



# **Social Security Policy Support (SSSP) Programme**

## **Project Evaluation**

**2018 – 2019**

**Cabinet Division and  
General Economics Division (GED) of  
Bangladesh Planning Commission**

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**



**Final Project Evaluation**

Social Protection Policy Support (SPPS) Programme

March – May 2020

**Disclaimer:** *the current report represents the views of the reviewer and not necessarily those of GoB or UNDP.*

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**Social Protection Policy Support (SPPS) Programme**

Cabinet Division and General Economics Division (GED) of Bangladesh Planning Commission  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

[www.socialprotecton.gov.bd](http://www.socialprotecton.gov.bd)

<b>Project / Outcome Information</b>		
<b>Project/outcome title</b>	Social Protection Policy Support Programme	
<b>Atlas ID</b>	00090394	
<b>Corporate outcome and output</b>	CPD Outcome 2 Develop and implement improved social policies and programmes that focus on good governance, reduction of structural inequalities and advancement of vulnerable individuals and groups CPD Output 2.3 The Government has the capacity to develop policies and carry out sectoral and geographical interventions in districts where inequality of progress is evident	
<b>Country</b>	Bangladesh	
<b>Region</b>	Asia-Pacific	
<b>Date project document signed</b>	January 2014	
<b>Project dates</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>Planned end</b>
	1 January 2014	30 June 2020
<b>Project budget</b>	6,068,108	
<b>Project expenditure at the time of evaluation</b>	100%	
<b>Funding source</b>	DFAT, Government of Australia, UNDP and Government of Bangladesh	
<b>Implementing party</b>	General Economics Division (GED), Planning Commission; and Cabinet Division, GOB.	
<b>Evaluation Information</b>		
<b>Evaluation type (project/outcome/thematic/country programme, etc.)</b>	Project	
<b>Final/midterm review/other</b>	Final evaluation	
<b>Period under evaluation</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>End</b>
	2018	2019 (it also covered pre-DFAT phase supported by DFID to way of analysis of various relevant prior activities)
<b>Evaluators</b>	M Amanullah (Mak) Khan	
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<b>Evaluation dates</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>Completion</b>
	12 March 2020	10 May 2020

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Mak Khan, *PhD*

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
AWP	Annual Work Plan
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
DCM	Data Collection Method
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DQS	Data Quality Standards
DSS	Department of Social Services
ERD	Economic Relations Division
FD	Finance Division of GoB
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FYP	Five-Year Plan
G2P	Government to People
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GED	General Economics Division
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GRS	Grievance Redressal System
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MIS	Management Information System
MoLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment
MoSW	Ministry of Social Welfare
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NILG	National Institute of Local Government
NSSS	National Social Security Strategy
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
PIC	Project Implementation Committee
PPA	Partner's Performance Assessment
ProDoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGSP	Strengthening Government Social Protection Systems for the Poor
SPPS	Social Protection Policy Support Programme
SSC	South-South Cooperation
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TrC	Triangular Cooperation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VfM	Value for Money

WoG

Whole of Government

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### 1. Introduction and Background

UNDP commissioned the final evaluation of the Social Protection Policy Support (SPPS) Programme over a period of six weeks, conducted by an individual international evaluation consultant. This report summarizes the purpose and methodology with regard to the evaluation, as well as the findings, lessons learnt and recommendations, emanating from the evaluation exercise. This report also takes stock of the outputs delivered by the project since its inception until the current period.

### 2. Background and context of the project

Social Security is a priority area of the Government of Bangladesh's development path. The SPPS project supported the policy, strategy and systems development in the Social Security area that operates within a complex developmental, political and social context. The 6th and 7th Five Year Plan (2016-2020) for Bangladesh emphasised on skill development and creation of employment opportunities. The forthcoming 8th Five Year Plan (2021-2025), in addition to skills and employment will focus on several key areas for Bangladesh socioeconomic development, including gradual reforms in the social security system. The current number of social security programmes stands at 123 which has been adjusted over the years from some close to 150 different fragmented schemes and programmes. A Mid Term Review (MTR) of SSSP took place in 2018, that recommended consolidation of the fragmented programmes to a manageable number. The budget of the largest 20 programmes is approximately 80% of the total budget, with the smaller programmes' share being only 20%. Based on the MTR, a study was completed for discussion on the future reform initiative of the government.

With funding from both DFID and DFAT, the overall objective of the SPPS Programme was to ensure that the Government of Bangladesh has established and implemented a more effective and efficient social protection system, including policies, strategies, plans, studies/research, capacity building, and governance. Based on the on-going results framework and lessons learned from SGSP Programme, the activities under the DFAT support to SPPS Programme were divided into two outcomes :i. Better governance of social security; and ii. Strengthening the delivery of the social security systems.

### 3. Purpose of the evaluation; approach and methodology

The evaluation, as per the TOR follows a set of criteria in line with OECD/DAC guidelines, as follows: i. Relevance and strategic fit of the project; ii. Validity of the project design; iii. Project progress and effectiveness; iv. Efficiency of resources; v. Impact and sustainability of the project; and vi. Gender.

The evaluation methodology comprised a comprehensive desk review of several key documents and publications undertaken by SPPS; Key Informant Interviews (KII) with key stakeholders; and initially a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the project team. This was followed by an analysis of the findings and triangulation of data and information to arrive at an evidenced based analysis of outputs and potential outcomes. The overall goal of the final evaluation was to present an objective analysis of programme performance related to outcomes, and in regard to the achievements of SPPS towards improving the social protection environment in Bangladesh. Finally, the report suggests possible next steps for sustainability of initiatives and results. The COVID 19 restrictions prevented the consultant to engage with a wider number of stakeholders and undertake field visits that would have been ideal.

### 4. Findings and Analysis of the Review Criteria

Notwithstanding the several inherent challenges, the SPPS Programme provided good value for money, created significant interest, *inter alia*, among the government, NGOs, civil society members, and development partners in moving forward the key social protection reform agenda in Bangladesh. It also contributed to building a good base towards promoting a cohesive Government-civil society collaboration and shared vision for increased capacity in the government and common accountability

in the area of poverty alleviation, and financial inclusion through a responsive social protection system. The project has grounded the fundamental elements to eventually achieve universal social protection through national policies and programmes towards equitable access to social protection measures.

#### **4.1 Relevance and strategic fit of the project**

The SPPS Programme is fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG-1: *“End poverty in all its forms everywhere (No Poverty)”* which is a major focus of the 7<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (7 FYP) of the Government of Bangladesh and UNDP Bangladesh’s current Country Programme Document (CPD), 2017-2020. Both policy documents end in 2020. The project also enjoys its continued strategic relevance in the context of the policy pronouncement of the 7<sup>th</sup> FYP, which is described as follows: *“The Government of Bangladesh is strongly committed to reducing poverty, improving human resource development and reducing inequality. Social protection is an important tool for reducing poverty and inequality.”* The strategic fit of the project is further understood from a number of angles: first, the various strategic studies conducted by SPPS Programme are serving as background research evidences for developing the social protection chapter of the 8th Five-Year Plan (FYP); secondly, the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh and the Strengthening Government Social Protection for the Poor (SGSP) programme was developed based on similar background studies; and finally; the project served as an effective influencing instrument for other development partners (DPs) in formulating or refining their own country priorities to support the government.

UNDP’s comparative advantage in implementing a project of this nature can be understood in a number of ways. UNDP’s strategic support to SPPSP is characterized by its comparative neutrality, independence, and their flexible access to the wider government machinery, including at the high level political, civil administration and local level administrative networks. This eventually led to the formulation of the NSSS, its associated Action Plan, and a series of knowledge documents which were the result of a partnership between the government and UNDP. The SPPS Programme is also aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF): *Economic growth is achieved in an inclusive manner extending opportunities to the rural and urban poor, and protecting the vulnerable from shocks.* Finally, the SPPSP is linked to the development priorities of the two major funding partners, i.e., DFID (UK) and DFAT (Australia).

#### **4.2 Validity of the project design**

The design, despite the strong rationale base grounded in the document, does not clearly establish the causal linkage between the broad goal and the immediate objective of the project. The project document lacks a clear description of what the immediate objective of the intervention should be. It goes on to describe what it calls *‘the overall objective’* as *“ensuring the Government of Bangladesh develops a fully functional social protection system, which supports and facilitates best practice delivery models.”* The project design thus remains ambiguous in terms of the articulation of the overall development objective that ideally should result in one or more immediate objective(s) that are specific and measurable in the immediate and long run. The design is also somewhat deficient in terms of the logic model as narrated in the Results and Resources Framework and lacks the connection between the outputs expected and the proposed inputs. The intended outcomes were also not specific, and thus the Results Framework in the document remains as a free-standing part of the project document. Activities proposed were over daunting and can be critiqued as not being consistent with the intended objective of the project, time line of implementation and the risk factors identified. The Theory of Change (ToC) is another weak area. The overall Outcome as described in the Theory of Change: *“A modern and fit for purpose social protection system developed,”* reads as an overstated and ambitious statement. There are some logical inconsistencies in the ToR that is discussed in the report.

### **4.3 Project progress and effectiveness**

#### ***Information Support and Research Capacity Building***

For the development of the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) document, the SPPS Programme supported the Cabinet Division and the GED to commission local and international research houses and think tanks to prepare a series of key background research documents, that includes : i Barriers of Accessing Social Protection Programmes for the Poor and Marginalised; ii. Cost-Benefit Ratio Study on Effects of Social Protection Cash Transfer; and iii. Long-Term Effect of Livelihood Promotion Types of Social Security Programmes. In addition, the Cabinet Division and the GED undertook ten high quality and extremely relevant researches with the assistance of the SPPS Project. The research topics include: lessons learnt from international experiences, appreciation of the nature, dynamics, and sensitivities inherent in poverty, vulnerability and marginalization. These researches served the immediate need for quality research founded on evidences and contributed to building the research capability within the Government towards the implementation of NSSS. In addition, the project supported a high-quality Political Economy Analysis (PEA) research in the context of the broader all-encompassing scope of social protection contemplated in the NSSS for consultation with a broad range of stakeholders. This flagship document was of critical importance for a broad based acceptance of the strategy draft. The purpose of all these strategic actions and consultations was to ensure their engagement, support and inputs in finalizing the NSSS document, and ensuring their ownership of the NSSS initiative. The NSSS is the flagship instrument supported by SPPS that gave the first impetus in streamlining the social security system of the country. It aims to reorganise the Government's 140 social safety net programmes into a single coherent system that tackles lifecycle risks through targeted cash transfers, mitigation of disaster and other covariate risks, and other supportive programmes.

#### ***Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Building***

This evaluation recognises that M&E in the context of the NSSS is a complex area given that the requirements are diverse, highly dynamic and involves the presence of qualified personnel in its conduct. The M&E activities in the project essentially began with the development of a concept paper on research and M&E needs in the context of NSSS in 2016, followed by an orientation on NSSS for the officers of the Cabinet Division. A series of dissemination and orientation actions were initiated for the mid-level implementors in the ministries. At the field level, this was followed by a consultative meeting involving multiple stakeholders on NSSS research needs and Results Based M&E. A high-level orientation on Results Based M&E for the NSSS was also carried out amongst the Parliamentarians.

The M&E process involved the following two steps: setting up of the NSSS M&E Committee comprising of implementing ministries' focal points for M&E and MIS. This step was preceded by a consultative workshop held with M&E focal points from 35 ministries on the draft M&E framework and format. One of the notable features of the intended M&E System, is its attention to segregate data that presents an opportunity to carry out several analyses using gender related parameters. While the above achievements do confirm that M&E arrangements envisaged in the SPPS project document is in place, issues of a perennial nature persists that include the lack of M&E knowledge and/or continued and sustainable commitment at the local and central ministry levels. Data dissemination process is often slow, requiring follow up given the attrition rate by way of civil service transfer rules which results in the depletion of capacity within the ministries, and also the absence of the institutional memory of focal points on M&E. A significant limitation of this intervention is that data is limited in frequency for higher-level indicators which makes assessment of the overall impact of completed reforms under the NSSS difficult.

'Managing expectations' is necessary in terms of a single all-encompassing M&E arrangement that could comprehensively serve various aspects of the NSSS through a Single Registry data platform. Also important, is that the vastness of the NSSS that demands a dedicated M&E unit exclusively for this purpose. This need to be resourced with dedicated M&E and expert professionals and housed, ideally

within the GED. The M&E Committee endorsed a situation assessment on the Single Registry Management Information System (SRMIS) which concluded that neither the NSSS nor the implementing are equipped to plug into a unified system. The reason was that IT platforms were not uniform across the related ministries and agencies to build a Single Registry. Once fully implemented, the SRMIS will be an extremely powerful and versatile tool that can generate processed data for a whole range of policy decision inputs, much wider than presently anticipated. As mentioned earlier, a strong M&E system can only be built with a dynamic MIS across all ministries as the two functions closely intersect and complement each other towards a common goal.

Initially, a basic form of Grievance Redress System (GRS) was in place following the recommendation of the Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC) in 2000. The Cabinet Division took an initiative, for the first time, to bring together the existing redressal systems in the country under a central GRS platform. The Cabinet Division designed, developed and tested a GRS software, which is an interactive web-based software and portal, for all line ministries to implement grievance redressal for mitigating people's complaints relating to end-to-end service delivery. In 2014-15, the online GRS software was finally hosted in a server, which is available at [www.grs.gov.bd](http://www.grs.gov.bd).

The draft architectural platform for the 2G GRS Platform and the terms of reference for Access to Information (A2i) support for conducting the pilot project was provided by SPPS Programme. The pilot project was successfully implemented in the Kurigram district. To generate demand for the GRS at the beneficiary level, the SPPS Programme distributed leaflets and posters at the ward level and the NGO community. Pre and post pilot phase data were collected to gauge the changes in usage of public hearing, direct complaints at the local offices and through hotline, and online platforms for SMS and social media. Despite inadequate hardware availability at the local level which was compounded by an inadequate system maintenance, a web-based GRS is functional and accessible online. However, it might take some time to have the GRS well entrenched at the local level particularly within the Union Digital Centres.

### ***Institution Building***

To provide necessary and efficient support for institution building and strengthening the capacity of the government, the SPPS Programme set up offices at the Cabinet Division and the GED. A Central Management Committee (CMC) Secretariat was also established within the Cabinet Division to support the NSSS Implementation and Coordination Unit. The two SPPS Offices (Cabinet Division and GED) acted as the focal point to ensure timely availability of all technical assistance under the provisions of the SPPS Programme. The key inputs provided for institution building are below: i. TA support to the Cabinet Division to assume the overall leadership in preparation of the Action Plan for NSSS by each implementing Divisions/Ministries to ensure that the GoB assumes full ownership of the direction and strategy in the Action Plan (2015 to 2017); ii. The SPPS project facilitated the process of substantive consultations between the ministries listed in the five thematic clusters<sup>1</sup> and facilitated constant close dialogue between the members of the CMC. Some of the key activities included one meeting at the Prime Minister's office for ratifying the NSSS, one meeting of the focal points of the CMC, one CMC meeting and two meetings of the NSSSB thematic clusters (2015 to 2017); and iii. TA support to organize the Bangladesh Development Forum Meeting 2015 with special emphasis on a session on Social Protection, attended by high level officials of GOB, DFID and UNDP.

Subsequent to the above supports, CMC and the five thematic clusters are now operating with enhanced authority and responsibilities to implement the NSSS. However further institutional strengthening is considered necessary. Following the mid-term review and the findings of the Study on Barriers to 'Accessing Social Security Programmes in Bangladesh', the Cabinet Division initiated the process of drafting the Bangladesh Social Security (Coordination) Act 2019. This was a major institution building initiative aimed at improving accountability within ministries and the field administration of

the NSSS. The Act mainly focuses on social security governance at both national and sub-national levels, and addresses beneficiary selection. The draft Act, completed in 2019 is still under formal review with the Cabinet Division.

