

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

Subject: Minutes of the Meeting of the Local Consultative Working Group on Poverty (LCG Poverty)

Meeting Date : 30 May 2018
Meeting Time : 1.30-3.30 PM
Meeting Place : Nazia-Salma Conference Room, General Economics Division (GED), Planning Commission, Dhaka.
Chairperson : Dr. Shamsul Alam, Member (Senior Secretary), General Economics Division, Bangladesh Planning Commission
Participants : Appendix 'A'

2.0 Presentation

The Chairperson began the proceedings of the meeting by expressing his warm greetings to the presence. He told that the major purpose of the meeting was to inform the updates regarding poverty situation in Bangladesh and the effort of the Government of Bangladesh in reforming its existing social security programmes; and also, to be informed by the Development Partners about their own development efforts in poverty reduction and increasing social securities in Bangladesh. He emphasized that the LCG, being an important interface between the Government and the Developments Partners (DPs), demands more frequency of meetings so that coordination could be done between the parties involved. He then requested Mr. Faizul Islam, Joint Chief, GED and National Project Director, Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme to proceed by agenda.

2.1 Mr. Faizul Islam apprised the audience with the updates concerning the decisions taken in the last LCG Poverty Meeting that took place in 6 February 2017. The decisions were approved unanimously with a note that such meetings should occur frequently.

2.2 As per the agenda, Mr. Napoleon Dewan, Senior Assistant Chief, Poverty Analysis and Monitoring Wing of the GED presented an update on the progress and dynamics of the current poverty and inequality situation in Bangladesh. According to the results of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2016 (HIES 2016), there was a marked progress in reducing poverty over the past decades. The world attained the first Millennium Development Goal target—to cut the 1990 poverty rate in half by 2015. Since 1990, Nearly 1.1 billion people have moved out of extreme poverty. In Bangladesh, in last 16 years, poverty reduced by half while extreme poverty came down by more than half. However, HIES 2016 depicted, although the economic growth found a momentum, the pace of poverty reduction slowed down. Both depth and severity of poverty had fallen in both rural and urban areas, although at a slower rate. Reduction in poverty was more impressive in rural areas than in urban areas, extreme poverty in urban areas remained stagnant; and income inequality increased in both the areas. Also, it is observed that the poverty reduction is uneven across divisions. The incidence of poverty was typically lower with districts close to the Centre. Mr. Dewan pointed out that the effort of the Government in poverty reduction was

well continued, but the effectiveness needed to be evaluated. He informed the meeting that the Government recognized the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and the need for addressing the issue by adopting appropriate policies and strategies.

2.3 The representative of the UNDP said that the poverty situation between the poor living in rural areas and urban areas in Bangladesh was dissimilar. Dissimilarity in the scale of poverty also occurred between slum and non-slum areas within urban setting. Thus, a big effort might be necessitated in reducing urban poverty. In response to the rise of urban poverty, some quantitative as well as qualitative study on urban slums could answer the complications of the nature of urban poor. Moreover, the existing policies and measures might be revisited. NSSS urban inclusion through SSPS came as a welcome note in this regard. In response to his concern, the Member (GED) warned that careful strategies could be undertaken so that rural to urban migration was not encouraged. The representative of the UNICEF, supporting the view of the representative of the UNDP, said that spending on social security programmes might reduce the urban poverty. Moreover, the issue of children-sensitive was of utmost important for reducing intergenerational poverty. For that matter, universal social protection programmes could be taken up for children of 0-5 year of ages. As far as child-poverty was concerned, it was alarming that for children who constituted some 40 percent of the total population would get only 8 percent of total social protection allocation. The Member (GED) duly noted their concern.

2.4 Mr. Faizul Islam, Joint Chief, GED and National Project Director, Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme provided an update on the social security reforms undertaken by the Government of Bangladesh. He mentioned that the public spending on social protection schemes were increasing gradually over the years. As for the reform in social protection front, the Central Management Committee (CMC) had been approved the NSSS Action Plan of 35 ministries/divisions (implementing and associate) action plans, along with 5 thematic clusters' action plan. The concerned ministries/divisions were perusing their reform agenda under the coordination of the CMC. The CMC would lead the coordination and reform of social protection schemes up to 2025. The Action Plan Preparation Sub-committee (under the CMC) would oversee the progress of implementation of the action plan by the ministries/divisions and related thematic clusters. This subcommittee would look after the issue of linking the action plan with the Annual Performance Agreement (APA) of the respective ministries. When it comes to subnational level, Divisional Committees had been formed by the CMC lately for bottom-up coordination, in addition to the existing District Committees and Upazila Committees.

