

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

Minutes of the 9th Meeting of the NSSS Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Committee

Date and Time : 28 October 2019, 2.00 PM
Venue : Nazia-Salma Committee Room (Block-6, Room-26), General Economics Division, 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 inaugurated the meeting with a note of heartiest 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 and others representing ministries and associated departments and agencies for participating in this important meeting.

2. The Chair informed that the main agenda of the meeting was to share and discuss findings of "Situation Assessment for Establishing a National Social Protection Management Information System (MIS) in Bangladesh" as contracted out to the Maxwell Stamp Limited Bangladesh. He explained that all the implementing ministries had their own programme of MIS. But the NSSS called for a single-registry MIS which would have a specific purpose: integrating the individual MISs and a poverty database (which is being finalized by the BBS) to a system where data on a particular individual could be pulled together. Such integration would offer selecting the right beneficiaries having desired socio-economic attributes, and then tracking down the benefits transferred to them in course of time. Thus, as the first step, it was necessary to assess the capabilities and characteristics of the existing MISs run by various ministries and agencies of the Government of Bangladesh. He then asked the participants to come up with their own technical comments.

3. The team leader of the study team from Maxwell Stamp Limited, presented the study report in front of the members of the M&E Committee and stakeholders. The National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh proposed reforms to establish a national 'Single-Registry Management Information System'. The scope of the study was to perform the assessments of the existing Social Security MISs of the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) and civil registration systems. He added that

the situation analysis identified the requirements for building a single-registry MIS. He explained the modality for beneficiary selection and benefit transfer process. Such an integrated database would be able to minimize exclusion error, inclusion, and duplication error. Moreover, their target was to develop road map that would guide the GoB towards building a National Social Protection (NSP) MIS which would be the single-registry beneficiary database. The overall idea was that: all the programme MISs would be linked with the single registry database. The advantage was that the system would be able generate analytics—National M&E, dashboards of service-providers, report generation, policy support, and operational support.

4. The presenter depicted that during the assessment, the team settled engagement with key stakeholders. Those included Finance Division, Social Protection Budget Management Unit (SPBMU), Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), General Economics Division (GED), Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC), Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED), Ministry of Health and UNICEF, Cabinet Division, Ministry of Local Government, and other Line Ministries, Directorates and Departments. Consultants reviewed existing documents of the projects, programmes and MISs that were assessed to have a better understanding of the existing situation. Situation assessment of the strength and risks of the existing MISs was also conducted.

5. The presenter explained the importance of a single-registry MIS at policy level. The single-registry MIS would be able to increase responsiveness and inclusiveness of intervention for poor, ensure universal or targeted coverage, build a stronger link to complementary institutional frameworks, increase transparency and accountability, and increase knowledge about poverty and vulnerability in Bangladesh.

6. He also described how this system would have positive impact on operationality. The system would facilitate oversight of multiple schemes, improve budget planning, decrease the burden on staff, avoid duplication of effort, establish common systems across all schemes, improve identification and management of error and fraud, enable beneficiaries to transition between schemes, and establish more effective emergency responses.

7. Potential risks were discussed during the presentation. Those included: cost involvement, complexity, data privacy and security, and risks of multiple exclusion from all social security schemes, and systematic exclusion of certain types of households.

8. The presenter demonstrated assessments of several existing systems, which were criteria based on their maturity level, risk level and coverage of functional process areas. Afterwards, he presented “Assessment Functional Context and Scope” which included beneficiary identification,

beneficiary data management, payments/benefits transfer, grievance and redress, conditionality management, and monitoring and evaluation.

