

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

Chairperson : Mr. Mohammad Shafiul Alam, Cabinet Secretary
Date & Time : 30 July 2017, 2:00 pm
Place : Cabinet Room (Building-1, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka)
Attendance : **Annexure-A**

The Chairperson opened the meeting with a warm note of welcome to all the participants that was followed by a brief round of self-introduction. In his opening remarks, he stated that the overarching goal of the country was to become a middle-income country by 2021, and an effective social security system, as envisaged in National Social Security Strategy (NSSS), could immensely contribute to achieving that goal. The Chair commended the role of the Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme for facilitating the establishment of life-cycle based social security system by supporting the implementation of the NSSS.

2. The Chair requested the National Project Director (NPD) to present the agenda of the meeting. Directed by the chair, the NPD made a power point presentation on different items of the agenda. The first item was to confirm the minutes of the first meeting of the PSC that was held on 20 June 2017. The Chair suggested that discussion might take place if the members indicated any points for revision. However, no member brought forward any amendment proposal and, therefore, the meeting unanimously adopted the minutes of the first PSC meeting.

3. Based on decision of the last PSC meeting, the NPD briefed the meeting on the overall implementation progress to date of the SSPS Programme since its inception. He informed that as per the decision of 1st meeting all the major reports and research works were shared with PSC members through e-mail. Further, he mentioned that, due to its volume of works, the project made available the printed front pages of SSPS products for easy understanding of the nature of tasks it has accomplished. He then handed over to the Chair two books on Bangladesh social protection published by SSPS Programme. These books are titled: 1) "Social Protection in Bangladesh – Building Effective Social Safety Nets and Ladders out of Poverty; and 2) "Exploring the Evidence – Background Research Papers for Preparing National Social Security Strategy of Bangladesh". The Project made provision of launching the second book followed by dialogue on Gender Diagnostic on NSSS in mid-September, where the Minister for Planning will attend as the Chief Guest, he informed the meeting. He also requested the PSC members that the detailed reports, works, etc. could be accessed at www.socialprotectionbd.org.

4. The second decision of the 1st first meeting was that, as per TPP provision, the UNDP would continue the SSPS Programme by its own fund until December 2017 and would sort out remaining fund commitment and unfunded issues. In this regard, the NPD mentioned that under the agreement between UNDP and DFID, the DFID fund was supposed to conclude in August, 2017, subject to amendment of contract, which is more likely not possible. The ERD Representative categorically mentioned that ERD valued this project as flagship programme for NSSS reform, and wished to continue. The Chair also mentioned that the project has created huge impacts and in case of funding shut down the whole efforts and endeavours behind the NSSS reform would be compromised. The Member (Senior Secretary), GED in this regard took the floor and highly applauded the efforts provided by UNDP, DFID, and DFAT since 2011 up to date for NSSS preparation, development, and continued support to NSSS related reform, and mentioned without their support, the country's social security programming would not have reached at this stage. The UNDP representative assured that UNDP valued this policy project and would carry forward the project with its own fund till December 2017, and would continue this project in 2018 with leftover unspent UNDP fund stipulated for this project for 2014 – 2017 time period. UNDP will also sort out the unfunded issue mentioned in the ProDoc as well as try to find out new donors funding to continue NSSS reform. In this regard, he mentioned UNDP will request ERD to extend the ProDoc time period, and accordingly TPP needs to be revised. The Chair and members of the PSC expressed their deep satisfaction for this commitment.

5. The third decision of the 1st meeting was that UNDP would look for the possibility of extending support to the SSPS Programme for its second phase starting from January 2018 and communicate with ERD and other concerned agencies. The NPD briefed the meeting that UNDP showed its eagerness and concern for continuation and take forward the NSSS reform. Funding was a major issue and UNDP wished to run the project, even in a miniature version, before second phase of the project could be initiated.

6. The fourth decision of the 1st first meeting was that a high level National Social Security Conference would be organized in presence of senior political leaderships and stakeholders of social security implementation in Bangladesh. The meeting was apprised that a draft concept note submitted to member GED and the tentative date for the conference was 2-3 August 2017. With this end in view, the policy paper discussion conferences would be held in a suitable time in August, 2017. In this regard, the NPD informed that the background research paper launch was yet to be confirmed by the Hon'ble Planning Minister. The Action Plan would be launched in a later date. A draft programme leaf for Action Plan launch was being prepared subject to CMC approval of NSSS action plan.

6. The fifth decision of the 1st meeting was that the next meeting of the PSC would be briefed on the progress of the NSSS Action Plan preparation. In compliance with the decision, the Secretary, Coordination and Reforms, Cabinet Division and the Chair of the Action Plan Sub-Committee made a power point presentation on the status of the action plan formulation. In his presentation, the secretary mentioned the procedures that were followed

in preparation of the action plan. He added that the action plan was formulated by the respective ministries following a format approved by the sub-committee. Then the filled-in information was reviewed and compiled in multiple workshops and meetings of the sub-committee that were attended by the focal points of these ministries and sub-committee members. He briefed the meeting about the main features of the Action Plan. The Action Plan primarily followed the provisions of the NSSS while also ensuring that these were in alignment with the 7th five-year plan, the Annual Performance Agreement (APA) and Mid Term Budgetary Framework (MTBF) of the ministries. Copies of the draft action plan were handed over to all the members.

