

Notes for Record

of the Reflection Meeting

Social Protection Policy Support (SPPS) Programme
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh

Date: 10 February 2022

Virtual (Zoom) Meeting



Mr. Aminul Arifeen, Project Manager, SPPS Programme inaugurated this Reflection meeting with warm greetings and a welcome speech. He said the objectives of the meeting are to ponder and reflect on the progress made by the project in major reform areas of social protection and evaluate some pertinent issues linked to the delivery of the SSPS Programmes. He then shared a brief powerpoint presentation highlighting key policy issues, major reform activities of the ministries/divisions, the SSPS Programme's contribution to NSSF's key reform areas of social protection programmes of Bangladesh.

Mr. Aminul Arifeen

Project Manager

SSPS Programme, UNDP Bangladesh

(Synopsis of the presentation)

Mr. Aminul Arifeen then explained that one hundred percent of poor elderly people, widows, and deserted women in most poverty-stricken 112 upazilas (sub-districts) have been brought under the coverage of 'Old Age Allowance' during the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. The coverage of this one hundred percent deserving beneficiaries will be extended to another 150 upazilas belonging to the extremely high and high poverty groups following the existing policy and from FY 2022.



He mentioned that this will add eight lakh new poor elderly beneficiaries, where an additional allocation of Tk. 481 crore will be provided to this end and 4.25 lakh new widows and deserted beneficiaries with an additional allocation of Tk. 255 crore allocated for this purpose. Mr. Aminul Arifeen added that as per the latest disability identification survey, the number of beneficiaries of the Insolvent Disabled Person Allowance Programme will increase by two lakh two thousand for which the allocation of this program will increase by Tk. 200 crore in FY 2021-2022.

He then briefly shared the major reform activities of the ministries/divisions. He mentioned that major reform activities of the Ministry of Social Welfare are to strengthen old age allowance and disability programme, strengthen support to vulnerable women and marginalized people, improve programmes for vagrant & homeless people, socially disabled women, training & rehabilitation programme for children and skill development programmes for women & persons with disability.

In the Finance Division, the main reform areas are to maintain government service pension and initiate the universal pension as part of the NSIS, creation of financial management database for social security programmes, scale-up government to person (G2P) payments system. At the same time, the Financial Institutions Division (FID) is to support the introduction of NSIS. The Economic Relations Division (ERD) will support coordination with development partners for upscaling social protection, highlight government achievement in social security in international forums, and the Ministry of Labour and Employment to establish the unemployment insurance scheme and childcare services in the workplace.

He then shared that the Cabinet Division's key reforms areas are to strengthen coordination of social security programmes in ministries and field administration, strengthen GRS for social security, engage with development partners and NGOs, support implementation of NSSS; and a Mid Term Review of NSSS. For the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, key areas are to strengthen social allowances for migrant workers and their family members, insurance coverage for all aspirant migrant workers, enhancing skills development programmes, Local Government Division, support measures to tackle the challenge of urban social security, expand SWAPNO project, through the selection of beneficiaries and support GRS. In his presentation, he briefly highlighted the SSPS programme link to NSSS key reform areas by evaluation questions and the major expected key deliveries: the 2021-22 inception phase.

Mr. Asif Kashem

Senior Program Manager

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Bangladesh

Mr. Asif Kashem applauded the excellent presentation made by Mr. Aminul Arifeen and discussed how the SSPS Programme's contribution can effectively foster the reforms in social protection amongst various ministries/divisions in Bangladesh. He said that they received some excellent insights on what is working well and the progress made against the performance indicators according to the log frame of the SSPS Programme. He then inquired about what is not working well, lessons learned, and recommendations considered for adjusting the targets. Mr. Asif Kashem especially requested Mr. Mohammad Khaled Hasan, Joint Secretary, Cabinet Division, to share his experience regarding the challenges and barriers to the SSPS Programme.



Ms. Kate Sangster

First Secretary – Development Cooperation
Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian High Commission, Bangladesh

Ms. Kate Sangster, First Secretary – Development Cooperation, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian High Commission, Bangladesh shared her gratitude and warm greetings to the audience and thanked Mr. Aminul Arifeen for his well-structured and informed presentation.



She particularly highlighted the effectiveness part of the programme, which is the evidence of progress towards the achievement of outcomes and how the programme achieved the outputs and outcomes expected at this time. Ms. Kate Sangster then put emphasis on Gender and Disability inclusion, the programme involving PwD and OPDs in planning, implementation, and M&E of the SSPS Programme, and how the programme identifies and addresses barriers to inclusion and opportunities for participation for people with disabilities through the SSPS Programme. She also highlighted the need to develop a common guideline/manual/induction documents or platform for the ministry leaders and officers, which can be helpful for newly transferred officers to get oriented about what was done before by the Ministry.

