

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

Minutes of the 8th Meeting of the NSSS Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Committee

Date and Time : 17 October 2019, 10 AM-01.00 PM
Venue : Nazia-Salma Conference Room, Planning Commission, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka
Chairperson : Dr. Shamsul Alam, Member (Senior Secretary),
General Economics Division (GED), Bangladesh Planning Commission
Participants : Appendix 'A'

The Chair opened the meeting with a note of warmest welcome to the participants, followed by a round of brief self-introduction. The Chair then thanked the members of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Committee for their contribution in overseeing the implementation progress of the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS). He mentioned that the NSSS had suggested to assess the effectiveness of small social security (SS) programmes. There were many workfare programmes that took care of the vulnerabilities of the poor, which needed to be observed in terms of their efficacy and potentials. Also, the NSSS had promised to expand the activities of the social security programmes in the urban areas. Thus, studies done on such topics would help the Central Management Committee (CMC) in deciding the ways and means of reshaping the existing social security schemes.

2. Enquired by the Chair, the Chief of General Economic Division mentioned that the main agenda of the meeting was to share and discuss inception reports of three studies. The studies

were: a) Analysis to increase efficiency and effectiveness of small social security programmes harmonization/consolidations; b) Evaluation of existing workfare programmes in terms of coverage and skill development, and its link with the job market; and c) Diagnostic of the urban poverty and social security needs of the urban poor.

3. The Chair requested the members of the committee to actively take part in the discussion, ask relevant questions for clarification, and make suggestions for improvement of the scopes and methodologies of the studies. He requested the representative of Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID) to make brief presentations on the inception reports of the assigned studies. Afterwards, Dr. Razzaque, the Director, RAPID presented the inception report of "Analysis to increase efficiency and effectiveness of small social security programmes harmonization/consolidations" in the meeting.

PRESENTATIONS

Presentation-1: Inception report on the Analysis to increase efficiency and effectiveness of small social security programmes harmonization/consolidations

4. During the presentation on this topic, Dr. Razzaque mentioned that the overall objective of the study was to analyze small social security programmes to find out possible ways to harmonize them. The presenter apprised that the research objectives were as follows:

- a. Mapping small SSPs by lifecycle category;
- b. A close look at the portfolio of small programmes based on budget, number of beneficiaries, objectives, eligibility as social security, and their scale of operation;
and
- c. Specific recommendations for streamlining and harmonization of small SSPs.

5. It was informed that the research team followed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative information collected included a comprehensive review of the

literature, KIs of the officials involved in small social security programmes (SSPs), and case studies on beneficiaries of small SSPs. The quantitative work involved analysis of the secondary data on small SSP's budget, beneficiaries, and objectives collected from different sources.

6. The presenter informed that, for collecting data, the biggest concern was about reaching to a definition of small programmes for this study. After some literature review and careful analysis, they thought to apply two ways to identify schemes of small size. Firstly, a approach was to include programmes with budget less than 0.5% of the overall Social Security Programme Budget and then to consider the bottom decile programmes. Thus, they identified 85 programmes that fell at the bottom decile. Secondly, for the programmatic approach, they used the other criteria for final assessment. Those criteria were:

- a. Deduction of the programmes related to construction works,
- b. Inclusion of the programmes related to Life cycle, covariate risks, social empowerment elements, and social security support programmes, and
- c. Deduction of the programmes with overlapping objectives with other large/ small programmes

Finally, with these two criteria involved, the study team came down to 42 programmes which were defined as small.

7. Further, the research team used a framework, that included the four key pillars of Social Security Programme harmonization. Those were: inclusiveness, efficiency, consistency with lifecycle risks, and coherence to strengthen the delivery channels. He mentioned that the assessment criteria of a harmonization framework could also include the Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI), Value for Money (VfM) and Frontier analysis. However, depending upon the time and cost involved, finally, a programmatic approach was applied for harmonization.

8. The preliminary findings showed that selected 42 small programmes could be classified into three broad groups: lifecycle, covariate risk and special programmes. The presenter also shared the status of the report and informed that they were in the process of drafting the report. Finally, he presented the way forward and concluding remarks about the assignment.