### ***Implementation Capacity Building***

The SPPS Programme supported several activities directed at training of trainers and implementers at all levels for building capacity to implement the NSSS interventions. In this regard, the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) was assigned to be the lead institution for imparting training on NSSS implementation. Following rounds of discussions, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed with BPATC to prepare training curricula for the capacity building of three levels of civil service employees (foundation, mid-level, and high-level) as an integral part of their regular training process. So far, the SPPS Programme helped in introducing training curricula on social protection which was integrated within the BPATC foundation course and in the curricula of a number of public training institutes for GoB officials. A pilot on the ToT curriculum and training on social protection was carried out in conjunction with the BPATC Foundation Course in August 2017 which was attended by 44 participants. This marks a significant step in the change management process within the civil service.

The SPPS Programme supported consultative workshops with participation of training officials from 18 government training institutions with inputs from experts on the Training of Trainers (ToT) curriculum and an assessment of a curriculum particularly with regards to poverty and social protection, and the life-cycle approach. In addition, to disseminate the training at the local level, the National Institution of Local Government (NILG) was assigned to be the lead institute for capacity building training of Union Parishads.

### ***Study tours, domestic trainings and information sharing within GoB***

The SPPS Programme supported study tours, undertaken in phases for GoB officials to learn from the experiences of social protection initiatives in selected countries. Study tours include training of 6 key officials from the Cabinet Division and GED on social protection, particularly related to poverty, social protection, and M&E at the Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI) at Chiang Mai, Thailand. The SPPS Programme also supported a study tour of GoB officials from the Cabinet Division, the General Economic Division (GED) and the lead ministries of the five thematic clusters for NSSS to four states in India to learn about the Indian experience in social protection initiatives. The SPPS Programme also supported a Study Tour in Kenya in 2017 to learn about system strengthening. Similarly, in 2019, the SPPS Programme supported knowledge sharing study tours for 20 officials of GED in Indonesia and Turkey. While these study tours are essential for capacity building, the evaluator was not able to access any 'back to office report' that could delineate the outcomes of the study tours in terms of the knowledge gained, possible knowledge sharing and potential twinning arrangements, or at the least, a collection of potential policy and institutional reform options that could be considered in the context of Bangladesh.

The results of the consolidated efforts is best seen in the fact that a good deal of awareness building and appreciation of the social protection concept has been achieved. From this perspective, the SPPS Programme has built a solid basis for building capacity through awareness building and appreciation of the social protection concept and practices. What is foremost is that the momentum needs to be maintained to reach the desired level so that future capacity building can rest on the foundation exercise that SPPS has built. Capacity, by principle must be portable, and thus the capacity gained by the trainees can be utilized by them at various ministries and institutions, given the routine civil service transfer rules and practices.

The SPPS Programme provided necessary technical assistance and support to facilitate effective consultations across the concerned ministries, especially the ministries within the five thematic clusters and the cross cutting ministries. Other key examples include a national consultation on key

policy issues on the short, medium and long term strategies proposed by the NSSSB to discuss the issues and challenges in related social protection areas. The results from these discussions include, but are not limited to: modifications of components of the social protection programme which can be influenced by Climate Change, and adaptive social protection to promote flexibility and gender empowerment co-benefits, including gender dimensions of disasters (covariate shocks). The discussion on 'Research Needs for the NSSS' identified knowledge gaps and associated research needs in line with five thematic areas: *Targeting and Selection, Accessibility, Value for Money, Coordination and Implementation, and Monitoring and Evaluation*. Another notable event was the consultation on 'Results based M&E' that underscored the need to introduce a continuous M&E process which could feed information to implementers towards delivery mechanisms, record results/impacts, provide information to policy makers and mobilize political commitment. Another notable dialogue initiative was the national 'Platform for Dialogue' (P4D) that included NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) with the government. The Platform is driven by NGOs who undertake the responsibility as member secretary on an annual rotating basis and meets twice a year.

### ***Advocacy materials, tools, and national level campaigns***

The prime mission of SPPS was advocacy across various types of stakeholders to increase awareness, appreciation, commitment and ownership of the NSSS visions and envisaged reforms. Advocacy activities were embedded in SPPS work streams where a variety of advocacy tools were used. These include: policy briefs, training events, research reports and other knowledge products, expert briefings, media campaigns, newsletters, and exposure to best national and international practices. As has been proven in many social sectors in Bangladesh, engagement of NGOs, civil society and the private sector could strengthen the national social security programming, contributory monitoring, upscaling and reporting. While some partnership with NGOs and civil society have been initiated under the SPPS Programme, linkages with media for wider dissemination of knowledge and information remained limited that needs to be carried forward in the subsequent phase of SPPS. Communication and advocacy should not be treated as an adjunct activity of the project, but should be integrated within the core programme, where feasible.

### ***Piloting social insurance scheme***

One of the major barriers in implementing a pilot project for developing a social insurance scheme was the absence of necessary capacity and resources within the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE). The SPPS undertook steps for conducting a feasibility study on a Social Insurance system for basic self-coverage for key contingencies, and to conduct a formal pilot scheme for social insurance. While a committee was formed by the CMC, the activity was not eventually undertaken. A perceived lack of capacity within the Financial Institution Division (FID) also deterred the development of an enabling Act for approval by the parliament to support an integrated social insurance framework. It is understood that devising a social insurance scheme that would be affordable by the target beneficiaries as well as offer adequate coverage (particularly including covariate shocks) is complex and challenging. Such a scheme cannot be delivered as a component of a programme because the enormous scope and highly specialized inputs demand a separate dedicated intervention. This should be closely tied to the future SPPS phase as a facilitating instrument for its full implementation.

### ***Public-Private Partnership: Promoting G2P transfer of benefits***

The system of direct payment under a Government to Person (G2P) system, through electronic transfer was piggy-backed on the UNDP implemented SWAPNO project implemented by the LG Division in Kurigram. The rationale for using the SWAPNO project route was that it promotes employment, and most importantly future employability, of extreme poor rural women. The private sector participants in the project were bKash, Rocket and Bank Asia's agent banking service in the project area.

Despite delay in the initiation of the the G2P pilot due to successive floods, it was eventually carried out in Kurigram in June 2019 with support of the district administration within the three months period to produce tangible results. A randomised controlled trial (RCT) of payments to the project beneficiary women was made through bKash, Rocket, the Bangladesh Post Office and agent banking service of Bank Asia. The pilot trial established that the beneficiary women received their payments on time and the reliability was no less than physical collection. The most important benefit that established is that online banking service significantly reduced the time and distance travelled to collection points.

In concluding, below is a summary of achievement of targets that is based on the Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) of DFAT which shows the status of the targets set for the period 2018-2019; and 2019-2020 :

#### 2018-2019

**Target: Better governance of social security through NSSS Gender policy, Action Plans, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and Grievance Redress System.**

**Progress rating: Highly satisfactory**

- NSSS Gender Policy approved by Cabinet led Central Management Committee (CMC), and development of NSSS Gender Strategy and Action Plan endorsed and commenced.
- NSSS Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and data collection tool approved by CMC. Draft of first annual NSSS M&E Report (for 2018) completed.
- NSSS Action Plan launched in the Social Security Conference (Nov 2018) engaging 35 Line Ministries. Minister for Social Welfare and State Ministers for Planning and Finance attended.
- NSSS Grievance Redress System on-line platform available, developed by a2i of ICT Division under the auspices of GRS Branch of the Cabinet Division. Orientation of GRS focal points of implementing ministries undertaken.

**Target: Evidence base generated on the effectiveness of NSSS reform to inform future government development plans.**

**Progress rating: Highly satisfactory**

- Mid-Term Review of the NSSS in response to CMC decision under GED's responsibility. Draft report completed. Appraised by NSSS M&E Committee. Key findings shared with development partners in LCG – Poverty meeting.
- In addition, 7 research studies on priority policy areas endorsed by CMC commenced. 4 studies completed and appraised by NSSS M&E Committee: 1) Barriers accessing social protection programmes for the poor and marginalised; 2) Cost-benefit ratio analysis on effects of social protection cash transfer; 3) Implication of changing demographics and effects on social protection in Bangladesh; 4) Long-term Effect of Livelihood Promotion Social Security Programs.

**Target: Increased budget-as percentage of GDP.**

**Progress rating : Highly satisfactory**

- Budget increased from 2.17 per cent of GDP (2017-18) to 2.54 per cent in 2018-19. Budget expenditure increased from AUD 62.15 billion in 2017-18 to AUD 74.04 billion in 2018-19.

**Target: Evidence of action plans being implemented**

**Progress rating : Satisfactory, needs improvement & follow up on key areas**

- 35 secretaries, 50 additional and joint secretaries, and 120 Parliamentarians briefed on NSSF reform progress, NSSF Action Plan, NSSF link to SDGs by Member, GED and Secretary (Coordination and Reforms), Cabinet Division; and Principle SDG Coordinator, Prime Minister's Office.
- Key reform priorities in the Action Plan progressed. Business case on consolidation of small-scale safety net programs developed and CMC focal points engaged. ToR for social insurance developed by thematic cluster. M&E reporting and MIS single registry progressed.
- In addition, A National Social Security (Coordination) Act drafted and under law wing of the Cabinet Division.
- A multi-agency committee formed comprising members from Cabinet Division, Finance Division, Statistics and Informatics Division, office of the Registrar General, and Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division, and General Economics Division (GED) under the Chair of Member, GED.

**Target: Partnership with Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) for foundation, mid-level and senior level officials**

**Progress rating: Highly satisfactory**

- Training curriculum on NSSF and social protection, and train the trainer for BPATC officials, completed.
- In addition, 12 training institutes within relevant Ministries engaged to review their training curricula on poverty and social protection.

**Target: Policy decision on single registry of social security management information system at Statistics and Information Division (SID)/Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) as a data source to address target errors**

**Progress rating: Partially met; weak**

- Agreement reached with the Government of Bangladesh that a more comprehensive feasibility study is required to make an evidence-based decision on the need and requirements for a single registry MIS. NSSF M&E Committee endorsed ToR and appraised the inception report of the feasibility study. Policy decision will be made in 2019/20.

**Target: Reduction in the number of social safety net programs**

**Progress rating: Satisfactory**

- In line with NSSF consolidation agenda, the number of social protection programmes decreased from 142 in 2016 to 136 in 2017, and further reduced to 118 in 2018 to 114 in 2019. While the government's 2019/20 budget included 13 new small development focused projects, which increased the total number of projects at 123.

**2019-2020**

**Target: Better governance of social security through NSSF Gender Strategy and Action Plan, and first Annual NSSF M&E report.**

**Progress rating: Highly satisfactory**

- Gender Strategy and Action Plan developed; first Annual NSSF M&E Report developed. Both presented at Bangladesh Social Security Conference and Knowledge Fair 2019.

**Target: NSSS evidence base informs development of next national development plan.**

**Progress rating: Highly satisfactory**

- Research studies feeding into 8th Five Year Plan development; MTR also feeding into it.

**Target: Increased budget-as percentage of GDP.**

**Progress rating : Highly satisfactory**

- 2018-19 2.53 per cent and 2019-20 2.58 per cent. Budget allocation shows that government spending on social security programmes has been increased, as total outlay amount to Bangladesh Taka 74,367 crore (about USD 8.8 billion, equivalent to AUD 13.1 billion).

**Target: Evidence of Action Plans being implemented.**

**Progress rating: Satisfactory; follow up and further actions needed.**

- There is both progress and challenges in the implementation of the Actions, but evidences do exist as discussed in this section earlier.

**Target: Policy decision on single registry MIS informed by feasibility study.**

**Progress rating: Less than satisfactory; needs follow up actions for implementation.**

- Situation Assessment feasibility study completed, and endorsed by the M&E Committee. However, assessment found many of the relevant platforms are not at operational readiness to proceed with Single Registry. The M&E Committee will now go for a revised Action Plan that will include getting the relevant platforms at operational readiness, and then build the Single Registry. Getting the other platforms up to operational readiness is the responsibility of the ministries.

**Target: Reduction in the number of social safety net programs.**

**Progress rating: Satisfactory; partially met:**

- Current number of programmes stands at 123. The MTR recommends not focusing major resources on small programme consolidation as there are too many political variables on-going at any given year, which are completely outside the scope of mandated NSSS reforms (in its current form). The budget of the largest 20 programmes is approximately 80 per cent of the total budget; therefore, smaller programmes are not taking much budget. However, the MTR recommended carrying out a small study to bring to GoB and stakeholders for discussion on next steps which was as completed. Discussions are due to take place in 2020.

#### **4.4 Efficiency of resource use**

The SPPS represents a good example of Value for Money based on economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity, and judicious use of resources. Resource allocation so far made, are largely in core areas that includes capacity building activities including training and study visits, consultative activities and advocacy, services of researchers for research-based knowledge documents, and cost for implementation through partner agencies. The trend of resource allocation signals to the project getting greater momentum as year passed.

The project, with the implementation support from UNDP has made serious efforts in adhering to best practices in procurement consistent with the UNDP rules; thus maintaining a high degree of transparency and fiduciary practices. The project was meticulous and conscious in its budget projection, and thereby delivered what was agreed within the allocated budget. The project also updated the annual plans and corresponding budgets to reflect realistic projection of delivery. The

project has been consistently maintaining close to 100 per cent delivery rate every year while maintaining strong Value for Money (VfM) by utilizing UNDP's global procurement system, and entering into negotiations for service providers offering competitive prices. The resources, by adhering to the principle of VfM, have economically converted the resources/inputs (funds, expertise and time) into many results that are well demonstrated and acknowledged.

#### **4.5 Effectiveness of management arrangements**

The SPPS Programme had instituted a management arrangement that appears to be strong and at par with some of the good global practices in relation to the management of a complex and highly ambitious undertaking such as the SPPS. The management arrangements have been met with varying degree of capacity constraints impinging on the continued commitment and ownership at various levels of the government. In line with the project design document, oversight of the project was provided by a Central Management Committee (CMC) which was originally called Project Management Committee. CMC is responsible for consensus management decisions for the project when guidance is required, including approval of project plans and revisions. CMC oversight is aimed to ensure accountability, transparency, effective project management and best value for money. Inter-ministerial coordination has been a major concern across the various people consulted during the evaluation exercise. There are also evidences of a long-time lag in the approval process of the minutes of these meetings, which need to be addressed for faster implementation of CMC decisions. A single Project Steering Committee (PSC) was established, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for policy guidance and co-ordination between all institutions and groups involved in the Social Protection Programme.

To support the project implementation framework by GoB, the SPPS Project Management Unit (PMU), located in GED premises was adequately staffed with three international staff, (intermittent), two national specialists on social protection, ten national and international consultants and four management staff who are called upon on specific assignments. A National Project Director, deputed by the government (level of Joint Secretary) oversees the work of the PMU and serves as the conduit between the project and the GoB machinery, mainly GED and the Cabinet Division.

While the Cabinet division was chosen as the right apex agency to undertake the coordination role, the capacity in this coordination is extremely limited with one (1) person at Deputy Secretary level remaining responsible for day to day operational tasks as well as coordinating with 35 ministries and divisions, as well as with the SPPS Programme. Similarly, coordination and monitoring activities at the focal points in various ministries are marred by the perennial problem of capacity and lack of term presence of qualified personnel. For the proper coordination of the implementation of cluster activities and effective monitoring and evaluation towards achieving a life cycle-based approach to social security in Bangladesh, there is no option left but to urgently embark on an institutional strengthening actions in these two areas.

Despite the several predicaments as discussed in the various areas of this section, on the overall scheme of outcomes, a key demonstrable area of outcome is the increase in Government's budget allocation for social security from USD 4.61 billion in FY 2015/16 to USD 6.6 billion in FY 2017/18. This corresponds to an increase from 2.19 per cent to 2.44% per cent GDP for social security programmes. The increased budget allocation reflects both enhanced allowance size for a number of life cycle programmes and extended beneficiary coverage. The total number of programmes has declined from 145 to 125. Around 97 per cent of annual social security allocations are spent through thirty major social security programmes. The contribution of SPPS Programme in the overall policy advocacy, capacity development and facilitation of governance practices in the social security landscape in Bangladesh has been well acknowledged by the government and external stakeholders.