Mr. Mohammad Khaled Hasan
Joint Secretary, Cabinet Division

Mr. Mohammad Khaled Hasan, Joint Secretary, Cabinet Division, said that the presentation has discussed how the SSPS Programme is contributing to the reforms of social protection in Bangladesh. He then mentioned that the SSPS Programme has made some outstanding progress against the performance indicators according to the log frame in terms of strengthening governance mechanisms in social protection. He then explained how stakeholder engagement in the project takes place in three stages; the project involved ministries, sub-ordinate offices, the development partners, and NGOs in the different stages of the formulation of the NSSS Action Plan. The Cabinet Division organized three series of workshops to orient the focal point officers then to prepare draft action plans and finally these plans were shared with NGOs for their recommendations in the NSSS action plan.



Mr. Mohammad Khaled Hasan then explained that the NSSS Action Plan Sub-committee, led by the Secretary, Coordination, and Reforms of the Cabinet Division, has formulated the NSSS Action Plan, Phase – II (2021-2026) successfully. The sub-committee conducted a series of consultative dialogues, meetings, and workshops with the concerned stakeholders and finalized the draft NSSS Action Plan. Then the first draft of the Action Plan was placed before the Central Management Committee (CMC) in its 15th meeting on 27 June 2021. As per the decision, the draft action plan was sent to the concerned 39 ministries/divisions for their further review and feedback. Following the review comments and input of the ministries/divisions, the final draft of the NSSS Action Plan 2021-2026 was thoroughly reviewed by the Action Plan preparation and monitoring Sub-committee and then placed before the CMC. In the 16th meeting held on December 23, 2021, the CMC finally approved the NSSS Action Plan, Phase – II (2021-26). The

Action Plan has also been vetted by the Honourable Prime Minister and advised to be published accordingly.

He mentioned that the Local Consultative Groups (LCG) on Governance and Social Protection is now under the leadership of the Cabinet Division. This LCG was co-chaired by the European Union (EU) last year but other development partners such as UNDP, DFAT or other organizations can also lead as co-chairs in the coming years. He said that during a field visit to Indonesia under the SSPS Programme, he found that Australia played a vital role to strengthen social protection there. He suggested that DFAT can also take a leading role in Bangladesh through the LCG platform. Mr. Mohammad Khaled Hasan intimated that frequent changes in leadership roles within the ministries and divisions are critical for the project and suggested that frequent meetings, consultations, dialogues can minimize coordination challenges amongst them.

Mr. Ashekur Rahman

Assistant Resident Representative UNDP, Bangladesh

Mr. Ashekur Rahman, Assistant Resident Representative UNDP, Bangladesh commended the presentation. He said that the project has made some brilliant achievements but still there are a lot of challenges in data governance especially for social protection which is critical. He mentioned that through this project, the level national-level social protection governance mechanism is now in a strong position, but there is a need to accelerate social protection governance at the field level. He also requested DFAT to think about its involvement with the LCG for governance and social protection in Bangladesh.



Mr. Ashekur Rahman emphasized that the Local Consultative Groups on Governance and Social Protection are under the coordination of the Cabinet Division which is a very good move in terms of coordination as the Cabinet Division is the custodian of social protection in Bangladesh. He reminded everyone that previously this group was co-chaired by former DFID now FCDO, but as this platform has been shifted, there is a new opportunity here, where, DFAT can approach to lead this group, as it is a major development partner of Bangladesh

Mr. Mohammad Khaled Hasan said that the government is involving private sectors to implement G2P approaches in social protection and service deliveries. Also, the government is trying to ensure social protection governance at the root level through the Upazila Management Committee on Social Protection. There is a GRS and dedicated hotline, should

there be any complaints on social protection. He informed the meeting that government officers are appraised by the annual performance report which is related to the governance of social protection at the field level. So, this governance cascades to the field level. For this, there is G2P and GRS. There are multiple channels to air grievances via a website and a hotline. There is also a public hearing which is coordinated by the Cabinet Division. People can meet the District Commissioner and directly call them and use social media to air their problems and issues.