9. Functional coverage assessment focused on determining the potential contributions to be made by both the programme MISs (as for example, SPBMU MIS) and functional MISs (as for example, National ID Database). Opportunities to reduce/eliminate redundancies and duplications were evaluated. In total, 15 systems were scored based on these assessment criteria. The systems that were assessed were: National Household Database, National Population Registry, iBAS++, National ID Database, Birth Registration Information System, SPBMU MIS, GRS System, Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Database, programme (beneficiary) databases of the 5 ministries/agencies (Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Directorate of Primary and Mass Education, and Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education) etc. All these programme 15 MIS databases were scaled. The results on functionality were diverse: in some cases, the systems were deployed and had been working; in some cases, systems were under construction; and in some cases, the development was just planned; and in some cases, the systems were not specified at all. Moreover, only the SPBMU MIS was integrated with programme MISs of different ministries (currently with programme MISs of five ministries).

10. The presenter also showed the elements obtained from each of the MISs on security assessment. The presentation showed that the selected MISs, in most of the cases, were high risk prone. These findings entailed significant investment of minimizing inherent risk of the systems on improve staffing, self-service support, greater participation of the local teams in maintenance etc.

11. The team leader then described experiences of using single-registry by some countries in the globe, it was mentioned that the best example of social registry was in Brazil. Another example of integrated beneficiary registry was Kenya's Single-Registry which acted as a data warehouse across the country's five main social protection programmes.

12. The presenter discussed the conceptual overview for drawing a National Social Protection (NSP) MIS through integration. It showed that the programmes which would provide their inputs into NSP MIS. Each of the programme MIS would be linked to the NSP MIS (back and forth). The NSP MIS would generate analytics. Functional MISs (SPBMU, iBas++, NHD, GRS and IMED database) would also feed into or feed from the NSP MIS.

13. The team leader outlined the process of implementation of such as NSP MIS. The registration and targeting included data called from BBS Household database, civil registration system, Proxy mean test (PMT), birth registration information system (BRIS), GRS and that of

IMED. The proposed that the National ID system and data validation would be conducted by SPBMU MIS server with the Ministry of Finance. Bangladesh Bank would be the authority of G2P payment transfer. He also showed another method of implementation of NSP MIS. In alternative approach, IMED, BRIS and GRS would provide their input to SPBMU MIS and from those data, SPBMU server would generate single-registry. Thus, there was a choice if SPVMU server would work at the center or NSP MIS would be generated from all data-sources through integration.

14. Finally, the presenter showed tasks involved in developing the single-registry MIS usage and briefed roadmap for NSP MIS implementation. It included specific steps for improving the existing MISs, their functionality, developing the NSP MIS, integration of the programme and functional MISs with the NSP MIS, and then testing before run finally. All these lists of tasks needed to be performed, if the government wished to develop the single-registry MIS.

Discussion:

15. The chair thanked the study team for the presentation. He mentioned that theoretically, overall concept and architecture looked promising. However, he enquired more into the types of the softwares and servers to be used, generating reports from the system, and its operation method. The presenter replied that there would be a new server to be built for such a single-registry MIS system. After installation of the server, design of the system (Application Programming Interface, API) would be taken care of. The connection for integration among the existing programme MISs would be conducted and a single-registry would be drawn from queries. This single-registry would generate reports through established analytics. Then the Chair opened the floor for comments and queries.

16. The Additional Secretary of the Finance Division pointed out that MIS of the Employment Generation Program for the Poorest (EGPP) or the MIS of the Health services transfer were missing in the presentation. He was wondering whether all other existing MIS would be assessed in the final report. The presenter informed that the current assessment of the existing MIS was conducted on sample basis and they took some of the biggest schemes only. The Additional Secretary of the Finance Division replied that the MISs of the EGPP was a big in itself. Also, he mentioned that the primary education system had no MIS but it was placed among the list of the MISs reviewed. The presenter replied that the ministry had a plan to set up MIS. That was the reason for evaluating and scoring their planned system.