Presentation-2: Inception report on the "Evaluation of the Existing Workfare Programmes in terms of Coverage and Skill Development, and Its Link with the Job Market"

9. The second presentation was about the evaluation of the existing workfare programmes in terms of coverage and skill development, and its link with the job market. The presenter, Dr Mahfuz Kabir, briefed on the existing workfare programmes in Bangladesh, and types of workfare schemes. He described the research questions of the assignment. Those were:

- a. Do SSP workfare programmes contribute to increasing the skills of beneficiaries (e.g. upgrading from unskilled to semi-skilled)?
- b. Is the private sector experiencing a shortage of semi-skilled labour? If yes, to what extent is the shortage?
- c. What policy avenues and/or specific policies can the Government consider improving SSP workfare programmes supportive of skill development of workfare beneficiaries, and thus help address shortage of skilled labour force?

10. He presented the selection process of workfare programmes using three criteria. Those criteria were: services through direct recruitment from the intended beneficiaries, miscellaneous schemes that create temporary jobs during implementation, and skill development and training. He listed out the names of such schemes and the relevant budgets as well which were selected using the above criteria. He also demonstrated the methodology, sample size, and field execution process of the study. The field survey was conducted in 8 districts and 2 upazilas from each district. It was also reported that the study team had already completed field survey, and 331 interviews were done at the field. Among the respondents, 59% of them were female and most of respondents were young-aged. Highest portions of the beneficiaries (58%) said that they looked for jobs in the same area during lean season. The respondents were asked whether they received any training. It was found that the 34% of beneficiaries received training and they received training on agricultural crop production mostly (31%). In general, their feedback on training was satisfactory and they stated that 44% of them rated their training as effective.

Finally, he mentioned that the report was at the draft stage and would be shared in stipulated time-schedule.

Presentation-3: Inception report on the Diagnostics for Urban Poverty and the Social Security Needs of the Urban Poor in Bangladesh

11. Dr. M. Abu Eusuf, Professor, the Department of Development Studies, the University of Dhaka and the Executive Director, RAPID presented the scope and the methodology of the study. He briefed the meeting about the background and the context of the study. It was informed that the overall objective of this study was to prepare urban diagnostics for urban poverty and the assessment of social security needs of the urban poor. The presenter informed that the research methodology of the study comprised of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. It included desk review, key informant interviews, focus group discussion, and sample survey. Questionnaire survey was conducted in Dhaka and Chattogram cities, and 200 urban poor households were interviewed. Key Informant interviews were conducted with GoB and UNDP officials.

12. The presenter shared the design of the study and layout of the report with the meeting. He described initial findings from their analysis. It included context of the study, concept of urban poverty, framework for urban vulnerability, coverage of social safety-net, rural-urban disparities, urban poverty reduction initiatives of Bangladesh, and global experiences. He talked about the social security programmes for urban poor with their budget allotment, coverage and responsible ministries. Their preliminary findings showed that even though poverty declined in urban areas, the absolute number of urban poor population increased. He reminded that the existing social security programmes continued to focus more on rural areas (HIES 2016). As for example, he observed the inherent rural-urban disparity in old age and widow allowances. Finally, he mentioned that the study would be finished on-time.

Discussion

13. The Chair requested the participants for their feedback and queries, if any, on the above-mentioned presentations. The Joint Secretary of Cabinet Division commented on the 1st presentation, that is, on small social security programme harmonization. She mentioned that the objectives and methodologies of the studies were very rational. However, she requested for more clarification on the programmatic approach of programme harmonization and benefit of small programmes consolidations in terms of costing. The presenter explained that many programmes would have welfare concern for continuing, and also, some programmes would die down naturally after project intervention periods were over. The Chair added by reminding the rationality for consolidation, and mentioned that the smaller number of programmes in the portfolio would lower down the overall administrative cost as borne by the Government.

14. Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Social Welfare suggested to analyze the results of programme harmonization by ministry so that each ministry can be aware about the future course. Ministry-wise segregation would be helpful for this purpose. Dr. Razzaque informed the meeting that they had already conducted the analysis, and that would be part of the final report.

15. Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Finance thanked Dr. Razzaque for seeing the harmonization from many angles. He appreciated the way the study team had segregated the analysis by ministry. He commented that, as per the suggestions made in the NSSS, harmonization of all the small programmes with large windows was not the end, the large programmes needed careful analysis too.

16. Deputy Secretary of the Governance and Innovation Unit of the PMO suggested to check the overall analysis without considering the pension benefit which is the largest programmes in the assortment. The presenter responded that they had done the analysis already, and the results ~~were~~ did not change much. Deputy Secretary also commented on aligning the Government's political agenda with the efforts of small programme consolidation.

17. Additional Secretary of Ministry of the Finance commented on the study “Evaluation of the Existing Workfare Programmes in terms of Coverage and Skill Development, and Its Link with the Job Market”. He emphasized that unemployment became a burning issue for Bangladesh and this study would carry great importance for this country. He added that the study-team should provide equal level of stress both on employment creation and skill development. He recommended to add insights on types of training required considering the demand of the recipients.

18. Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Social Welfare suggested to improve coordination among different ministries in case of rendering skill-based training. Also, while imparting skill-based training, within a ministry, there should be a good coordination between the ministry with its own field-level training centers.

19. Joint Secretary of the Cabinet Division observed that there had been a little relation of capacity development training with the job market, also skill-match was overlooked in many instances. For female-recipients, it was hard for them to match skill in the same locality. The Chair commented that the programme should be able to incorporate the vision of the training programmes at planning stage.

20. The Programme Director of the SSPS programme mentioned that the present study would be based on static analysis. However, there could be skill spillover in the future. Possibility of this kind of skill spillover could be observed in a separate study.

21. Deputy Secretary of the Governance and Innovation Unit at PMO pointed out that the study on skill and employment was related to youth mostly. So, this study would be able to fulfill the Government’s political agenda on focusing on youth development. He suggested incorporating the employment and skill development of the youth in the study separately. The researcher agreed to look into the matter by segregation of the beneficiaries by age cohorts.

22. Joint secretary of the IMED suggested to compare social security budget with neighboring countries. The Chair responded that such a comparative analysis had already been done in the NSSS.

23. About “Urban Poverty and the Social Security Needs of the Urban Poor”, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Social Welfare spoke briefly on the importance of a database of urban poor. The Chair remarked that all database should get approval from the SID who had been developing National level database.

24. Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Finance commented that it was true that poverty shifted from rural to urban area in these days. He suggested to analyze the social security budget allocation by rural and urban areas. The study team agreed for furnishing such information.

25. The Chair mentioned that change in definition of administrative demarcation could have an impact on the way of living of the residents. The fate of the beneficiaries could be worse off as they shifted to urban areas without any changes into their economic status. These issues should be addressed in the report. The researcher recognized the point made by the Chair.

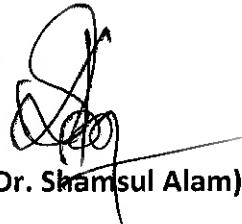
26. The Programme Director of the SSPS reminded the researcher that, as per the TOR, it was important to shed light on innovative tools of urban social security intervention. The nature of such intervention by rural and urban areas would be different certainly. Thus, a mere extension of a rural-based social security programme into urban areas would undermine the parity. The researcher so agreed.

27. Finally, all the participants endorsed the methodology and approach of the three researches unanimously. They viewed that these would reflect the reality on the ground about different aspects of social protection practice in Bangladesh. The Chair appreciated the efforts of the research teams, and requested that the studies should be completed within stipulated time.

Decisions/Recommendations

28. The Meeting endorsed the scope and the methodologies of the three studies. The research teams were asked to complete the studies within stipulated time as mentioned in the contracts.

29. There being no other issues for discussion, the meeting was concluded with the vote of thanks from the Chair.



(Prof. Dr. Shamsul Alam)

Member (Senior Secretary)

General Economics Divisions (GED)

Bangladesh Planning Commission

Appendix "A"

SL	Participants	Designation	Organization	Contact Info
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