#### **4.6 Gender and People with disability (PWD)**

The first evidence of the Government's commitment towards transformative social protection is the publication of a 'Gender Diagnostic Study' of the National Social Security Strategy of Bangladesh (NSSS) in late 2016. Based on the diagnostic study, a Gender Policy was approved by the CMC in 2018. The Gender Policy made a wide range of policy commitments aligned with the National Women's Development Policy, the 7th Five Year Plan, and several SDGs to address the problems faced by women at individual, household, societal, and national levels. However, in order to operationalize the policy, the line ministries need to develop their respective sector-specific gender policy provisions, guidelines and gender-focused indicators for assessment of gender equality results of the social security programmes under the NSSS. An elaborate consultation process also took place in developing the Gender Policy at the Platform for Dialogue (P4P) to obtain views from NGOs and civil society. Both the Gender Action Plan and the Gender policy were developed based on national level dialogue, where civil society representatives were invited who played important role in the development of the policy.

A study on "Scope of Gender Responsive Adaptive Social Protection in Bangladesh" was also completed in 2017. Following an extensive review process, the final draft is now in place for publication and policy inclusion in the 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan which will mark a significant contribution of the SPPS Programme in the area of gender as discussed earlier in the report, the Social Security Conference featured a dedicated session on gender and social protection, where the Gender Diagnostics Study and the Gender Policy, Strategy and Action Plan for Social Security in Bangladesh were presented and discussed. It merits special mention that in April 2019, the NSSS Gender Policy and the Gender Plan incorporated disability issues, as a special area of attention in the social security interventions.

## **5. Impact orientation and sustainability of the project**

The contribution of the SPPS Programme and the prior SGSP Programme have been pivotal in shaping Government led social protection policy and strategy development in a number of ways. The main changes linked to impact can be understood in the following ways: i. The National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) and Bangladesh 7<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan for the first time opened a separate chapter on social protection, where attention have been paid for the inclusion of women, people with disability and other marginalized groups; ii. Approval of the NSSS Action Plan presents new opportunities for strategic dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders, as well as aligning the government's and development partners policies and priorities towards reform of the social protection sector in Bangladesh; and iii. Intent of the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) was, for the first time, reflected in the government budget, with increased budget allocations in FY 2016/17 and 2017/18 for both extended beneficiary coverage and enhanced allowance size for a number of life-cycle based programmes.

## **6. Sustainability**

Anecdotal evidences show sustainable results emanating from capacity building endeavours, and research related support for policy, strategies and plans of the government, although no strong baseline information or post capacity building outcomes are readily available. This having said, there exists several evidences of the use of the many key strategic research and other documents feeding into the government plans and the NSSS. It is understood that the SPPS Programme is not a one-off assistance to an isolated venture of the government. Rather, the programme has been supporting a very comprehensive large scale long term national Social Security Strategy impinging on the core areas of economic and social priorities of the government. These interventions has enjoyed the strong political commitment at the highest level in the country. The SPPS Programme has successfully assisted the Government in laying the foundations for an integrated social security system in the country. The successful support of the SPPS Programme so far, points to its continued relevance, and potential contribution it can make in its successive phases until the NSSS objectives are fully reached

by 2030, coinciding with the SDGs. Thus, the results of the SPPS Project are highly sustainable in the long term, results which shows promise of high impact that can be maintained or even scaled up.

## 7. Gaps and Lessons Learned

The evaluation has noted a few gaps from which lessons can be learned in the context of the SPPS Programme:

- i. Strong commitment and ownership of the government is the key to initiate, innovate and deliver programmes that align with various strategic pronouncements of the government;
- ii. Before embarking on an ambitious programme such as this, a few factors need to be reassured. These include, but not limited to: i. institutional readiness of the government; ii. assessment of existing and absorptive capacity to deliver that could be incrementally increased; iii. commitment of full funding, thus not compromising the intended results; and iv. consideration of a practical timeline within which the host of activities can be achieved;
- iii. A lesson that can be learnt is that, in future, a balance must be struck between the need for an inclusive and extensive consultation process and an agreed practical timeline, so that the outcomes should occur in the interest of timely and efficient delivery of key outcomes. Absence of this may lead to opportunities being lost, together with the loss of the validity of the contextual conditions for the intended interventions.
- iv. The task of reducing the number of social security programmes through consolidation was also made more difficult by development partners continuing to suggest new programmes based on their strategic aid objectives. Thus, the government needs to base its judgment on evidences from researches, specific needs of the population, and best practices that have been learnt from elsewhere.
- v. One of the key lessons learned is that quality research and assessments can indeed effectively contribute to government's policy and strategy development. The MTR findings as well as findings from key researches, such as the 'Political Economy Assessment (PEA)' undertaken by SPPS Programme demonstrated that there is a high level of political will in implementing the NSSS. These two documents are being used in the formulation of the 8<sup>th</sup> FYP.
- vi. The coordination process and mechanism has been one of the challenging aspect of the Programme, with a scanty Unit established in the Cabinet Division, marred by lack of adequate and appropriate level of human resources which is by far inadequate for effective coordination with the 35 ministries, UNDP and host of other stakeholders, as well as the over stretched committee system that exists. A lesson to be learned here is that the UNDP implemented SPPS project has not demonstrated the required level of effectiveness in ensuring that an effective coordination mechanism is installed, especially in the Cabinet Division. UNDP has been a lead player in the Local Consultative Group (LCG) meeting which also discusses the SPPS related activities, with no visible outcome in relation to addressing the long pending issue of social security programme coordination and governance.
- vii. UNDP management has been instrumental in decision making, though the PSC and PIC meetings. However, these meetings were not held frequently given that these committees were led and co-led by three secretaries, and management of their time was always difficult. The Thematic cluster ministries do not meet regularly or as frequently as these should. Like many other GoB projects, the NSSB is also subject to frequent institutional memory loss because of the usual transfer and promotion rules of the civil service.

- viii. Also important is building a sustainable capacity within the government agencies in knowledge management and M&E, perhaps stretching it to MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning) so that these learning materials and tools can be accessed by relevant people and institutions, including think tanks.
- ix. Capacity building must be based on assessment of capacity needs, absorptive capacity of the institutions, and qualitative outcomes expected from the capacity building interventions. At this stage, trainings are without a systematic impact assessment, or a follow up tracer study. The evaluation notes that the post-study visit reports and action plans delineating how their learning could be put to use were not followed up which appears to be a missed opportunity for best practice knowledge utilization in the context of Bangladesh.
- x. The NSSS and its support through SSPS, engaging 35 ministries and divisions, offers a huge opportunity for whole-of-government (WoG) approach to social security reform. This was the original intention of the programme, but capacity constraints did not lead to attaining enough attention in this area.
- xi. The programme and institutional reforms suggested in the NSSS Action Plan appear to be over-ambitious for the period 2016-2020. A phased approach over a longer period of time (say by 2025) with a detailed step by step plan specifying outputs from each step expected would be a more practical approach.

## 8. Conclusion

The current state of Bangladesh's social security system is to a large extent, characterized by low coverage and transfer values, as well as high exclusion errors. There are significant gaps in coverage across the lifecycle. Also, over 70 per cent of the population are excluded from Bangladesh's social security system. This is, despite the fact that the majority of those on middle incomes are living on low and insecure incomes and would benefit from access to various evolving social security priorities being promoted by the government. The exclusion of those on middle incomes, the so-called 'missing middle' – from social security and other public services cannot be an option for Bangladesh in the long run. Even if these initial limitations of the social protection sector are to be considered in assessing the overall sectoral performance, by no means these should be attributed to the implementation of the SPPS project. The sector has still not attained the state of maturity although the learning curve is in the upward trend. Many of the issues being experienced, such as coordination in the first place, are the product of systemic enigma in the government system, and the inherent quandary of the policy makers to choose the most workable path.

The DFAT supported UNDP's SSPS Programme has largely played an important catalytic role that confirms the counterfactual impact through its support to the implementation of the NSSS, to begin with. What if the SPPS was not initiated? The discussions in the preceding sections do sufficiently provide the data and information, albeit in some cases, anecdotal evidences (such as outcomes of capacity building training) that can safely confirm a stronger body of evidences towards strong outcomes generated by the project. One of the early evidences of outcome of SPSS is its critical advocacy and policy support role that saw a significant increase in the Government's budget allocation for social security from USD 4.61 billion in FY 2015/16 to USD 6.6 billion in FY 2017/18. This corresponds to an increase to 2.44 per cent of GDP for social security programmes in a span of only two years. The increased budget allocation reflects both enhanced allowance size for a number of life cycle programmes and extended beneficiary coverage. As was expected by the project rationale and proposed outcome indicator, the total number of programmes has declined from 145 to 125. The SPPS Programme has also been a useful learning process for the government, DPs, think tanks and the policy setters as to how best to support the social security sector in Bangladesh. This was largely achieved while undertaking and supporting some of the key strategic research and knowledge products. The

robust and most inclusive consultation process in developing the NSSS, as well as building ‘buy-in’ support across all possible spheres of the government for its implementation were also possible through the presence and painstaking role of the SPPS Programme.

The challenge, no doubt remains enormous, and given the current low baseline of only 27.8 per cent of household in Bangladesh having access to at least one safety net attaining the goal of Universal Social Protection (USP) by 2030 may seem out of reach. However, through the SPPS, the government and the policy makers are able know by now what has not worked, and started to understand what may work. Achieving USP by 2030 in line with the NSSS would require drastic increase in domestic resources – using both new and existing sources of funding, and most importantly, increased efficiency in the government actors, and a strong coordination and monitoring mechanism.

## 9. Recommendations

A number of recommendations emanate from the discussions in this report, and the discussion in the section on lessons learned.:

1. **Completion of the pending activities:** The project needs to be proactive in ensuring that several pending activities which are critical to the various outcome areas of SPPS are followed up and implemented in appropriate phases, some of which can be carried forward to the next phase as indicated by the project management.
2. **Strengthen the coordination structure and process:** The coordination Unit within the Cabinet Division needs strengthening with a revised Terms of Reference, appropriate human resource structure in place and continuity of staff therein. A rapid organization development (OD) study can be undertaken at an earliest opportunity in this regard. The SPPS should focus on the core ministries which may range between 5 and 8.
3. **Gradual strengthening the coordination capacity for the Ministry of Social Welfare:** Special attention should be given to strengthen the Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW), which will take the lead by 2026 for the social security programme coordination and implementation. A consideration can be given to create a separate Division (Social Security Division) in the MoSW headed by a Secretary that will oversee the full delivery of social security services, and play the coordination role in this area.
4. **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) functions:** A dedicated M&E Office needs to be established exclusively for monitoring the social security interventions nationwide as a universal system. Ideally, this can be housed within the GED or the Ministry of Finance. A piloting assisted by an external agency/private sector entity for such independent monitoring and evaluation can be useful. SPSS can consider supporting this activity.
5. **Updating of M&E Framework:** The M&E framework should be updated with identification of data collection requirements as well as find ways and means to expand on nationally available data at a frequency higher than the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES). There could be also the need for identifying sub-level indicators, including proxy indicators that do not require national data.
6. **Integration of Single Registry MIS with M&E system:** The import of HIES Data from BBS, Upazila level training data, financial and budget information, G2P records, and GRS. Every beneficiary could be brought under two key data (i) the NID number, and (ii) biometric identification. Therefore, there is a need to develop and unify the IT structure from the Upazila level to higher levels.
7. **Knowledge management linked to M&E in SPPS Office:** A dedicated Knowledge Management and M&E Unit in SPPS is highly recommended for conducting the standard project monitoring

and reporting functions; and secondly, for supporting communication and advocacy functions, as well as consolidating and disseminating the various studies undertaken by the project.

8. **Consolidating the social security schemes:** It is strongly recommended to review the smaller schemes and consolidate these to a manageable number. This does not mean eliminating the existing benefits, but to rationalise the schemes/programme with identical or complementary objectives. The GED and Cabinet Division have already taken some positive steps in this direction.
9. **Increased engagement of multiple stakeholders:** Regular interactions with NGOs, think tanks, universities, parliamentarians, private sector and trade bodies, and most importantly media should be pursued towards implementing more progressive and universal policies, together with innovations in the sector.
10. **Scaling up innovations:** The testing of innovative approaches to social security at local level should be rolled out nationally in phases, such as the G2P.
11. **Study tour outcomes:** In future, post-study visit reports and action plans delineating how their learning could be put to use should be followed up, as well as, rapid tracer studies to see how well the investments have been in this area.

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This evaluation report contains the main findings and recommendations of an independent final evaluation of the Social Protection Policy Support Programme (SPPS) which was carried out during March-April 2020. Funded in two phases, initially by the Department For International Development (DFID, UK), and subsequently by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT, Australia), the project was implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Bangladesh in partnership with the Cabinet Division, and General Economic Division (GED), Planning Commission, Government of Bangladesh (GoB). The SPPS Programme is currently under a two-year no-cost extension, to end in June 2020. The Annual Development Programme (ADP) of the Bangladesh Planning Commission, and the Ministry of Finance reflect SPPS Programme as part of the social security budget of the government.

This report summarizes the purpose, methodology and tools with regard to the evaluation, as well as the findings, lessons learnt and recommendations, emanating from the evaluation exercise. This report also gives an overview of the ultimate objective of this evaluation and describes activities carried out in relation to the evaluation. With respect to the tools, this report outlines the questions applied for the various stakeholders in general, and in particular those relevant to the Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) and Key Informants Interviews (KIIs).

As a practical examination, the evaluation examined the past relevant assessments, including the Partner Performance Assessment (PPA), Project Completion Narrative Report, and the past assessments by DFID and DFAT impinging on the interventions within the wider themes of social protection policies and systems in Bangladesh. Thus, the overall goal of the final evaluation was to present an objective analysis of programme performance related to outcomes, and in regard to the achievements of SPPS towards improving the social protection environment in Bangladesh. Finally, the report suggests possible next steps for sustainability of the initiatives and results.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

The Government of Bangladesh recognises that poverty reduction is a multi-dimensional issue. Furthermore, it recognizes that a whole-of-government (WoG) approach is required to address the challenge of generating employment by creating productive and inclusive jobs in the economy. Bangladesh enjoyed decades of demographic dividend that had helped a period of stability in the economic growth. However, this may face challenges in the future despite the ambition that Bangladesh will reach the figures required to accelerate to the status of middle-income country by 2021.

The SPPS project while remaining within the prescribed design, undertook the required activities as per its work plan in achieving the two key outputs, albeit in a varying degree of results and outcomes. The project, although appearing to be a straightforward intervention, operates within a complex developmental, political and social context. This is more so given that the development climate in Bangladesh is now in a difficult paradoxical stage. Bangladesh has made steady progress in reducing poverty from almost 50 per cent in 2000 to 20.5 per cent in fiscal year 2018-19 with the GDP growing consistently at above 7 per cent annually. The rate of extreme poverty has also decreased to 10.5 per cent in fiscal year 2018-19 compared to 11.3 per cent in fiscal year 2017-18. The General Economics Division (GED) of Planning Commission of Bangladesh readjusted the national poverty figure at 21.6 per cent in 2018 using its own survey.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, significant challenges remain. In 2018, under 50 per cent of the population were living on less than BDT 100 (USD 1.90) a day, 80 per cent on less than BDT 170 (USD 2.15) and 92 per cent

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<sup>2</sup> National Economic Council (NEC) Press briefing 17 December 2019 based on Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and GED data.

on less than BDT 310 (USD3.85). Therefore, only a very small proportion of the population could be regarded as enjoying income security. The 6th and 7th Five Year Plan (2016-2020) for Bangladesh emphasised on skill development and creation of employment opportunities. The forthcoming 8th Five Year Plan (2021-2025), in addition to skills and employment will focus on several key areas for Bangladesh socioeconomic development, including gradual reforms in the social security system.

The following table shows the Bangladesh social security programmes by categories, which is a regular budget allocation by the Ministry of Finance and approved by the parliament. The smaller schemes are by far large in number, and represent fragmented undertakings by the various ministries. These also need consolidation and the required level of coordination. Despite declining trend in current running small programmes, new programmes are included from time to time, based on social, economic and political considerations. The emergency and disaster conditions, such as flooding, cyclone, and the most recent example of COVID 19 crisis have led to introduction or expansion of many short, medium and long term social security interventions.