17. The Director of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) wanted to know about the process of application of proxy mean test (PMT) in the system. He added that PMT was dependent on several indicators. He told that the values of PMT would be necessary for beneficiary selection which would be calculated from such a single-registry MIS (the proposed NSP MIS). Further, he commented that

updating was important too. The presenter informed that there would be scope for running PMT in the system. He suggested that updating could be done in the field by different data collectors and MIS operators. There would be requirements to move from paper-based data collection to tablet based data collection. This move would make the data updating system easier. As an example, he added that if the data collector/field officer updated income level of any household at union level, it would be updated in the National Household Database (NHD) automatically. The Director of the BBS expressed a caution that there should be an authority who could screen such updating. The fear was that auto-updating could have done on purpose or may suffered from human error.

18. Senior Maintenance Engineer of the BBS commented that the PMT was dependent on several indicators and it might be updated in every 4-5 years using the national household database or NHD. Further, he talked about the process of updating the data into a single-registry MIS. The presenter said that every event, such as payment transfer, would be added into the system automatically. It could be the responsibility of the BBS to find a way about how to utilize these new events for data compiling/updating. Senior Maintenance Engineer for BBS commented that data mining and machine learning could play vital role in maintaining credibility of data. He further commented that it would be difficult to utilize poor performing database into the system if there were no smart query system developed and feedback mechanism present.

19. The Chair commented on the credibility of the data and added that prior permission from the BBS was required for updating data collected from or reported by the beneficiaries. The Additional Secretary of Ministry of Finance commented that all the programmes would continue to maintain their own databases and updating should be done as per the BBS's mandates.

20. The Additional Secretary of Ministry of Finance further commented that there should be system where every user would be able to see each other's activities, may be on read-only format. Such an interface would be able to help report generation globally. Every ministry should have access to the list of beneficiaries of other ministries. The ministries should have the admission to check whether beneficiary applications were genuine or not. The chair commented that single-registry MIS employing the same database (NHD) would be able to diminish the selection error or targeting error anyway. The MIS specialist from Maxwell Stamp suggested that the existing SPBMU database would check the duplications.

21. The National Project Director (NPD) of the SSPS Programme commented that the existing SPBMU database (a programme database in nature) had integrated five ministries so far. Practically, in the future, a comprehensive database was required for operation of selecting beneficiaries and payment transfer as would be done by all the ministries and agencies. Preferably, such a database would be able to integrate the databases of the all the social security benefit transferring ministries and agencies. The question was if the SPBMU database of the Finance

Division would be extended in future or service-providing entities would feed into the single-registry MIS system directly. After that, a social protection database (which would be a compendium of social registry, individual programme database, and functional databases) would be drawn through queries. The NPD of the SSPS programme also added that this present exercise was meant for assessment of the strength and weaknesses of the existing MIS databases. It would be the next step where the government would be able to decide upon the nature of integration, the characteristics of the application programming interface (API), updating the data, sorting the beneficiaries etc. Thus, a further study could be required for operationalizing a single-registry MIS. Based on that the GOB could decide upon the nature of the proposed social security MIS.

22. The National Project Manager of the SSPS Programme reminded that the National Household Database was key to the success to single registry MIS. The assessment elaborately captured all the relevant information implemented by the agencies with impressive suggestive actions. However, the success depends on correct beneficiary selection based on NHD and their inclusion in the respective social security programmes' MIS. Thus, it would be imperative to finalize the architecture of the operations if the proposed social security MIS.

23. The presenter thanked everyone for their suggestions and feedback made. They would incorporate the comments while finalizing the situation analysis. The Chair appreciated the efforts of the research team and noted their efforts in assessing the existing programme and functional MISs. He commented that the next job would be to think over the overall architecture of a single-registry MIS which would be developed in the spirit of the NSSS.

24. Decisions/Recommendations

- a) The appointed firm, Maxwell Stamp limited, should make efforts to revise the study report with incorporating the suggestions made and concerned expressed in the meeting; and
- b) The key findings of this assessment study will be shared in Bangladesh Social Security Conference 2019 for further inputs from the social protection implementing ministries / divisions.

25. 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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