State of Governance within Social Protection Sector in Bangladesh

Introduction

Bangladesh has been performing better than the South Asian economic giants like India across key development parameters. It is also observed that there is a scope for improving failings in governance within the social sectors are likely to tarnish this well achieved progress. More precisely, there is consensus that progress could have been faster in the past and that social policy challenges that persist will require some deep institutional - or governance – reforms.

Objective: Provide an in-depth assessment of the state of governance within the social protection sector and to isolate institutional arrangements that are likely to improve the quality of governance within the social protection sector by enhancing the effectiveness of the overall sector in delivering services.

Methodology:
A comprehensive literature reviews and consultations with the experts, NGOs and related government was done .

Research Findings

Political Context and Governance in Social Protection Sector

Governance reforms in the 2000s demanded greater accountability and transparency in the use of public resources, political incentives that supported reforms geared towards the expansion of social protection services. An issue that further complicates this scenario, in the context of social protection schemes, is the lack of comprehensive evidence on the magnitude of anomalies and inefficiencies in transfer of public resources that result in high inclusion and exclusion errors that persist within respective social protections schemes.

Effectiveness of Targeting of Major Safety Net Programmes
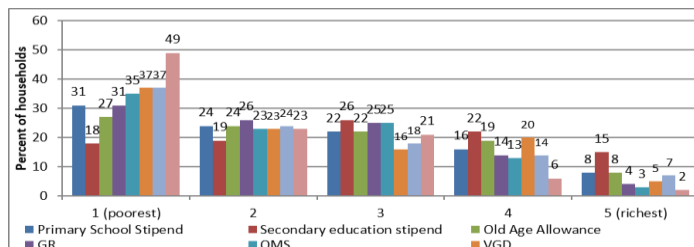
Recent evidence on the effectiveness of targeting suggests that all major social safety net Programmes allocate some portion of the resources to the top income quintile. It indicates that mechanism employed for targeting are suffering from some core loopholes – allowing people towards whom the programme is not targeted to benefit from state resources. Prospective institutional reforms that this analysis will prescribe must take into consideration these existing political conditions so that the changes are both feasible from an institutional perspective and acceptable to the key stakeholders.

Governance and Administrative Issues of the Social Protection Sector

- Many programmes operate with a similar objective by different ministries with little or no coordination among themselves .Lack capacities to undertake monitoring and evaluation is common due to lack of human capital.
- Second, programmes are often implemented in such manner that a rigorous impact assessment is no

- Incentives are also not appropriately aligned within the institutions of social sector service delivery. This facilitates the prevalence of leakage within the social protection sector. At present, very few incentives are in place to ensure service providers achieve the objective of the social protection scheme.

Addressing the governance challenge: Possible Reforms

This section discusses the key governance reforms required for successful implementation of the social safety net programmes. It identifies governance reforms from both the demand and supply side perspective for effective social safety net programme delivery.

Improving supply-side governance: A lead agency needs to be identified for overall social protection activities. The main aim is to be less dependent on many actors so that coordination ineffectiveness could be minimised. This agency can be the Ministry of Social Welfare.

Coordinating Agency: The lead ministry agency will coordinate/consult with all the line ministries/departments and NGOs involved with different social protection schemes for successful implementation of the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) and budgeting of the programmes.

Creation of Meta-Programmes: The lead ministry agency in coordination with relevant line ministries, Planning Commission and (development partners in some cases) can consolidate programmes with similar objectives and instruments under a *meta-Programme* under fewer line ministries. These would prevent duplication and overlapping of programmes.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the programmes

There will be a need for developing an M&E framework that will help monitor the programmes and supply information about how well a programme is working so that policy makers can take actions to improve the programme implementation. It will be a continuous process throughout the programmes life and be an integral component of all the programmes.

Good management information systems (MISs) needs to be developed rather than basing on traditional paper which is the current way of administering the programmes by the local government (Khondker and Kidd, 2013). A central beneficiary database for all the schemes should be placed for the lead agency to get access from other MISs of the ministries and agencies. Formal and informal sector coverage can also be expanded through improved administration and compliance. A unique identification number for the beneficiaries and strong IT support are essential.

Passing responsibilities at the local government level: Capacity of staffs at the local level needs to be developed and their incentives must be aligned to the objective of the programme.

The paper suggests that the programmes be brought under the jurisdiction of two major ministries and the remaining programmes be either separated from the safety net programmes or eliminated altogether.

As noted below, the core functions of some key agents are described below:

Finance Division of the Ministry of Finance: The overall budget for the social protection sector will be formulated by Finance Division after undertaking a joint consultation with Ministry of Social Welfare, Planning Commission and respective line ministries to determine the overall budget for the sector

Cabinet Division: The responsibilities and mandate of the Central Monitoring Committee (CMC) under the Cabinet Division will be expanded so as to convert it into an effective institutional platform for effective policy coordination among SSN implementing ministries.

Planning Commission: The policies concerning the social protection sector will be formulated by the Planning Commission. To implement these policies Ministry of Social Welfare will formulate and undertake necessary social protection programmes. The Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBM&E) Unit within the GED should undertake independent monitoring and evaluation of each programme under the social protection sector.

Relevant Line Ministries: Social sector programmes which do not strictly fall under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Social Welfare will be operated by relevant line ministries. For example, education stipend programme can be implemented by Ministry of Education. However, relevant line ministries will not have any jurisdiction to introduce any new programme without consultation with Ministry of Social Welfare and Planning Commission to ensure programmes do not suffer from duplication. The relevant line ministries will also feed information to Ministry of Social Welfare

Improving demand side governance

- All information needs to be readily available to stakeholders i.e.the beneficiaries, ministries and NGOs involved. The beneficiaries should be aware of the programme outcomes and the eligibility criteria for each programme. They should be encouraged to use instruments such as the Rights to Information Act (RTI) when facing difficulties to get information on the different social protection schemes. Safety net programmes could incorporate the RTI Act to bring a qualitative change in delivery system. Since the prime objective of the Act is to ensure transparency and accountability in governance, so integrating RTI Act will help in promoting good governance. On the other hand, targeted beneficiaries will be able to receive services offered by the government and non-government organisations.

- As noted in Stolk (2010) stakeholder (beneficiaries, civil societies and development partners) participation should be encouraged in programme decision-making, implementation and monitoring. Mechanism and procedure should be in place to allow beneficiaries and citizens to lodge complaints regarding programme administration, quality of programme delivery and even payment of benefits. The idea here is to accommodate voice of a wider number of actors within the social protection sector.

- Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry of Local Government must frequently hold responsible entities within the ministry accountable by evaluating the performance of the overall social protection sector. In fact, Member of Parliaments must scrutinize whether social protection sector is suffering from any inefficiencies by bringing to attention difficulties faced by targeted population in getting support.