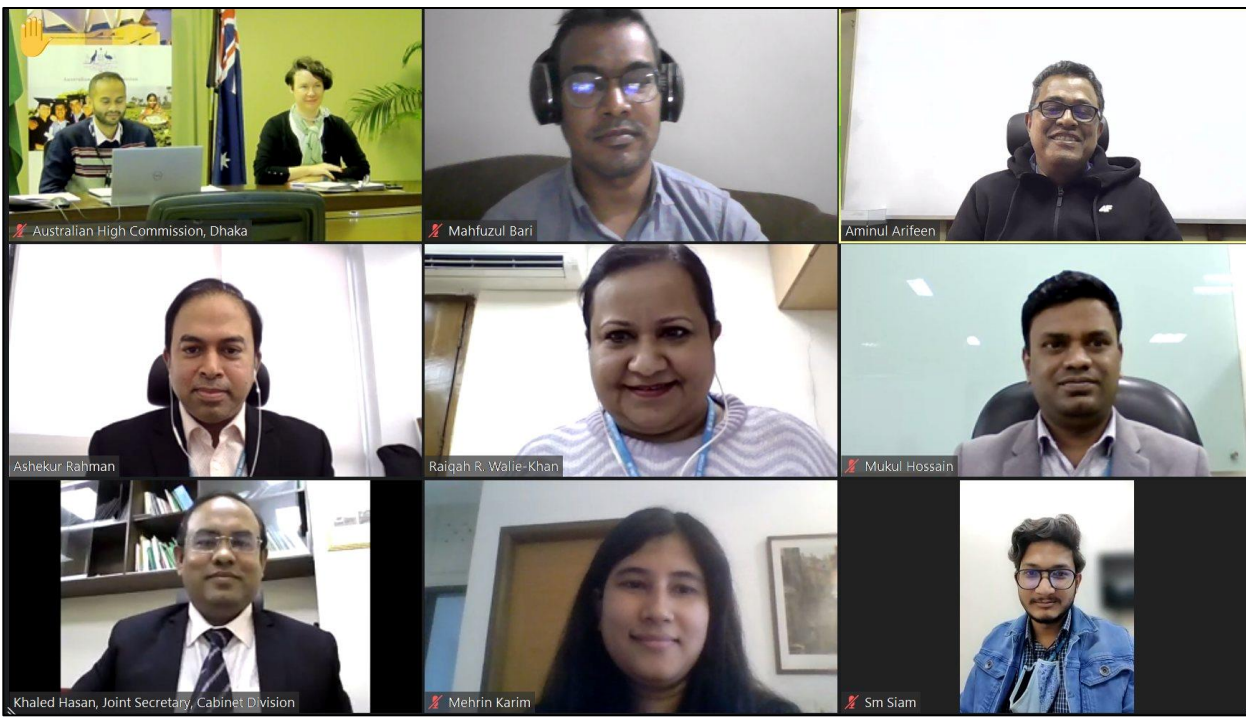
Mr. Aminul Arifeen complemented, that coordination challenges is a major issue in the ministries/divisions particularly coordination with multiple agencies, distribution of works in many wings within many divisions and changes in the leadership of the ministries are major challenges of the programme. Also, the project has mobilized private sectors, NGOs, Insurance Companies, and CSOs in social protection.

Mr. Asif Kashem thanked all, especially Mr. Mohammad Khaled Hasan, Joint Secretary, Cabinet Division for sharing his experience regarding the challenges and barriers of the SSPS programme. He then mentioned that one thing we should proactively look for that is disability inclusion the programme involving PwD and/or DPOs and addressing barriers to inclusion and opportunities for participation for people with disabilities in the SSPS Programme.

Mr. Asif Kashem also emphasized finding a sustainable solution to minimize the challenges of frequent changes in the leadership of the ministries by developing a toolkit or guideline for the officers that can be helpful for new and transferred officers to get oriented.

It was deduced that the holding of these kinds of Reflection Meetings should be done on a regular basis.

The Meeting was concluded with a vote of thanks from Mr. Asif Kashem and Mr. Ashekur Rahman.



Major Actions/Recommendations

- Tracking progress made against the performance indicators according to the log frame
- Arranging stakeholder meetings more frequently
- Putting emphasis on Gender and Disability inclusion
- Involving PwD and OPDs in planning, implementation, and M&E
- Developing common guideline/manual/induction documents or toolkits for the ministry leaders and officers
- Accelerating social protection governance at sub-national/field level
- DFAT leading as LCG Social Protection co-chair in the coming years.

Annexure 1 (Participant List)

SL	Name	Designation	Organization
1.	Mr. Mohammad Khaled Hasan	Joint Secretary	Civil Registration and Social Security, Cabinet Division, GoB
2.	Ms. Kate Sangster	First Secretary	Australian High Commission, Bangladesh
3.	Mr. Asif Kashem	Senior Program Manager	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Bangladesh
4.	Mr. Ashekur Rahman	Assistant Resident Representative	UNDP, Bangladesh
5.	Mr. Aminul Arifeen	National Project Manager	SPPS Programme, UNDP, Bangladesh
6.	Ms. Raiqah Ripa Walie-Khan	Communications Officer	SPPS Programme, UNDP
7.	Mr. Mohammad Mahfuzul Bari	ICT Expert (MIS-GIS)	SPPS Programme, UNDP
8.	Ms. Mehrin Karim	Research Associate	SPPS Programme, UNDP
9.	Mr. S M Siam	Finance & Administrative Assistant	SPPS Programme, UNDP
10.	Mr. Md Mukul Hossain	Project Assistant	SPPS Programme, UNDP