7. After the presentation, the representatives of the Financial Institutions Division and Ministry of Women and Children Affairs informed that they had some minor amendment to their respective part of the Action Plan. After the presentation and brief discussion, the meeting unanimously agreed to endorse the Action Plan and recommended it to be placed in the next CMC meeting for approval. Before it, the Chair urged that the ministries would send their amendment proposal in writing within a week, if they wish to. The members of the meeting proposed that the next meeting of the CMC might be convened by the end of August 2017 and be launched soon in a ceremony. The Chair agreed to hold the CMC meeting in August 2017 subject to the availability of his schedule.

8. Following the review of the implementation progress of the 1st meeting's decision, the meeting held elaborate discussion on the next agenda item which was about revision and extension of the SSPS Programme. The NPD elucidated that the SSPS Programme was mainly a project for reforming existing policy, programme and institutional issues to enhance good governance and strengthen social security system of the government. The project still had several crucial activities due which would require some additional fund and time for completion. As per the TPP, the total project cost was BDT 45.35 crore. So far, the project had channelized BDT 31.17 crore (including GOB's contribution of BDT 1.05 crore). The Project had lost about \$500,000 (BDT 3.86 crore) due to falling conversion rate in the foreign exchange market. The Project might not be able to access \$500,000 (BDT 3.86 crore) due to DFID fund utilization bindings that were supposed to end in August 2017. Under such circumstances, most of the activities related to policy makers' engagement and some important studies would be at stake. If DFID extended the fund utilization time, its visibility would be increased. Also, he commented that UNDP contribution in the Project was a bit uncertain. Out of committed \$1.5 million (BDT 11.58 crore) to date \$300,000 (BDT 2.31 crore) was ensured by UNDP. Thus, the estimated funding gap was BDT 14.17 crore. After discussion, the members, in reiteration of their previous position in the first meeting of the PSC, recommended that the project should be continued in 2018. The UNDP was requested to take necessary measures for arranging funds and complete relevant formalities in this respect.

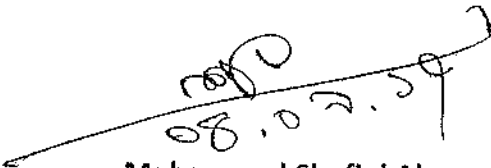
9. Then the meeting was briefed on the progress in integrating the NSSS in different training courses of the BPATC. It was mentioned that a scoping workshop was organized at BPATC with the participation of Advanced Course on Administration and Development (ACAD) trainees on the importance and modalities of integrating the NSSS in the curricula of different training programmes of BPATC. The workshop reviewed the matter and came out with the recommendation that the concept and reform process of the NSSS deserved to be incorporated in different training courses of BPATC. It was also apprised that a similar workshop would be held with participation of trainees of Senior Staff Course (SSC) on 9 August 2017. The Chair suggested that the SSPS programme should continue providing supports in designing course contents and capacity building of the implementers of social protection.

10. The NPD informed that the SSPS Programme developed a website on social protection which could be used by different ministries even after the project is closed. The impending tasks were to host it in Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) server and establish link with the Cabinet Division and GED, and other implementing ministries' website. To make it consistent with the leading website in the world on social protection www.socialprotection.org it was necessary to send an official request letter to BTCL for allocating a new .gov.bd domain (www.socialprotection.gov.bd). The Chair suggested that the Cabinet Division would immediately send the purported official request letter to the BTCL for allocating the desired website link and also, Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) for hosting the website in its own server. It was also discussed that the website should be managed by the Cabinet Division as per the directions of the CMC.

11. After elaborate discussion following decisions were made unanimously:

- a) The minutes of the first meeting of PSC held on 20 June 2017 is confirmed without any amendment;
- b) UNDP will continue the SSPS Programme up to December 2017 as per the TPP and ProDoc. Also UNDP will continue this project in 2018 with leftover unspent UNDP fund stipulated for this project for 2014 – 2017 time period. UNDP will also sort out the unfunded issue mentioned in the ProDoc as well as try to find out new donors' funding to continue NSSS reform;
- c) UNDP and ERD will arrange necessary measures for extending ProDoc time period as no cost extension, and further funds to continue the SSPS Project from January 2018 to December 2018, and accordingly SSPS Programme will furnish relevant formalities and revision in TPP duly;
- d) The draft of the NSSS Action Plan is endorsed by the meeting and recommended for submission in the next meeting of the Central Management Committee (CMC) of the Cabinet Division for approval;
- e) The BPATC will be provided technical support in designing contents on social protection for different courses run by BPATC; and

- f) The BTCL will be requested to allocate www.socialprotection.gov.bd as the website link for the SSPS Programme and the the BCC will be sent a request letter to host it in its server. The line ministries will be requested to embed the link in their respective websites.
- g) The website will be managed by the Cabinet Division as per the directions of the CMC.
12. The meeting concluded with vote of thanks from the Chair.



Mohammad Shafiul Alam
Cabinet Secretary
&
Chairperson of the PSC
Social Security Policy Support Programme