**Table 1: Distribution of national social protection**

Year	Social Protection (SP)	Social Empowerment (SE)	Cash Transfer	Food Security	Micro Credit : SE	Miscellaneous FUND: SE	Miscellaneous FUND: SP	Running Development projects	New Development projects
2008-09	12	2	2	7	4	5	4	21	0
2009-10	14	2	2	7	2	4	10	36	0
2010-11	14	2	2	7	4	4	10	39	2
2011-12	14	2	2	7	3	4	11	39	11
2012-13	14	2	2	7	3	4	10	45	5
2013-14	17	2	3	9	3	4	9	78	0
2014-15	17	2	3	9	3	8	10	75	12
2015-16	17	2	3	10	5	3	11	80	7
2016-17	16	2	3	9	3	7	11	75	2
2017-18	16	2	4	10	4	10	11	63	8
2018-19	17	2	4	11	4	9	11	60	9
2019-20	17	2	4	11	4	9	11	54	13

*Original Source: Ministry of Finance, 2019 (extracted from the SPPS Project Completion Report 2020)*

The current number of programmes stands at 125. The MTR of the SSSP recommended not focusing major resources on small programme, but consolidating the fragmented programmes given the existence of many political variables at any given year, which are completely outside the scope of the current mandated NSSS reforms. The budget of the largest 20 programmes is approximately 80% of the total budget, with smaller programmes' share being only 20%. Based on the MTR a study was completed for discussion on the future reform initiative of the government.

The Government of Bangladesh in partnership with DFID, embarked on the comprehensive 'Strengthening Government Social Protection Systems for the Poor (SGSP)' Programme (2014 – 2017) engaging the Cabinet Division and the General Economics Division (GED) of the Planning Commission as the key strategic partners of UNDP, the implementing partner. Subsequently, the government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) jointly signed the Social Protection Policy Support (SPPS) Programme Project Document (ProDoc) in 2014 with a budget of USD 7.05 million funded by DFID and UNDP. Subsequently, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Government of Australia joined the SPPS Programme for the period 2018-2019. Three major agencies of the GoB were involved in the implementation of the programme: the Cabinet Division, and General Economics Division (GED) of the Planning Commission by engaging other 33 ministries / divisions those that are involved in Bangladesh's social protection programming.

With funding from both DFID and DFAT, the overall objective of the SPPS Programme was to ensure that Government of Bangladesh has established and implemented a more effective and efficient social protection system, including policies, strategies, plans, studies/research, capacity building, governance in terms of coordination, monitoring and evaluation, review, grievance redress system, Government to Person (G2P), single registry of MIS, social insurance, advocacy and communication for engaging policy makers in social protection budget, and programmes. It was expected that the said programme would make a key contribution to the impact and development outcomes of approved SPPS Programme document. This meant that poor families would be less vulnerable to external shocks, as a people-centric social security system is developed. Based on the on-going results framework and lessons learned from SGSP Programme, the activities under the DFAT support to SPPS Programme were divided into two outcomes<sup>3</sup> :

**Table 2: Key Working Areas under DFAT Support to SPPS Programme**

	Outcome – 1		Outcome – 2
<b>1.</b>	<b>Better governance of social security</b>	<b>2.</b>	<b>Strengthening the delivery of the social security systems</b>
<b>1.1</b>	National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) policy guidance on NSSS action plans implementation	2.1	Establishing single registry of social security management information systems (MISs) at SID/BBS, with link to policy and decision-making bodies and capacity building
<b>1.2</b>	Strengthening of the NSSS M&E framework to improve efficiency and effectiveness	2.2	Promoting saving habits of social security beneficiaries towards financial inclusivity under G2P and P2P electronic payment systems
<b>1.3</b>	Formulation of and advocacy for NSSS gender policy	2.3	Review of SPPS Programme and NSSS implementation in Bangladesh

<sup>3</sup> Modified from the project document and project reports

1.4	Diagnostic studies to develop an evidence base for policy reforms		
1.5	Development of communication and advocacy, and urban strategy for NSSS		
1.6	Government capacity development on social security		
1.7	Grievance redress system: piloting 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation online system (demand generation and capacity building)  Social Security Coordination both national and sub-national level		

The most significant development in social protection area under the SPPS Programme is the development of a National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh and an Action Plan for the implementing the NSSS by 35 ministries /divisions of Government of Bangladesh. Formulating the NSSS Action Plan for 2016 – 2021 involved the implementing ministries of social security schemes which in turn developed their respective action plans. The approval of the NSSS Action Plan presented new opportunities for strategic dialogues as well as alignment of the government’s and development partners’ principles and priorities towards social security reforms in Bangladesh. The NSSS is a 10-year-long social protection strategy of Bangladesh, approved in mid-2015 by the Cabinet of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB). It sets two goals:

- i. medium term by 2020: *‘reform the national social security system by ensuring more efficient and effective use of resources, strengthened delivery systems and progress towards a more inclusive form of social security that effectively tackles lifecycle risks, prioritising the poorest and most vulnerable members of society;’* and
- ii. long-term goal by 2025: *‘build an inclusive social security system for all deserving Bangladeshis that effectively tackles and prevents poverty and inequality and contributes to broader human development, employment and economic growth.’* Apart from providing basic lifecycle focused social security assistance, the current national social security programme also reflects the Government’s response to the poor and the vulnerable population to manage their livelihood risks as an essential component to fight against poverty and shocks in Bangladesh.

The Cabinet Division along with other coordinating ministries coordinates the implementation by the ministries, and agencies at the national and sub-national level.

There are two specific rationale embedded in the final evaluation of the SPPS project, as described below:

- i. Examine, through a policy-lens focus, the delivery of objectives in relation to the project document and its intended purpose. It will consider how activities have contributed to advancing, the reforms and implementation of the NSSS; and
- ii. Following the DAC criteria in general, the evaluation will consider relevance of the design, effectiveness, efficiency, delivery of outputs, and sustainability.

The evaluation mainly considers the DFAT funded period (2018-2019) as implied in the ToR; however, while doing so, the evaluation considers the entire period of the project's duration (DFID from the initial phase and subsequently the DFAT funded phase) given that the provisions of the project document which was originally prepared continued without interruption, and the phases were interlinked and interdependent. The consultant considers the evaluation exercise a process to gauge accountability and transparency with regard to the utilization of resources of the development partners, including DFID, DFAT and UNDP, as well as the resources from the Government of Bangladesh. The consultant also considers the evaluation an important exercise to assess that the lessons derived from the project that are intended to feed into strategic decisions regarding future design, implementation arrangements and delivery of further technical assistance services.

Thus, the broader objective of the assignment is to evaluate to what degree the SPPS project, through its activities, and from a public policy perspective, has advanced the NSSS reform agenda. Also, the evaluation assesses whether or not the project has delivered its promised outputs. The final output of the evaluation, thus, intends to provide an evidence-based assessment on the contributions of the project, including both positive and negative lessons learnt. The consultant used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodology based on key informant interviews and desk reviews, in assessing the delivery against planned results.

The evaluation, as per the TOR follows a set of criteria in line with the OECD/DAC guidelines, as follows:

- **Relevance and strategic fit of the project:** the extent to which the objectives of the project have been consistent with the government's and development partners' priorities, policies, country needs and global best practices;
- **Validity of the project design:** the extent to which the project design was logical and coherent;
- **Project progress and effectiveness:** to what extent the immediate objectives, and intended results and outcomes were achieved, including the effectiveness of the M&E system and process;
- **Efficiency of resources:** whether outputs achieved were reasonable for the resources spent, and effectiveness of management arrangements;
- **Impact and sustainability of the project:** positive and negative changes produced by the interventions, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended long-term goals; and in terms of the probability that the benefits of the intervention will continue after the end of the project, and scaling up possibilities; and
- **Gender:** as a cross-cutting issue in terms of how gender equality concerns were integrated throughout project's methodology, data and deliverables, including in the progress reports.

One of the key objectives of the evaluation, as can be understood from the TOR and other background information, was to identify where and how DFAT, as the current funding agency, and UNDP can optimize their support to the Government of Bangladesh in the field of social protection policy,

systems and processes, with the aim to help Bangladesh develop a better trained, qualified and competent workforce with increased economic opportunities, and strengthened capacity to tackle competitive challenges.

### 3.1. EVALUATION APPROACH AND LIMITATIONS

In planning and implementing this evaluation, the evaluation exercise followed two standard guiding principles: *triangulation*, and *stakeholder consultation and engagement*. The consultant worked with the UNDP team to build consensus around the evaluation's scope and process. However, the exercise was hampered due to the COVID 19 situation that has, after an initial stage, only allowed limited face to face discussion with the stakeholders, and prevented from undertaking field visits that should have been ideal in an exercise such as this. However, after the commencement of the evaluation, the consultant was able to conduct a focus group discussion with the key members of the project team, and meet officials at the GED. Subsequently, discussions with the government officials, as well as with the UNDP team, DFID and DFAT were held via telephone and skype in addition to exchange of questions and answers via email.

The Evaluation Framework below describes the data sources and data collection methods for gathering required information for further analysis. The evaluation draws on conclusions based on triangulation of evidence from different data collection methods, and from both primary and secondary data sources.

#### Data Collection Methods (DCM)

The following methods of data collection were employed in the evaluation:

- **Desk Review** of secondary information - project documentation, together with the initial project document, progress reports, project work plan, project completion report; Partner Performance Assessment; relevant reports/policy papers, policy and strategy papers, and the various knowledge products. A list of documents consulted is given in Annex 3.
- **Individual and/or group interviews (KII)** with selected key informants from the project, project partners, key government policy makers and strategic level officials. Discussions were held with the General Economic Division (GED) of the Planning Commission, Cabinet Division; Finance Division; and the project team. An initial group discussion was held with the UNDP officials, the National Project Director, Project Manager, Programme Analyst and the Research Consultant.

**Table 3: Detail of DCM**

SI	DCM	Detail / Remarks	Data Analysis
01	<b>Desk Review</b>	<p>A detailed review of documents related to the Project provides an important line of evidence. The following categories of documents have been included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project document – including the Results Framework, Theory of Change, Budget, and the Risk Management Plan</li> <li>• Technical papers, including the NSSS</li> <li>• The Annual Workplans</li> <li>• Minutes of the CMC meetings</li> <li>• Financial reports</li> </ul>	<p>The desk review focuses on results achieved so far through an examination of reports, assessments, and correspondence.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training/workshop modules and agenda</li> </ul> <p>related to progress of SPPS, including completion report, and past evaluation report of NSSS.</p>	
02	<b><i>Individual and/or group interviews (KII)</i></b>	<p>The KIIs elicited stakeholders’ opinions on the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, results and sustainability of the project results. The consultant had developed a semi-structured interview guide for that. The specific questions were designed keeping in mind the particular stakeholder group, and not all questions were applicable to all members interviewed.</p> <p>The semi-structured interview guides were shaped by the key evaluation questions. Responses were documented and verified. Wherever possible, evaluator triangulated data using the data sources. Limited interviews were conducted face-to-face, given the COVID 19 restrictions.</p> <p>The consultant following the review of the documents, took assistance from the Project Manager with regard to several rounds of clarifications and for obtaining information.</p> <p>Discussions mainly paid attention to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effectiveness: project achieving outcomes that includes, Reporting quality and responses to funding agencies; Institutional support including committees, logistics, policy, advocacy and coordination mechanisms;</li> <li>• Efficiency: including Value for Money, prudent and efficient use of resources; and project management quality</li> <li>• Relevance: includes contribution to policy reforms, such as NSSS; response to government’s agenda; and SDGs</li> <li>• Gender: evidence of gender analysis and gender action plan; attention to gender equality</li> <li>• Risks: identification of key risks and challenges</li> </ul>	<p>A qualitative analysis of the themes emerged from the KIIs was conducted.</p> <p>Analysis was based on criteria of evaluation.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lessons learned: focusing on what has worked and what has not; relative effectiveness of different interventions; M&amp;E issues; design and management issues.</li> </ul>	
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The evaluation plan containing Evaluation questions, notes on stakeholder involvement, quality control and conflict of interest is annexed in Annex 5 of this report.

**Data Analysis**

The evaluation employed a range of complementary data sources and analytical approaches. Wherever feasible, data were triangulated to improve data reliability. By combining multiple methods, the consultant attempted to overcome the weaknesses, intrinsic biases, and problems that may arise from a single method.

During the data-gathering phase, key informant interviews and document reviews led to the identification of specific findings. These findings observations were triangulated, or cross-checked with each other to arrive at a consensus. Data triangulation analysis started at the end of the evaluation analysis phase and involved consolidation of evaluative evidence and identification of key preliminary findings. During the analysis stage, feedback from the stakeholder groups was compared to determine areas of agreement as well as areas of divergence.

From the evidences gathered during this evaluation, it appears that the project, notwithstanding the several inherent challenges, provided a good value for money, created significant interest, *inter alia*, among the government, NGOs, civil society members, and development partners in moving forward the key social protection reform agenda in Bangladesh. It also contributed to building a good base towards promoting a cohesive Government-civil society collaboration and a shared vision for increased capacity in the government, and common accountability in the area of poverty alleviation, and financial inclusion through a responsive social protection system. The project has grounded the fundamental elements to eventually achieve universal social protection through national policies and programmes towards equitable access to social protection measures.

The evaluation findings, as below, are organized according to the evaluation criteria stipulated in the TOR: a) relevance and strategic fit; b) validity of the project design, c) project progress and effectiveness, d) efficiency of resource use, (e) effectiveness of management arrangements, (f) impact orientation and sustainability; and (g) gender.

#### 4.1 RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC FIT OF THE PROJECT

The Social Protection Policy Support (SPPS) Programme sought to support the Government of Bangladesh's efforts to bring a set of highly complex and fragmented social security support initiatives under a coordinated and integrated framework. The SPPS Programme is fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG-1: "*End poverty in all its forms everywhere (No Poverty)*" which is a major focus of the 7<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (7 FYP) of the Government of Bangladesh also, and UNDP Bangladesh's current Country Programme Document (CPD), 2017-2020<sup>45</sup>. Both policy documents end in 2020. Poverty has many dimensions, but its causes include unemployment, social exclusion, and high vulnerability of certain populations to disasters, diseases and other phenomena which prevent them from being productive. Growing inequality in Bangladesh is detrimental to economic growth and undermines social cohesion, increasing political and social tensions and, in some circumstances, can drive instability and conflicts that can stall the economic progress the country has made.

The project enjoys its continued strategic relevance in the context of the policy pronouncement of the 7<sup>th</sup> FYP, which is described as under <sup>6</sup>:

*"The Government of Bangladesh is strongly committed to reducing poverty, improving human resource development and reducing inequality. Social protection is an important tool for reducing poverty and inequality."*

The Vision of GoB in the area of Social Protection as reflected in the 7<sup>th</sup> FYP is quoted below:

*"In the long-term, the objective should be to move towards building a social security system that is available to all Bangladeshis who are in need of support, providing them with a guaranteed minimum income but also a comprehensive safety net for those who suffer shocks and crises that may push them into poverty. Therefore, the long-term vision for Social Security is to: build an inclusive Social Security System (SSS) for all deserving Bangladeshis that effectively tackles and prevents poverty and inequality and contributes to broader human development, employment and economic growth."*

The above statements are strong evidences of the GoB's commitment to developing and adopting policies, strategies, and most importantly, a workable system of social security governance. The SPPS

<sup>4</sup> UNDP CPD Outcome 1 : Increase opportunities, especially for women and disadvantaged groups to contribute to and benefit from economic progress.

<sup>5</sup> Also, CP Outcome(s), [2.1] : Economic growth is achieved in a more inclusive manner, with economic opportunities reaching the rural and urban poor and the protection of vulnerable groups against shocks.