2.5 Mr. Faizul Islam informed ongoing reform progress of social security schemes and the commitment of the Government in this regard. The ongoing reform process is linked to the generous assistance extended by the Department of Foreign Aid and Trade (DFAT). First, a Results-based M&E Framework had been formed to oversee the reform process under the guidance of an M&E Committee with the GED. As per the spirit of the NSSS, a framework had already been developed. Now, it would go through consultations with implementing ministries and divisions of the Government. Apart from the usual Results-based M&E, in order to measure the efficacy of the reform process, Core Diagnostic Indicators (CODI) would be run half-yearly. The other major tasks of the M&E Committee would to delineate the process of the preparation of a Single Registry MIS, Gender-based Action Plan (based on an approved gender policy); NSSS urban inclusion—NSSS urban strategy and an action plan; Advocacy and Communication—NSSS advocacy and communication to be developed both from the supply and demand perspective; strengthening Grievance Redress System (GRS) with a 2nd generation online platform; Orientation and Capacity Building, and Setting up of an GO/NGO/Civil Society Platform. Also, a number of policy researches

would be undertaken within the purview of this funding: Reaching the marginalized groups; implications of changing demographics; Social security needs of the urban poor; Long-term effect of livelihood promotion types of social security programmes; Labour market integration based on job opportunities matched with skills; Micro-simulation of what has greater effect on reduced poverty: expanding programme coverage or increasing transfer size; Small programme consolidation: scope, principles and suggestions. Importantly, there would be a Mid-term Evaluation of the NSSS along with some pilot studies.

2.6 Development Partners provided updates of their own implementation of the social security schemes. The representative of the European Commission informed the meeting that, from July 2019, they would channel budgetary support to the national exchequer of the Government of Bangladesh which fund would be used for increasing the scale of the operation of the nutrition-based social security schemes. Also, there would a part of TA support along with that chunk. The Member (GED) expressed his concern that, in case of monitoring, the indicators should be aligned with the spirit of the NSSS. The representative of GIZ informed the meeting that they were preparing an action plan for working age people of Bangladesh. The representative of the DFID expressed his optimism that the SGSP would continue supporting the reform effort of the Government. Also, they were working on installation of shock-responsive social protection for the poor in the country. The Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction (UPPR) project supported the implementation of strategies to respond to the challenges of urban poverty reduction in the context of Bangladesh's rapid urbanisation. Meanwhile, the World Bank had been continuing their support in creating a poverty database and architecture for G2P payment system. The Member (GED) thanked both the GIZ, DFID and the World Bank since they had extended their support in the reform process of the social protection. The representatives of the Dfat felt the need for using advocacy and communication tools for scensetising the implementers within the Government. They expressed their concern that the LCG Poverty should meet frequently which would smooth the coordination between the development partners and the Government. The Member (GED) endorsed their idea.

2.7 The meeting felt the need for updating the existing TOR of the LCG poverty group. The TOR had been agreed upon in 2010 between eighteen development partners and organisations, and the GOB. The representative of the UNDP argued that small groups under the preview of the LCG poverty group could be formed for this purpose. The Member (GED) argued that the existing set up of the Group could go ahead with amending the TOR since they formation of any kind of sub-group might not be justified within the scope of the TOR of the LCG poverty group.

As decided in the last meeting, we are supposed to review the terms of reference (ToR) of the LCG-poverty Working Group. Brainstorming regarding this task is going on and before the meeting to follow, we are expecting a good number of suggestions to be reviewed by the group. There was also a decision on subcommittee on social protection. As this issue is embedded into poverty itself, a separate subgroup may not be needed rather we may come up with a concrete ToR for the mother committee that takes care of social protection in a comprehensive way. The third and final decision of the last LCG was to increase the frequency of the meeting and a bi-monthly option was to examine. For the time being however, a quarterly sitting seems pragmatic and to be followed onwards.

3.0 Decisions

3.1 All the development partners would send their respective write-ups to the GED regarding their effort in implementation and reform progress of social protection in Bangladesh.

3.2 Terms of Reference of the Local Consultative Working Group on Poverty (LCG) will be reviewed further. The development partners would send their respective comments to the GED within one month of the issuance of the minutes.

3.3 LCG meeting will be held quarterly.

4.0 The Chairperson thanked all for their active participation and announced the closing.

Sd/-

20/01/2019

(Prof. Dr. Shamsul Alam)
Chair of the LCG Poverty &
Member (Senior Secretary)
General Economics Division (GED)
Bangladesh Planning Commission

Appendix A

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