities in Cox's Bazar is well appreciated. However, host community social protection will be considered as a separate programme under Cabinet Division with new modus operandi. The Cabinet Division will take up a separate programme with GoB funds initially leaving unfunded part for donors' support and SSPS Programme will provide necessary support in

developing the proposal for social protection support to host communities in Cox's Bazar district;

- e) The proposed launching ceremony of NSSS Action Plan and books as well as social security conference along with social protection fair will be organized with Honourable Speaker of the Parliament as the Chief Guest preferably on 25 – 27 September 2018 or on any date convenient for the chief guest;
- f) The SSPS Programme will be extended up to June 2020 with no cost and the concerned wing of the Cabinet Division will take necessary measures in time to complete all the official procedures in this regard.

12. The Chairperson concluded the meeting by extending thanks to all the participants and Australian Government and DFAT colleagues as well as UNDP Bangladesh for timely support and arranging fund for SSPS Programme.



Mohammad Shafiul Alam  
Cabinet Secretary  
&  
Chairperson  
Project Steering Committee (PSC)  
SSPS Programme