<sup>6</sup> Chapter 14 : Social Protection, 7th FYP, GoB. pp 719-722

Programme is precisely in support of these pronouncements. These are essentially rooted in the Article 15(d) of the Constitution of Bangladesh. The Constitution mentions that citizens must be guaranteed “the basic necessities of life, including food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care”.<sup>7</sup>

The strategic fit of the project is further understood from a number of angles: first, the various strategic studies conducted by the SPPS Programme are serving as background research evidences for developing the social protection chapter of the 8th Five-Year Plan (FYP) which is currently under preparation; secondly, in the past, the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh and the Strengthening Government Social Protection for the Poor (SGSP) programme was developed based on similar background studies, including the concept paper on the NSSS; and finally; the project served as an effective influencing instrument for other development partners (DPs) in formulating or refining their own country priorities to support the government. Similarly, the government, large NGOs and development partners, refined their interventions in social protection area over the last five years, following lessons that have been learned over years of work. One such notable initiative has been a pilot study on digital payment (G2P) in a poverty and disaster-prone district, Kurigram which also helped the Ministry of Finance to take a flagship innovative step on social protection digital cash transfer programme. The NSSS Action Plan also provides guidance on digital payment to the beneficiaries by the Ministry of Education (secondary and higher education division) and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education that initiated digital payment of stipends to eligible students impacting on eradicating ghost payment, and transparency in the system.

Examples from the donor side include the current EU’s 130 million Euro budgetary support to the child sensitive nutrition and cognitive development programme has been developed taking greatly help of NSSS Action Plan developed by SPPS Programme for 35 ministries. Similarly, the World Bank also was influenced by the NSSS Action Plan that led the initiation of a USD 300 million project titled *JATNO* in association with the Local Government Division for Child Nutrition and Cognitive Development in collaboration with Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. This project focuses also on use proxy-means test and support to poverty most poverty prone eight districts of Bangladesh.

UNDP’s comparative advantage in implementing a project of this nature can be understood in a number of ways. UNDP’s strategic support to SSSP is characterized by its comparative neutrality, independence, and their flexible access to the wider government machinery, including at the high level political, civil administration and local level administrative networks. This eventually led to the formulation of the NSSS, its associated Action Plan, and a series of knowledge documents which were the result of a partnership between the government and UNDP.

The SPPS Programme SSSP is also aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The activities within the SPPS Programme directly address Outcome 2 of the UNDAF: *Economic growth is achieved in an inclusive manner extending opportunities to the rural and urban poor, and protecting the vulnerable from shocks. Activities specifically respond to Output 2.1.2: Poor families are less vulnerable to external shocks through greater access to financial and insurance services, Social Safety Nets with clear graduation strategies.* Finally, the SSSP is linked to the development priorities of the two major funding partners, i.e., DFID (UK) and the DFAT (Australia). One of the priorities of the Country Programme priorities of DFAT which is the current funding partner, is *‘building economic resilience and improving social inclusion’*.<sup>8,9</sup> UK Government’s Department for International Development (DFID)’s bilateral plan for Bangladesh has been averaging close to 25% of

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<sup>7</sup> Constitution of the Government of Bangladesh, Article 15(c); 1972

<sup>8</sup> DFAT’s program is outlined in greater detail in the 2015/16- 2018/19 Bangladesh Aid Investment Plan. Objective 2: Building economic resilience by reducing vulnerability and improving inclusion in the growing economy.

<sup>9</sup> DFAT’s Aid Investment Plan states: Creating opportunities for the poorest of the population to engage in the economy will help promote resilience and stability. Australia is doing this by improving Bangladesh’s social protection systems, as well as increasing the productive capacity of the poor, through a range of complementary investments.

its aid outlay in the area of economic development since 2015. The DFID Country Profile for Bangladesh 2018 mentions the following: “DFID will continue to support extremely poor people to lift themselves out of poverty through promoting better livelihoods, with the objective of linking them to economic opportunities.”

#### 4.2 VALIDITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN

The fundamental premise of the project, as articulated in the project design document is to respond to deficiencies in the existing social protection system drawing on the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS). This was intended to provide a functional entry point for effecting changes in the wider social protection system via better governance and oversight of the system. This aspect features strongly in the project document in so far as the analysis of the sector, from the perspectives of the policy, systems, process and capacity environment is concerned. However, the design, despite the strong rationale base grounded in the document, does not clearly establish the causal linkage between the broad goal and the immediate objective of the project. The logic model could be SMART<sup>10</sup> to avoid any ambiguity in the implementation stage. The list of activities in the original design was complex and difficult to infer in order to measure the output and results.

The project document lacks a clear description of what the immediate objective of the intervention should be. It goes on to describe what it calls ‘*the overall objective*’ as : “*ensuring the Government of Bangladesh develops a fully functional social protection system, which supports and facilitates best practice delivery models.*”<sup>11</sup>The project design thus remains ambiguous in terms of the articulation of the overall development objective that ideally should result in one or more immediate objective(s) that are specific and measurable in the immediate and long run.

While the design of the project is founded on two components, which are also referred to as Outputs, there is a reference to an additional ‘component’ called ‘scalable pilot intervention through SWAPNO project to catalyse improvements in delivery capacity and innovation, enable testing and learning and inform social protection strategy and policy through field based evidence.’<sup>12</sup>. The description of the components is complex, and does not lend either to quantifiable or even qualitative judgements in terms of the overall outcomes of the project.<sup>13</sup>

The design is also somewhat deficient in terms of the logic model as narrated in the Results and Resources Framework and lacks the connection between the outputs expected and the proposed inputs. One example may suffice: the shortfall in full anticipated funding resulted in the non-implementation of some of the key activities, such as the Challenge fund initiation, establishment of the policy research unit within existing government system, and the launching of the social insurance scheme.

The Results Framework, Annual Work Plan and the Budget estimates thus lacked the necessary logical interdependence between the project components and their intended outputs and outcomes. In summary, the logic model presented in the project document falls short in specifying the immediate objectives and thus articulating the causal relationship between the objectives, outputs and eventual outcomes. The intended outcomes were also not specific, and thus the Results Framework in the document remains as a free-standing part of the project document. Activities proposed were over

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<sup>10</sup> Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time Bound.

<sup>11</sup> Project document of SPPS Programme

<sup>12</sup> ibid

<sup>13</sup>Project document page 18 describes ‘aims’ of the components as i. Ensure better governance of social protection by helping to build coordination, M&E and reporting functions while strengthening research and analysis capacities in order to build a more effective evidence base for effective policy development; ii. Develop a modern social protection infrastructure capable of supporting a nationally integrated delivery system for reliable, transparent and developmental GoB social transfers and promote linkages to ensure effective coordination.

daunting and can be critiqued as not being consistent with the intended objective of the project, time line of implementation and the risk factors identified.

The Theory of Change (ToC) is another area that needs some analysis. A number of assumptions have been identified in the Theory Change model, that includes, *inter alia*, broadened capacity building base for social protection support and improved governance; investments in pilots, evaluations and other research that will build evidences for policy; effective knowledge management and strengthened communication; political will; and effective reforms and coordination processes. These assumptions are fundamental preconditions for a project of this (policy and systems) nature to become successful. Thus, the overall Outcome as described in the Theory of Change: “*A modern and fit for purpose social protection system developed*” reads as an overstated and ambitious statement. The ultimate aim would be to eventually reach to a broader impact occurring in the social protection landscape in Bangladesh which, as mentioned in the Theory of Change is: “*Poor families are less vulnerable to external shocks*”.<sup>14</sup>

While it is understood that a single project of this nature cannot achieve the intended outcome within the proposed framework and timeline, the design thus needed to be practical, and implementable within the following context : i. readiness of the government and existing capacity that could be incrementally increased; ii. commitment of full funding, thus not compromising the intended outputs and results; and iii. consideration of the timeline within which the host of activities were intended to be achieved. The results framework should have better served if this was updated while transiting from the first phase to the second.

Despite the above weaknesses in the design, the project proactively undertook tasks, delivering expected results based on the rationale and framework of implementation contained in the project document. The project team resorted to a robust, yet flexible approach, while remaining mindful of the broad intent of the project, and thus continued to develop the annual work plans and implementation strategies within the overall framework of the project.

### **4.3 PROJECT PROGRESS AND EFFECTIVENESS**

#### **The context of discussion**

The UNDP implemented SPPS Programme’s overall objective, as described in the project document is: ‘*Ensuring the Government of Bangladesh develops a fully functional social protection system, which supports and facilitates best practice delivery models*’. The project document, in line with this objective specifies two components as follows:

- i. **Component 1:** Ensure better governance of social protection by helping to build coordination, M&E and reporting functions while strengthening research and analysis capacities in order to build a more effective evidence base for effective policy development; and
- ii. **Component 2:** Develop a modern social protection infrastructure capable of supporting a nationally integrated delivery system for reliable, transparent and developmental GoB social transfers and promote linkages to ensure effective coordination.

In addition, the SPPS Programme is closely linked to a third component the Strengthening Women’s Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO) implemented through Local Government Division to conduct scalable and replicable pilot interventions through improvements in delivery capacity and innovation, enable testing and learning, for policy support through field based evidences.

An examination of the above outputs keeping in view the diverse complexities and difficult ground realities of the SPPS project shows that the project design has accommodated, albeit in an ambitious manner, a wide range of strategic interventions. These include initial high quality researched information support; capacity building for quality research, implementation capacity including in the

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<sup>14</sup> Project document of SPPS. Page 29

area of M&E; ; institution building; knowledge building; harnessing a wide consultative process; piloting a social (micro) insurance scheme; and harnessing public-private participation in social protection delivery.

### **Project progress and outputs:**

In undertaking an analysis to determine the extent to which project contributions achieved the desired outcomes, the key aspect that was considered is that outcomes are long term results and are not merely the sum products of a project activities. At this stage, social security landscape is gaining its place in the overall policy and economic development horizon of Bangladesh. Thus, a robust monitoring system when developed together with the consolidation of the various social security interventions, will guide the process of understanding how well the outcomes of the various policy and institutional have been grounded.

The first stage of the project that was supported by DFID had the following main components:

Component 1: Ensure the better governance of social protection, by helping to build coordination, M&E and reporting functions.

Component 2: Strengthen delivery systems for regular GoB social transfers.

Under each of the two components, a host of outputs were framed as follows:

Component 1 envisaged an evidential base and mechanisms for policy analysis and better management of the social protection system; and analytical and policy key capacities within decision making and administrative institutions are developed.

Component 2 was proposed to deal with the development of a modern social protection system, able to deliver strategic objectives. The component had three activity streams: (1) the overhaul of current payment delivery mechanisms, (2) the harnessing of poverty database information for downstream policy planning, and (3) the means of monitoring performance, both in terms of compliance and M&E, with linkages to the management information, and payment systems. There were also mention about fiduciary and public expenditure management dimensions.

Under the DFAT supported phase, there has been a shift that made the project much more explicit and gave a sharpened focus regarding the intention of the project. The nomenclature 'social protection' was changed to 'social security' and covered the following:

Outcome 1 : Better governance of social security : This included policy guidance on NSSS action plans implementation; strengthening of the NSSS M&E framework to improve efficiency and effectiveness; formulation of and advocacy for NSSS gender policy; Diagnostic studies to develop an evidence base for policy reforms; development of communication and advocacy, and urban strategy for NSSS; government capacity development on social security; grievance redress system, and piloting of second generation online system (demand generation and capacity building)

Outcome 2: The earlier phrase 'Strengthen delivery systems for regular GoB social transfers' was replaced with 'Strengthening the delivery of the social security systems'. This component envisaged the following outcomes : establishing single registry of social security management information systems; (MISs) at SID/BBS, with link to policy and decision-making bodies and capacity building; promoting saving habits of social security beneficiaries towards financial inclusivity under G2P and P2P electronic payment systems; and review of SPPS Programme and NSSS implementation in Bangladesh.

The evaluation exercise, considered the ambiguity in the project design (see discussion in the *Validity of project design* section, above), and the narration therein; the weak results framework; and the absence of a revised project document while transiting from phase 1 to 2. For the purpose of analysis and convenience of analyses, the following themes were developed that cut across the two phases of the project:

## **1. INFORMATION SUPPORT AND RESEARCH CAPACITY BUILDING:**

### Related project outputs:

- i. Information support needed to implement the NSSS.
- ii. Research capacity building within and outside the government to keep feeding high quality research for effective implementation of NSSS.

Prior to implementation of the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) document, several high-quality background researches papers were needed. To meet this need, the SPPS Programme supported the Cabinet Division and the GED to commission local and international research houses and think tanks as stated below:

- i. Barriers of Accessing Social Protection Programmes for the Poor and Marginalised.
- ii. Cost-Benefit Ratio Study on Effects of Social Protection Cash Transfer.
- iii. Long-Term Effect of Livelihood Promotion Types of Social Security Programmes.

In addition, the Cabinet Division and the GED undertook a number of high quality and extremely relevant researches with the assistance of the SPPS Project. The research topics include: lessons learnt from international experiences, appreciation of the nature, dynamics and sensitivities inherent in poverty, vulnerability and marginalization. The researches undertaken are listed below:

- i. Diagnostics for Urban Poverty and the Social Security Needs of the Urban Poor in Bangladesh.
- ii. Gender Policy, Strategy and Action Plan for NSSS.
- iii. Scope of Gender Responsive Adaptive Social Protection in Bangladesh.
- iv. Harmonisation of Small Social Security Programmes Issues and Policy Options.
- v. Implication of Changing Demographics and Effects on Social Protection in Bangladesh.
- vi. Review of the Social Protection Training Curricula.
- vii. Single Registry Integrated MIS - Assessment and Road Map Report.
- viii. Situation Analysis : A Perception Study of Persons with Disability in Bangladesh.
- ix. Social Security Digital Cash Transfers - Strengthening G2P in Bangladesh.
- x. Workfare Programmes and Skill Development Evidence and Policy Implications.

The above researches served the immediate need for quality researches founded on evidences and contributed to building the research capability within the Government towards the implementation of NSSS. Some of the above researches are currently being published in the form of a book to help the actors and stakeholders understand the context of social security in Bangladesh, and the avenues that need to be addressed for realizing the NSSSB objectives<sup>15</sup>.

The SPPS Programme assisted in the review of the research findings by the UN Theme Group on Social Protection to facilitate a commonly accepted inclusion policy, which is a major feature of the NSSS. In addition, the project supported a high-quality Political Economy Analysis (PEA) research in the context of the broader all-encompassing scope of social protection contemplated in the NSSS for consultation with a broad range of stakeholders. This flagship document was of critical importance for broad based acceptance of the strategy draft. The PEA not only aimed at mapping the level of bipartisan support

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<sup>15</sup> Project Completion Narrative Report 2014 – 2017: Strengthening Government Social Protection System for the Poor (SGSP) Programme - Project Completion Report (Draft-Updated Version), UNDP implemented Component Project Titled 'Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme'. Prepared for the UK Department for International Development (DFID). February 2018.

of NSSSS, but also to provide the much-needed advice on short term actions on the NSSS development and the adaptation process, beyond a paper document only. The purpose of all these strategic actions and consultations was to ensure their engagement, support and inputs in finalizing the NSSS document, and ensuring their ownership of the NSSS initiative.

The NSSS is the flagship instrument supported by SPPS that gave the first impetus to streamlining the social security system in the country. It aims to reorganise the Government’s over 140 social safety net programmes into a single coherent system that tackles lifecycle risks through targeted cash transfers, mitigation of disaster and other covariate risks, and other supportive programmes. In addition, the NSSS emphasises reduced leakages, incorrect targeting and other inefficiencies through new information systems and strengthened programme administration. However, the suggested reform is a very complex task, which requires assessment of the potential implementation risks, and consideration of some possible mitigation measures to ensure full-fledged implementation of the strategy over the next five years. A policy diagnostic report produced by the SPPS Programme ‘unpacks NSSS implementation’ into 14 desired social security features, and from this defines three implementation levels as analytical benchmarks:

- Advanced implementation corresponds to a full ‘letter and spirit’ achievement of the NSSS goal, resulting in fewer and well-coordinated social security programmes, operating at greater scale and quality through the use of new information systems.
- Medium implementation that result in a partially reorganised mix of programmes and benefits relative to what is envisioned in the NSSS.
- Basic implementation resulting in modest changes to what currently exists by introducing the key NSSS features, such as lifecycle cash transfers, ‘targeted universal’ beneficiary selection, and Single Registry MIS and GRS.

In this connection, this evaluation supports the observations of the DFAT Project Completion Narrative Report 2018-19 which states : *“the SPPS Programme planned activities revolved around inter-ministerial coordination and high-level oversight through the CMC, supporting analysis and research in wider policy circles, workshops on NSSS reform agenda items, policy dialogues, building policy level linkages within the institutional planning machinery of the Government and the different delivery elements with NSSS related line ministries.”*

**2. MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E) CAPACITY BUILDING:**

Related project outputs:

- i. Support the field M&E, coordination and local compliance through a pilot initiative by building in the data collection to the UP-payment system – allowing for assistance and real time monitoring at pilot locations.
- ii. A single registry management information system would provide a vehicle for managing and monitoring all payment processes.
- iii. Confirm that a documented M&E arrangement is in place.
- iv. Piloting support to civil society for a proposed Grievance Redress System (GRS) and strengthen social accountability.

This evaluation recognises that M&E in the context of the NSSS is a complex area given that the requirements are diverse, highly dynamic and involves the presence of qualified personnel in its conduct. This is more so, in relation to the environment in which the interventions are administered, than simply understanding the achievements of quantitative target. The success of the M&E ideally depends on a robust information system that is capable of capturing the entire host of data to feed the M&E process. Therefore, building a strong M&E without a strong corresponding MIS is not tenable

as the two functions closely intersect, as well as strongly complement each other towards a common goal. This area has seen one of the slow progressing one for a variety of reasons that feature discussion in this section.

**Status of M&E arrangement:**

The M&E activities in the project essentially began with the development of a concept paper on research and M&E needs in the context of NSSS in 2016 that was agreed by GED followed by an orientation on NSSS for the officers of Cabinet Division. A series of dissemination and orientation actions were initiated for the mid-level implementors in the ministries, and at the field level, followed by a consultative meeting involving multiple stakeholders on NSSS research needs and Results Based M&E. A high-level orientation on Results Based M&E for NSSS was carried out amongst the Parliamentarians also. The SPPS developed concept notes on Policy Research for NSSS and the M&E Framework, in line with Chapter 7 of NSSS was discussed in policy dialogues with the Government and other stakeholders in August 2017.

The M&E process involved the following two steps: setting up of the NSSS M&E Committee comprising implementing ministries' focal points for M&E and MIS. This step was preceded by a consultative workshop held with M&E focal points of all 35 ministries on the draft M&E framework and format. Comments from all participants were included in the M&E framework and data collection tool; and approval of the NSSS M&E Framework and the data collection tools followed.

In addition, the report of the mid-term review of NSSS was shared with the development partners at the LCG Poverty Group Meeting. Both the reports were also presented at Bangladesh Social Security Conference and Knowledge Fair 2019 in a paper titled 'State of Social Protection 2018-19'. The DFAT Project Completion Narrative Report of March 2020 states that the *"NSSS M&E Committee is a good forum to discuss technical areas and think through policy areas which may lead to incorporation into actual policy."*

One of the notable features of the intended M&E System is its attention to segregate data that presents an opportunity to carry out several analyses using gender related parameters. The findings, thus, can strengthen policy dialogues on gender, as well as devise specific gender equality measures for the respective action plans of the ministries.

While the above achievements do confirm that an M&E arrangement as envisaged in the SPPS project document is in place, issues persist of perennial nature that include the lack of M&E knowledge and/or continued and sustainable commitment at the local and the central ministry levels. Data dissemination process is often slow, requiring follow up given the attrition rate by way of civil service transfer rules that results in the depletion of capacity in the ministries, and absence of the institutional memory of focal points on M&E in the ministries. The evaluation supports the observations made in the DFAT Project Completion Narrative Report 2018-19<sup>16</sup> in this regard:

Regarding the M&E framework, a significant limitation of this intervention is that data is limited in frequency for the higher-level indicators which makes assessment of the overall impact of completed reforms under the NSSS difficult. Secondly, the lack of a formal process by the Government to take into consideration data and use that to assess internal progress or bottlenecks and take specific action.

A lesson learned in this respect is that to the framework needs to be updated with identification of data collection requirements as well as find ways and means to expand on nationally available data at a frequency higher than the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) conducted by the Bureau of Statistics (BBS) which has been the primary focus of the government. There could be also the need for identifying sub-level indicators, including proxy indicators that do not require national data. The idea of regular, smaller panel surveys was laid out in the NSSS; however, this never was

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Page 35.

funded by any stakeholder, but this could potentially be pursued in any upcoming programming as a means of institutionalizing regular, high-level data collection for informed decision-making.<sup>17</sup>

Building a robust and strong M&E System in tandem with an equally robust MIS that would link all the implementing ministries, the local government bodies, the GED and the Cabinet Division on a single unified platform would require much longer than the SPPS Project period. Therefore, ‘managing expectations’ is necessary in terms of a single all-encompassing M&E arrangement that could comprehensively serve various aspects of the NSSS through a Single Registry data platform. Also important is that the vastness of the NSSS that demands a dedicated M&E unit exclusively for the NSSS. This needs to be resourced with dedicated M&E and expert professionals and housed, ideally within the GED.

Until a viable M&E capacity is developed in-house, and also in the interest of neutrality and independence, regular monitoring and evaluation could be outsourced to external organisations, the way research papers were done. But it does not free the government in any way from developing its own M&E process and capacity. It is a proposed stop gap arrangement which will allow the GOB staff to also be associated in the M&E process, carried out by external parties.

### ***Single Registry Management Information System (SRMIS)***

The M&E Committee endorsed a situation assessment on the Single Registry Management Information System (SRMIS) which concluded that neither the NSSS nor the implementing are equipped to plug into a unified system. The reason was that the IT platforms were not uniform across the related ministries and agencies to build the Single Registry. This necessitated the M&E Committee to revise the Action Plan to accommodate the procurement of a unified and a common platform. The immediate implication is the commitment of a significant budget, ideally from the government resources to fund the hardware, software and related trainings at ministry level.

Once fully implemented, the SRMIS will be an extremely powerful and versatile tool that can generate processed data for a whole range of policy decision inputs, much more wider than presently anticipated. As mentioned earlier, a strong M&E system can only be built with a dynamic MIS across all ministries as the two functions closely intersect and complement each other towards a common goal. Therefore, the SRMIS should record all necessary information needs for a comprehensive and continuous real time M&E instead of just recording the payment process.

### ***Piloting support to civil society for a proposed Grievance Redress System (GRS)***

Initially, a basic form of Grievance Redress System (GRS) was in place, following the recommendation of the Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC) in 2000. The Cabinet Division took an initiative, for the first time to bring together the existing redressal systems in the country under a central GRS platform. In 2007 (revised in 2008), a manual grievance redress system was established in all line ministries in order to help reduce grievances and improve service delivery in public service as a whole. Subsequently, in 2011 the Cabinet Division designed, developed and tested a GRS software, which is an interactive web-based software and portal, for all line ministries to implement grievance redressal for mitigating people’s complaints relating to end-to-end service delivery. In 2014-15, the online GRS software was finally hosted in a server, which is available at [www.grs.gov.bd](http://www.grs.gov.bd)<sup>18</sup>. A national level workshop was held in 2016 to validate the second generation (2G) GRS concept attended by more than 100 GRS focal points from 56 ministries, NGO representatives, private sector and development partners. The findings and recommendations of a grievance redressal situation analysis study completed earlier was presented and validated during this workshop. This was approved in 2019 after a long delay.

<sup>17</sup> DFAT Project Completion Narrative Report, March 2020

<sup>18</sup> Source: <http://socialprotection.gov.bd/en/2016/12/20/draft-grievance-redress-system-design/>

The draft architectural platform for the 2G GRS Platform and the terms of reference for Access to Information (A2i) support for conducting the pilot project was provided by SPPS Programme. The pilot project was implemented in Kurigram district with the direct support of the local administration. Unfortunately, due to successive flooding the duration of the pilot initiative had to be reduced to three months and the GRS service users could not adequately access the system. As a result, the demand for the system could not be appropriately assessed. Given the constraints the pilot project activities were somewhat limited to providing orientation on GRS to the local administration below district level, local public representatives, NGO officials and Digital Centre entrepreneurs.

To generate demand for the GRS at the beneficiary level, the SPPS Programme distributed leaflets and posters at the ward level and the NGO community. Pre and post pilot phase data were collected to gauge the changes in usage of public hearing, direct complaints at the local offices and through hotline, and online platforms for SMS and social media. The data collection period was October to December 2019.

Despite inadequate hardware availability at the local level which was compounded by inadequate system maintenance, a web-based GRS is functional and accessible online. However, it might take some time to have the GRS well entrenched at the local level particularly within Union Digital Centres.

However, the support to civil society for GRS towards strengthening the social accountability mechanism has been met to the extent feasible but continued support will be needed for the GRS to reach the desired level. Concurrent investments in hardware and software from national to local level both for GRS as well as for the Single Registry MIS and M&E must be made, as all these components are closely inter-woven and the success of any one of these components is closely dependent on the success of the others.

### **3. INSTITUTION BUILDING:**

- i. Institution building support at the apex GED level to create a permanent institution empowered to coordinate the NSSSB implementation across 35 participating ministries.

To provide necessary and efficient support for institution building and strengthening the capacity of the government, the SPPS Programme set up offices at the Cabinet Division and the GED. A Central Management Committee (CMC) Secretariat was also established within the Cabinet Division to support the NSSS Implementation and Coordination Unit. The two SPPS Offices (Cabinet Division and GED) acted efficiently as the focal point to ensure timely availability of all technical assistance under the provisions of the SPPS Programme. The key inputs provided for institution building are summarized below:

- i. TA support to the Cabinet Division to assume the overall leadership in preparation of the Action Plan for NSSS by each implementing divisions/ministries to ensure that the GoB assumes full ownership of the direction and strategy in the Action Plan (2015 to 2017).
- ii. The SPPS project facilitated the process of substantive consultations between the ministries listed in the five thematic clusters<sup>19</sup> and facilitated constant close dialogue between the members of the CMC. Some of the key activities included one meeting at the Prime Minister's office for ratifying the NSSS, one meeting of the focal points of the CMC, one CMC meeting and two meetings of the NSSSB thematic clusters (2015 to 2017).

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<sup>19</sup> National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh, July 2015, General Economics Division, Planning Commission, GoB, page 76. The five thematic clusters were officially constituted with defined cross-cutting responsibilities in a Gazette Notification dated May 2016.

- iii. TA support to organize the Bangladesh Development Forum Meeting 2015 with special emphasis on a session on Social Protection, attended by high level officials of GOB, DFID and UNDP.

Subsequent to the above supports, the reconstituted CMC<sup>20</sup> and the five thematic clusters are now operating with enhanced authority and responsibilities to implement the NSSS. However further institutional strengthening is considered necessary. To this end, UNDP has shared a proposal with DFAT to continue the TA support to NSSSB with a view to establishing stronger governance and coordination support for NSSS reforms towards effective policy development and sectoral interventions.

Following the mid-term review and the findings of the Study on Barriers to ‘Accessing Social Security Programmes in Bangladesh’, the Cabinet Division initiated the process of drafting the Bangladesh Social Security (Coordination) Act 2019. This was a major institution building initiative aimed at improving accountability within ministries and field administration of NSSS. The SPSS provided TA support to the Cabinet Division and GED in drafting the Act. The Act mainly focuses on social security governance at both national and sub-national levels, and addresses beneficiary selection. The Act also focuses on the provision of reward and punishment against any wrongdoings in the selection of beneficiaries, misappropriation in cash transfer, and also aims to minimize exclusion and inclusion errors. The draft Act, completed in 2019 is still under formal review with the Cabinet Division. This needs to be expedited so that it can be passed during the Parliament session during 2020.

This evaluation in relation to the institution building initiatives, supports the observations of the DFAT Project Completion Narrative Report 2018-19 which states : “the SPPS Programme planned activities revolved around inter-ministerial coordination and high-level oversight through the CMC, supporting analysis and research in wider policy circles, workshops on NSSS reform agenda items, policy dialogues, building policy level linkages within the institutional planning machinery of the Government and the different delivery elements with NSSS related line ministries.”

#### **4. IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY BUILDING:**

- i. Capacity building across all the implementing agencies from top to bottom in implementing social security support intervention through training of trainers and training of implementers.
- ii. Continuous knowledge building by installing a social security training system at the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) and similar institutions for all GoB officials.

The SPPS Programme supported several activities directed at training of trainers and implementers at all levels for building capacity to implement the NSSS interventions. In this regard, the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) was assigned to be the lead institution for imparting training on NSSS implementation. Following rounds of discussions, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed with BPATC to prepare training curricula for capacity building of three levels of civil service employees (foundation, mid-level, and high-level) as an integral part of their regular training process.

To ensure understanding of the NSSS and social protection in the socio-economic context of the country, a number of steps were taken and results achieved. So far, the SPPS Programme helped in introducing training curricula on social protection which was integrated within the BPATC foundation course and in the curricula of a number of public training institutes for GoB officials. A pilot on the ToT curriculum and training on social protection was carried out in conjunction with the BPATC Foundation

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<sup>20</sup> Previously called Central Monitoring Committee which was reconstituted as Central Management Committee (CMC) with added authority and responsibilities.

Course in August 2017 which was attended by 44 participants. This marks a significant step in the change management process within the civil service. A book for BPATC trainees titled 'ABCD of Social Protection in Bangladesh' was launched at the Bangladesh Social Security Conference 2018 that was used for training at the BPATC foundation course to understand the basic concepts of social protection in Bangladesh and highlights of the NSSSB.

The SPPS Programme supported consultative workshops with participation of training officials from 18 government training institutions with inputs from experts on the Training of Trainers (ToT) curriculum and an assessment of a curriculum particularly with regard to poverty and social protection, and life-cycle approach. In addition, to disseminate the training at the local level, the National Institute of Local Government (NILG) was assigned to be the lead institute for capacity building training of Union Parishads. The process of training module development and hosting a series of trainings was fully owned and implemented by the government, a sign of ownership and commitment to capacity building within the local level administrative machinery.

### ***Study Tours:***

The SPPS Programme supported study tours, as part of broader capacity building endeavour. This was undertaken in phases for GoB officials to learn from the experiences of social protection initiatives in selected countries. Study tours include training of 6 key officials from the Cabinet Division and GED on social protection, particularly related to poverty, social protection, and M&E at the Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI) at Chiang Mai, Thailand. The SPPS Programme also supported a study tour of GoB officials from the Cabinet Division, the General Economics Division (GED) and lead ministries of the five thematic clusters for NSSSB to four states in India to learn about the Indian experience in social protection initiatives. The SPPS Programme also supported a Study Tour in Kenya in 2017 to learn about system strengthening. Similarly, in 2019, the SPPS Programme supported knowledge sharing study tours for 20 officials of GED in Indonesia and Turkey. The objectives of these study tours included gaining insights on procedures of deserving beneficiary selection, types of social protection activities under the social protection programmes, and integrated MISs.

While these study tours are indeed essential elements of a wider capacity and building endeavour, the evaluator was not able to access any 'back to office report' that could delineate the outcomes of the study tours in terms of the knowledge gained, possible knowledge sharing and potential twinning arrangements, or at the least, a collection of potential policy and institutional reform options that could be considered in the context of Bangladesh. A quote from a participant in one of the study tour is as follows:

"The study tour to country XYZ was very useful. They have similar economy as ours as well as challenges. But they have done much over the years in setting up the social security system in stages. Our NSSS is no doubt a landmark document but to institutionalise this, we need extra attention in building our lasting capacity within the actors, both at the central and local level to build policies, and systems. Perhaps we need to have a stock taking as to what kind of institutions we need to do away with, which one to reform and which new systems and processes to work on further. Our slowness is our biggest hurdle, despite the broad intention of the government. It will take time." (Name withheld).

### ***Domestic trainings and information sharing within GoB***

As mentioned earlier, the National Institute of Local Government (NILG) was assigned as the lead training institute at the local Upazila Parishad (UP) level as the UP is the main implementer of all social protection initiatives in the local government. A two days ToT course was conducted by NILG for the Upazilla Resource Team in selected UPs. This was followed up by training programmes in 14 batches for 457 Upazila Resource Team members and 115 Deputy Directors and Assistant Directors of District Social Service Offices. In addition to the above, the SPPS supported several domestic training and information initiatives undertaken at different times to install a continuous social protection

knowledge building process based on the NSSS. These included orientation training for 120 officials of the Cabinet Division and the GED on NSSS; training of 140 officials from the five Thematic Clusters on NSSS reforms and the action plan; training of 120 Assistant Deputy Commissioners (ADC) and 64 Deputy Commissioners on district and upazila social safety net committees, lifecycle approach and NSSS implementation; and ToT on social protection for 450 Upazila resource team members on implementation issues.

Orientation training was also imparted to over 100 Members of Parliament on various aspects of the National Social Security Strategy, besides hosting several workshops, consultative meetings, and orientation sessions for Government officials at various levels on the concepts of social security, policy and strategy issues, M&E, life cycle approach, gender, poverty analysis, and challenges in implementation of social security system.

The above are evidences of the SPPS's effort to build a strong cohort of capacity building actions. However, capacity building is highly complex and challenging task that requires constant high level leadership and strong coordination of 35 ministries across five thematic clusters towards ensuring that the local level activities are executed as planned. Considering this, the SPPS Programme has undertaken what was practical against the stated Outcome of the project design 1.2 and 1.6 in terms of capacity building for better governance and social security within the tight time frame, resource envelope and the administrative challenges inherent in the broad civil service networks.

The results of the consolidated efforts is best seen in the fact that a good deal of awareness building and appreciation of the social protection concept has been achieved. From this perspective, the SPPS Programme has built a solid basis for building capacity through awareness building and appreciation of the social protection concept and practices. What is foremost is that the momentum needs to be maintained to reach the desired level so that future capacity building can rest on the foundation exercise SPPS has built. Capacity, by principle must be portable, and thus the capacity gained by the trainees can be utilized by them at various ministries and institutions, given the routine civil service transfer rules and practices.

The sector is highly cross cutting in nature and rests on a common life cycle approach where almost all possible ministries are engaged in Bangladesh. Thus, the capacity that has been built across the government through the many strategic actions, should ideally be sustainable and utilitarian in the short and the long run. However, difficulties faced by ministries and institutions engaged in supporting social protection delivery gradually need to have sufficiently qualified technical expertise within their respective domains.

Capacity building at local level is always a challenging task given resource constraints, political variables, and most importantly lack of qualified personnel to comprehend the conceptual and operational framework of social protection at the local level. This demands a shift from the traditional practices to an effective change management outcome where civil society and NGOs can be brought to the main door of service delivery in tandem with the government.

#### **5. HARNESSING A WIDE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS:**

- i. Stakeholders consultative system with parliamentary and civil society engagement on all aspects of implementation strategies.
- ii. Development of advocacy materials and tools, and planning national level campaigns.

The SPPS Programme has supported a wide number of activities in relation to NSSS through conducting extensive consultative process at all levels on many aspects of implementation strategies. Foremost were the meetings held at the UN Theme Group for Social Protection to review the draft NSSS to obtain the group's views to incorporate in the final strategy and ensure their fullest support during the implementation process.

Following the decision that the Cabinet Division would assume the overall leadership in implementing NSSS, the SPPS Programme provided necessary technical assistance and support to facilitate effective consultations across the concerned ministries, especially the ministries within the five thematic clusters and the cross cutting ministries. Other key examples include a national consultation on key policy issues on the short, medium and long term strategies proposed by the NSSSB to discuss the issues and challenges in related social protection areas. Avenues to strengthen the policy making capacity of the government and associated civil society organizations was also discussed in this forum. Secondly, a national consultation to understand the need for research based evidences for policy decisions, monitoring and evaluation of reforms prescribed in the NSSS in three distinct components: NSSS Research Needs, NSSS Results-based M&E Framework, and Adaptive Social Protection issues in the context of climate changes in Bangladesh<sup>21</sup>. The results from these discussions include, but not limited to: modifications of components of the social protection programme which can be influenced by Climate Change, and adaptive social protection to promote flexibility and gender empowerment co-benefits, including gender dimensions of disasters (covariate shocks). The discussion on 'Research Needs for the NSSS' identified knowledge gaps and associated research needs in line with five thematic areas: *Targeting and Selection, Accessibility, Value for Money, Coordination and Implementation, and Monitoring and Evaluation*. Another notable event was the consultation on 'Results based M&E' that underscored the need to introduce a continuous M&E process which could feed information to implementers towards delivery mechanisms, record results/impacts, provide information to policy makers and mobilize political commitment.

As mentioned earlier, parliamentary engagement was attempted through three Orientation Workshops on NSSS for 121 Members of Parliament in phases which discussed a number of pertinent topics, but limited to: i. *Evolution of National Social Security Strategy Development*; ii. *Comparative analysis of Social Security Expenditure in Developed countries and Bangladesh*; iii. *Life Cycle Approach and other programmes*; iv. *Reform agenda for social security*; v. *Implementation Arrangement of NSSS*; and vi. *Result Based M&E*.

Given that the Grievance Redress System (GRS) is one of the fundamental windows of direct communication between the NSSS implementors and the end beneficiaries, the GoB, UNDP and funding DPs placed significant emphasis on ensuring a wide consultative process with key stakeholders NGOs, civil society and technical agencies. Some examples include involvement of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), a civil society organization to pilot the second generation online Grievance Redress System (GRS) platform developed by the A2i project through the SWAPNO initiative in Kurigram district along with BRAC.

SPPS supported the Cabinet Division and the Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) to share the results of the mapping exercise related to grievance mechanisms and systems for implementation in a workshop titled "Workshop on Grievance Redress System (GRS) in Bangladesh – a situation analysis exercise"<sup>22</sup>. Over hundred participants representing different Ministries, NGOs and UNDP attended the workshop to share their views on concrete actions to be taken for establishing a comprehensive and effective GRS.

Another notable dialogue initiative was the national 'Platform for Dialogue' (P4D) that included NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) with the government. The Platform is driven by NGOs who undertake the responsibility as member secretary on an annual rotating basis and meets twice a year. Prominent partner NGOs include BRAC, ASA, Save the Children, Action Aid, Care, Wave Foundation, Ganashastha, Manusher Jonno Foundation, HelpAge, MRDI, Oxfam, PKSF, Plan International, RDRS,

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<sup>21</sup> <http://socialprotection.gov.bd/2017/08/17/national-consultation-nsss-research-needs-results-based-framework-adaptive-social-protection-issues-bangladesh/>

<sup>22</sup> <http://socialprotection.gov.bd/2016/04/06/grievance-redress-system-in-bangladesh-national-validation-workshop/>

TMSS, CDD and World Vision. These NGOs also participated in the Bangladesh Social Security Conference and Knowledge Fairs held in 2018 and 2019.

In terms of coordination with the development partners, a Social Protection sub group of the Local Consultative Group (LCG) was created that meets quarterly. A common narrative for development partners from this sub-group is underway based on the members' respective intended efforts communicated to GED in implementing social protection, and the 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan.

The results from the study on 'Scope of Gender Responsive Adaptive Social Protection in Bangladesh' conducted by UNDP in 2016-17 was consulted amongst stakeholders involved in implementing the NSSS. Also, in 2017, a consultation meeting with stakeholders related to social protection and link to SDGs was held that discussed the NSSSB implementation and action plan.

The SPPS also supported the following key consultations:

- A Gender Policy diagnostic for NSSS which was shared with key stakeholders in 2016 and the eventual Gender Policy<sup>23</sup> was endorsed.
- Social protection concept notes for urban areas were shared with the Local Government Division and the LCG.
- The plan for implementing the pilot G2P e-payment system in the SWAPNO project areas was consulted with the immediate stakeholders in 2015. There were 20 participants from SWAPNO, A2i and SPPS Programme.

The SPPS Programme supported two major national level major consultations that is worth mentioning: Bangladesh Social Security Conference and Fair 2018; and the Bangladesh Social Security Conference and Knowledge Fair 2019. Both these events were attended by all the relevant government ministries and agencies, the consultative group members, the donors, the NGOs, the civil society and the business community (banks and mobile phone operators). The Action Plan for the implementation of the NSSS was formally unwrapped at the Bangladesh Social Security Conference and Fair 2018<sup>24</sup>. Two more publications - the Background Research Papers for preparing the NSSS, and 'ABCD of Social Protection in Bangladesh' a useful booklet were also unveiled on this occasion. The objective of the conference, attended by government, NGOs and the private sector was to review the social protection programmes of different ministries and to enhance collaboration between the government and non-government organisations in implementing the NSSS and to showcase the social protection initiatives of the government.

### ***Advocacy materials, tools, and national level campaigns:***

The prime mission of SPPS was advocacy across various types of stakeholders to increase awareness, appreciation, commitment and ownership of the NSSS visions and envisaged reforms. Advocacy activities were embedded in SPPS work streams where a variety of advocacy tools were used. These include: policy briefs, training events, research reports and other knowledge products, expert briefings, media campaigns, newsletters, and exposure to best national and international practices. Some of the key advocacies that took place by default of the project's implementation include:

- a) Advocacy to bring about acceptance amongst the ministries currently implementing the social security programmes to coordinate and reduce the number of duplicate programmes, in line with NSSS' focus on consolidation around core life-cycle programmes.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://socialprotection.gov.bd/2017/10/12/nsss-gender-policy-draft/>

<sup>24</sup> <http://socialprotection.gov.bd/en/2018/11/08/bangladesh-social-security-conference-and-fair-2018-held/>

- b) Advocacy for buying in of a changed implementation framework with ministries to work through coordinating thematic clusters.
- c) Advocacy in the Parliament and relevant Standing Committees to promote cross-party ownership of the NSSS.
- d) Support to develop a gender strategy for the NSSS and subsequent advocacy for its implementation.
- e) Developing a strategy to ensuring that women are benefitting as recipients and addresses structural causes of gender inequality.
- f) Advocacy to ensure that MIS databases are maintained and updated, with a focus on flow of relevant, timely and accurate data from the field to central level.
- g) Advocacy for a shift to electronic payment platforms for social transfers.
- h) Advocacy to obtain support from civil society organisations to help implement grievance redress systems and rights-protected mechanisms, and governance

Despite several attempts in the area of advocacy and communication, the concern by the development partners and a number of people consulted was that these actions were sporadic and without a credible advocacy and communication strategy to begin with for creating further demand for change. The visibility of NSSS and SPPS was still considered relatively low, which if properly designed could provide reform inputs to the government in creating more awareness, both at the political and social level. There remains a gap regarding advocacy to include urban poor under social protection programmes, and thus, increase in urban coverage. As has been proven in many social sectors in Bangladesh, engagement of NGOs, civil society and the private sector could strengthen the national social security programming, contributory monitoring, upscaling and reporting”<sup>25</sup>. The awareness level amongst beneficiaries about the NSSS initiatives and their rights has been limited from the perspective of campaigns and visibility building initiatives.

While the consultation process had also raised the profile of the NSSS in a wider circle, specific advocacy related groundwork that was undertaken should ideally be carried forward in the next phase include : i. full operationalization of the advocacy and communication strategy; a Gender Integrated Advocacy and Communication Strategy and an Action Plan that is planned to be incorporated in the revised NSSS Action Plan 2021-25. Lessons can be learned from the piloting of communication campaign e.g., posters and leaflets, that were distributed at the Ward level during pilot testing of GRS in the focused UPs in Kurigram and Satkhira under the SWAPNO project.

Visibility and advocacy are vital to the awareness building on social security and rights of the citizens, as well as ensuring social accountability that are critical to good governance principles. While some partnership with NGOs and civil society have been initiated under the SPPS Programme, linkages with media for wider dissemination of knowledge and information remained limited that needs to be carried forward in the subsequent phase of SPPS. Communication and advocacy should not be treated as an adjunct activity of the project, but should be integrated within the core programme, where feasible.

<b>6. <u>PILOTING SOCIAL INSURANCE SCHEME:</u></b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Undertake a pilot project for developing a social (micro)-insurance scheme for basic self-coverage for key contingencies in a suitable format for the target beneficiaries.</li> </ul> |
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<sup>25</sup> Project Completion Report (Early Draft), DFAT Support to Social Protection Policy Support (SPPS) Programme, Project Completion Narrative Report 2018-19, March 2020 prepared by Aminul Arifeen, Project Manager SPPS Programme and Daniel Winstanley, Researcher, Social Protection. Page 23.

One of the major barriers in implementing a pilot project for developing a social insurance scheme was the absence of necessary capacity and resources within the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE). The SPPS undertook steps for conducting a feasibility study on a Social Insurance system for basic self-coverage for key contingencies, and to conduct a formal pilot scheme for social insurance. While a committee was formed by the CMC, the activity was not eventually undertaken. A perceived lack of capacity within the Financial Institution Division (FID) also deterred the development of an enabling Act for approval by the parliament to support an integrated social insurance framework. Together with the Ministry of Labour and Employment, and Insurance Development Authority (IDRA), the TOR was subsequently developed for a study on ‘Social Insurance Situation Analysis’ which has been agreed in a consultative workshop. The FID had also initiated a dialogue with the insurance providers in the private sector to devise a suitable framework although no further progress was visible.

It is understood that devising a social insurance scheme that would be affordable by the target beneficiaries as well as offer adequate coverage (particularly including covariate shocks) is complex and challenging. Such a scheme cannot be delivered as a component of a programme because the enormous scope and highly specialized inputs demand a separate dedicated intervention. This should be closely tied to the future SPPS phase as a facilitating instrument for its full implementation.

#### **7. PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP TO PROMOTE G2P TRANSFER OF BENEFITS:**

- i. Undertake a pilot project through UNDP’s Strengthening Women’s Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO) initiative for creating platforms for direct electronic transfer of benefits to within the Union Parishad through the G2P individual accounts using platforms provided by UNDP’s Access to Information (A2I) Project under Public-Private partnership initiatives through mobile and agent banking requiring biometric identification at cash points.
- ii. Promoting saving habits of social security beneficiaries towards financial inclusivity under G2P electronic payment systems.

One of the key outputs of the SPPS Programme was to establish a model of direct payment under a Government to Person (G2P) system, through electronic transfer to the individual beneficiary’s accounts using platforms provided by Access to Information (A2I) Project. This output was piggy-backed on the UNDP implemented SWAPNO project<sup>26</sup> implemented by the LG Division in Kurigram. The rationale for using the SWAPNO project route was that it promotes employment, and most importantly future employability, of extreme poor rural women. The private sector participants in the project were bKash, Rocket and Bank Asia’s agent banking service in the project area.

Despite delay in the initiation of the G2P pilot due to successive floods, it was eventually carried out in Kurigram in June 2019 with support of the district administration within the three months period to produce tangible decision making results. A randomised controlled trial of payments to the project beneficiary women was made through bKash, Rocket, the Bangladesh Post Office and agent banking service of Bank Asia. The pilot trial established that the beneficiary women received their payments on time and the reliability was no less than physical collection. The most important benefit that established is that online banking service significantly reduced the time and distance travelled to collection points. The time and distance (and thereby travel cost) to the Post Office remained similar to that in the control group. The experience with the Bangladesh Post Office did not register any improvement and the major issues continued to be distance, time and cost of travel, and making more than one trips<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> <http://swapno-bd.org/>

<sup>27</sup> Project Completion Report, Strengthening Government Social Protection System for the Poor (SGSP) Programme, UNDP Implemented Component SPPS, Project Completion Narrative Report, 2014-2017, Page 14

The objectives of the pilot project were met to a significant extent despite the initial challenges. The efficiency of the electronic G2P payment transfer demonstrated by the pilot trial conducted amongst 648 women in the SWAPNO project has adequately established that the system can be easily scaled up through replication in successively larger geographical areas subject to establishment of the necessary IT platforms (which were readily available at the SWAPNO project) in the respective areas. This pilot is not only an initiative that inspired MoF to take decision on G2P, there has been influence of A2i on MoSW implemented various piloting, SGSP Finance Division Project, and piloting of MoPME on school stipend transfer through G2P. All these evidences were in favour of taking decision on all cash-based programme under social protection should implement e-payment, i.e. bank account, mobile cash transfer.

Therefore, scaling up would require careful planning of resources and capacity building.

***Promoting saving habits towards financial inclusivity under G2P system:***

One of the intended outputs of the SPPS Programme was to promote savings habits of social security beneficiaries under the G2P electronic payment system within the SWAPNO project. As the G2P system requires the beneficiaries to establish an account in the disbursing financial institutions for the electronic payment transfers, the SPPS Programme intended to encourage the beneficiaries to use the account to develop a habit to save. It was observed that the beneficiaries kept withdrawing the full amount disbursed to them instead of retaining some amount to start savings. An underlying cause of this phenomenon was the distrust on keeping any fund in the account. As a result, the beneficiaries could not be immediately brought under financial inclusion despite their inclusion under the G2P digital transfer system.

As saving is a major cultural shift it will require some time and adjustment before the beneficiaries can begin trusting the accounts to keep their money and start saving. Going forward, this output should become a major component in a subsequent phase alongside the establishment of the G2P process replication. Substantial investment in educating and motivating the beneficiaries to develop savings habit would be needed as they keep graduating to the G2P platform with scaling up.

In concluding this section, below is a summary of achievement of targets that is based on the Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) of DFAT which shows the status of the targets set for the period 2018-2019; and 2019-2020:

**2018-2019**

**Target: Better governance of social security through NSSS Gender policy, Action Plans, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and Grievance Redress System.**

**Progress rating: Highly satisfactory**

- NSSS Gender Policy approved by Cabinet led Central Management Committee (CMC), and development of NSSS Gender Strategy and Action Plan endorsed and commenced.
- NSS Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and data collection tool approved by CMC. Draft of first annual NSSS M&E Report (for 2018) completed.
- NSSS Action Plan launched in the Social Security Conference (Nov 2018) engaging 35 Line Ministries. Minister for Social Welfare and State Ministers for Planning and Finance attended.
- NSSS Grievance Redress System on-line platform available, developed by a2i of ICT Division under the auspices of GRS Branch of the Cabinet Division. Orientation of GRS focal points of implementing ministries undertaken.

**Target: Evidence base generated on the effectiveness of NSSS reform to inform future government development plans.**

**Progress rating : Highly satisfactory**

- Mid-Term Review of the NSSS in response to CMC decision under GED's responsibility. Draft report completed. Appraised by NSSS M&E Committee. Key findings shared with development partners in LCG – Poverty meeting.
- In addition, 7 research studies on priority policy areas endorsed by CMC commenced. 4 studies completed and appraised by NSSS M&E Committee: 1) Barriers accessing social protection programmes for the poor and marginalised; 2) Cost-benefit ratio analysis on effects of social protection cash transfer; 3) Implication of changing demographics and effects on social protection in Bangladesh; 4) Long-term Effect of Livelihood Promotion Social Security Programs.

**Target: Increased budget-as percentage of GDP.**

**Progress rating: Highly satisfactory**

- Budget increased from 2.17 per cent of GDP (2017-18) to 2.54 per cent in 2018-19. Budget expenditure increased from AUD 62.15 billion in 2017-18 to AUD 74.04 billion in 2018-19.

**Target: Evidence of action plans being implemented**

**Progress rating : Satisfactory, needs improvement & follow up on key areas**

- 35 secretaries, 50 additional and joint secretaries, and 120 Parliamentarians briefed on NSSS reform progress, NSSS Action Plan, NSSS link to SDGs by Member, GED and Secretary (Coordination and Reforms), Cabinet Division; and Principle SDG Coordinator, Prime Minister's Office.
- Key reform priorities in the Action Plan progressed. Business case on consolidation of small-scale safety net programs developed and CMC focal points engaged. ToR for (stocktake of?) social insurance developed by thematic cluster. M&E reporting and MIS single registry progressed.
- In addition, A National Social Security (Coordination) Act drafted and under law wing of the Cabinet Division.
- Multi-agency committee formed comprising members from Cabinet Division, Finance Division, Statistics and Informatics Division, office of the registrar general, and Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division, and General Economics Division (GED) under the Chair of Member, GED.

**Target: Partnership with Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) for foundation, mid-level and senior level officials**

**Progress rating : Highly satisfactory**

- Training curriculum on NSSS and social protection, and Train the trainer for BPATC officials, completed.
- In addition, 12 training institutes within relevant Ministries engaged to review their training curricula on poverty and social protection.

**Target: Policy decision on single registry of social security management information system at Statistics and Information Division (SID)/Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) as a data source to address target errors**

**Progress rating : Partially met; weak**

- Agreement reached with the Government of Bangladesh that a more comprehensive feasibility study is required to make an evidence-based decision on the need and

requirements for a single registry MIS. NSSS M&E Committee endorsed ToR and appraised the inception report of the feasibility study. Policy decision will be made in 2019/20.

**Target: Reduction in the number of social safety net programs**

**Progress rating : Satisfactory**

- In line with NSSS consolidation agenda, the number of social protection programmes decreased from 142 in 2016 to 136 in 2017, and further reduced to 118 in 2018 to 114 in 2019. While the government's 2019/20 budget included 13 new small development focused projects, which increased the total number of projects at 123.

**2019-2020**

**Target: Better governance of social security through NSSS Gender Strategy and Action Plan, and first Annual NSSS M&E report.**

**Progress rating : Highly satisfactory**

- Gender Strategy and Action Plan developed; first Annual NSSS M&E Report developed. Both presented at Bangladesh Social Security Conference and Knowledge Fair 2019.

**Target: NSSS evidence base informs development of next national development plan.**

**Progress rating : Highly satisfactory**

- Research studies feeding into 8th Five Year Plan development; MTR also feeding into it.

**Target: Increased budget-as percentage of GDP.**

**Progress rating : Highly satisfactory**

- 2018-19 2.53 per cent and 2019-20 2.58 per cent. Budget allocation shows that government spending on social security programmes has been increased, as total outlay amount to Bangladesh Taka 74,367 crore (about USD 8.8 billion, equivalent to AUD 13.1 billion).

**Target: Evidence of Action Plans being implemented.**

**Progress rating : Satisfactory; follow up and further actions needed.**

- There is both progress and challenges in the implementation of the Actions, but evidences do exist as discussed in this section earlier.

**Target: Policy decision on single registry MIS informed by feasibility study.**

**Progress rating: Less than satisfactory; needs follow up actions for implementation.**

- Situation Assessment feasibility study completed, and endorsed by M&E Committee. However, Assessment found many of the relevant platforms are not at operational readiness to proceed with Single Registry. M&E Committee will go for a now revised Action Plan that will include getting the relevant platforms at operational readiness, and then building the Single Registry. Getting the other platforms to operational readiness is the responsibility of several ministries.

**Target: Reduction in the number of social safety net programs.**

**Progress rating : Satisfactory; partially met:**

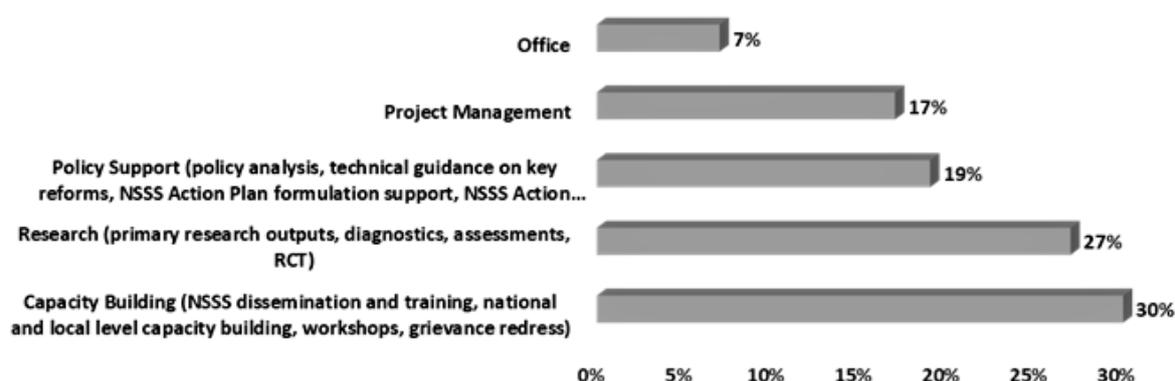
- Current number of programmes stands at 125. The MTR recommends not focusing major resources on small programme consolidation as there are too many political variables on-going at any given year, which are completely outside the scope of mandated NSSS reforms (in its current form). The budget of the largest 20 programmes is approximately 80 per cent of the total budget; therefore, smaller programmes are not taking much budget. However, the MTR recommended carrying out a small study to bring to GoB and stakeholders for discussion on next steps which was completed. Discussions are due to take place in 2020.

#### 4.4 EFFICIENCY OF RESOURCE USE

This criteria has been assessed as a measure of how resources/inputs (funds, expertise and time) have been converted into outputs in the first place, and the extent to which funding, staffing, time and administrative resources were effectively utilized for the achievement of results within the set annual work plan. The SPPS represents a good example of Value for Money based on economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity, and judicious use of resources. Resource allocation so far made are largely in core areas that includes capacity building activities including training and study visits, consultative activities and advocacy, services of researchers for research-based knowledge documents, and cost for implementation through partner agencies. The trend of resource allocation signals to the project getting greater momentum as year passed.

The project, with the implementation support from UNDP has made serious efforts in adhering to best practices in procurement consistent with the UNDP rules; thus maintaining a high degree of transparency and fiduciary practices. The project was meticulous and conscious in its budget projection, and thereby delivered what was agreed within the allocated budget. The project also updated the annual plans and corresponding budgets to reflect realistic projection of delivery. The following Figures show the summary of project delivery rate since its inception; and year-wise budget, expenditure and delivery rate respectively.

**Figure 1: Percentage of Expenditure by Major Components of UNDP SPPS Programme**



Source: SPPS Project Office, Planning Commission, March 2020

With regard to the component wise expenditure, the project's first years under DFID funding support was heavier around capacity building because immediately after the NSSS was adopted in 2015 widespread dissemination of training and capacity building (parliamentarians and bureaucrats) were required at national and local levels. In the DFAT funding period of 2018-19, capacity building resource utilization was lower. It needs to be mentioned here that UNDP SPPS project spend over 76 per cent of the budget in core programme implementation, while 24 per cent was spend on Project Management. Remaining 17 per cent and 7 per cent were dedicated to office maintenance, and operational areas. This is well within the international good practice related project management,

especially in technical assistance and policy projects. Percentages of total expenditures by major components are shown below:

**Table 4: Year-wise budget, expenditure and delivery rate**

Year	Budget	Expenditure	Delivery rate - period	Delivery rate - cumulative	Remarks
2014	322,022.07	322,022.07	100%	5.63%	
2015	774,957.57	774,957.57	100%	13.55%	
2016	1,219,445.92	1,219,445.92	100%	21.33%	
2017	1,084,530.73	1,084,530.73	100%	18.97%	
2018	987,075.94	988,755.94	100%	17.29%	
2019	1,330,047.04	1,313,751.09	99%	22.98%	Left over 1% for 2020 January.
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,718,079.27</b>	<b>5,701,783.32</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>99.74%</b>	Left over was spent in January 2020

Source : SPPS Project Office, Planning Commission, March 2020

In addition to the above funds the SPPS Programme received additional USD 101,400 comprising USD 46,400 from a grant proposal of the iData Studio and USD 55,000 from a second grant proposal from the UNDP Global Innovation Facility for working on the NSSS policy objective of strengthening G2P initiative.

### **Value for Money (VfM)**

The project has been consistently maintaining close to 100 per cent delivery rate every year while maintaining strong Value for Money (VfM) by utilizing UNDP's global procurement system, and entering into negotiations for service providers offering competitive prices. The resources, by adhering to the principle of VfM, have economically converted the resources/inputs (funds, expertise and time) into many results that are well demonstrated and acknowledged. Dozens of social security programme reforms have been made, as laid out by the NSSS and now enacted, Action Plans for each line ministry have been developed and are under implementation. Larger social security programmes targeting the most vulnerable have increased their per beneficiary taka allocation, and national and local GoB representative adoption of the NSSS vision and implementation has moved from almost none in 2014 to widespread adoption.

The VfM for SPPS, as a UNDP led programme is founded on DFAT's and DFID's leveraging of UNDP's understanding of context, including the social security and political economy of Bangladesh, as well as UNDP's established relationship with government including their neutrality and independence as a UN agency. The other factor was to leverage on the outcomes UNDP has achieved with GoB since 2011 in social protection area in different forms. The NSSS is now a political reality, as it has been formally endorsed by the Prime Minister in 2015. Some risks remain, as programmes are spread across many line ministries who strongly defend all their individual programmes, which is in contradiction to the

NSSS' vision of consolidation of not only programmes, but carrying out social protection reforms at the line ministry's end also.

The project's VfM practices have been in line with UNDP policies and procedures, which was primarily ensured by UNDP's procurement department. The UNDP SPPS Programme maintained all necessary records of expenditure with references to the budget line items and related annual outputs. In 2017, UNDP engaged a third party auditor to review the operations of a number of projects including the SPPS Programme. There were zero issues for correction arising from the audit. Some of the positive features revealed by the audit report include:

- i. Procurement of big-ticket items followed the established and well laid out standard UNDP procurement policy and system.
- ii. Bulk procurement for printing and publication was done wherever possible under cost sharing with other UNDP projects resulting in reduced per item cost. These due diligence processes resulted in considerable cost savings. For example, negotiations with the top-scoring bidder for the Situation Assessment resulted in a saving of USD 16,500. Overall the administrative costs were in line with other UNDP projects of similar nature in Bangladesh.
- iii. Salaries were periodically reviewed against the local market benchmarks. Attendance hours of staff were accounted.
- iv. Additional negotiations with enlisted vendors post competitive bid were done whenever felt necessary to obtain further competitive costs without compromising on quality.
- v. Training costs were minimised by using a training of trainers' approach - key GoB focal points became trainers to train GoB implementers in turn.
- vi. Fund allocation in the UNDP SPPS Programme Annual Work Plan was reviewed throughout the year whenever required and revised accordingly to ensure that every component of expenditure related to an output is within or below market rates.

With regard to the contribution of GoB, as listed in the TPP, office accommodation including utility was provided to the project by the government from 2014 under its contribution to the project, which equals to over USD 200,000 covering the project period so far. The main project office which houses the project team is located in the Planning Commission. Also, the contribution made in kind by the Government led to substantial cost savings to the UNDP SPPS Programme. For training and workshop venues related to NSSS activities, the project relied on GoB facilities whenever possible within and outside Dhaka particularly at the local level for training GoB representatives (Upazila Nirbahi Officers, Deputy Commissioners, and Divisional Commissioners).

The year-wise budget and expenditure statement confirms that all expenditures to deliver the outputs were within the original budget, that was revised on an annual basis. However, despite utilisation of the budget optimally, certain outputs remain to be delivered by the project for the reasons stated alongside each:

- i. Innovation Challenge fund: This output was not delivered as this was planned under anticipated support external to the project.
- ii. Social (micro) Insurance: Based on the NSSSB experience this component will be dealt separately under a broader context of social insurance in subsequent phases.
- iii. Preparation of an advocacy plan: Careful review led to the conclusion that an advocacy plan would provide greater dividend after all the requisite systems for implementing the NSSSB are ready. Till then, all the activities of the UNDP SPPS Project, particularly the trainings from parliamentarians and bureaucrats to the UP level were considered as adequate for the time being to raise awareness, sensitizing and advocacy objectives.
- iv. Twinning arrangement: Establishment of international linkages for learning and lesson sharing via twinning arrangements (via GED) was not undertaken.

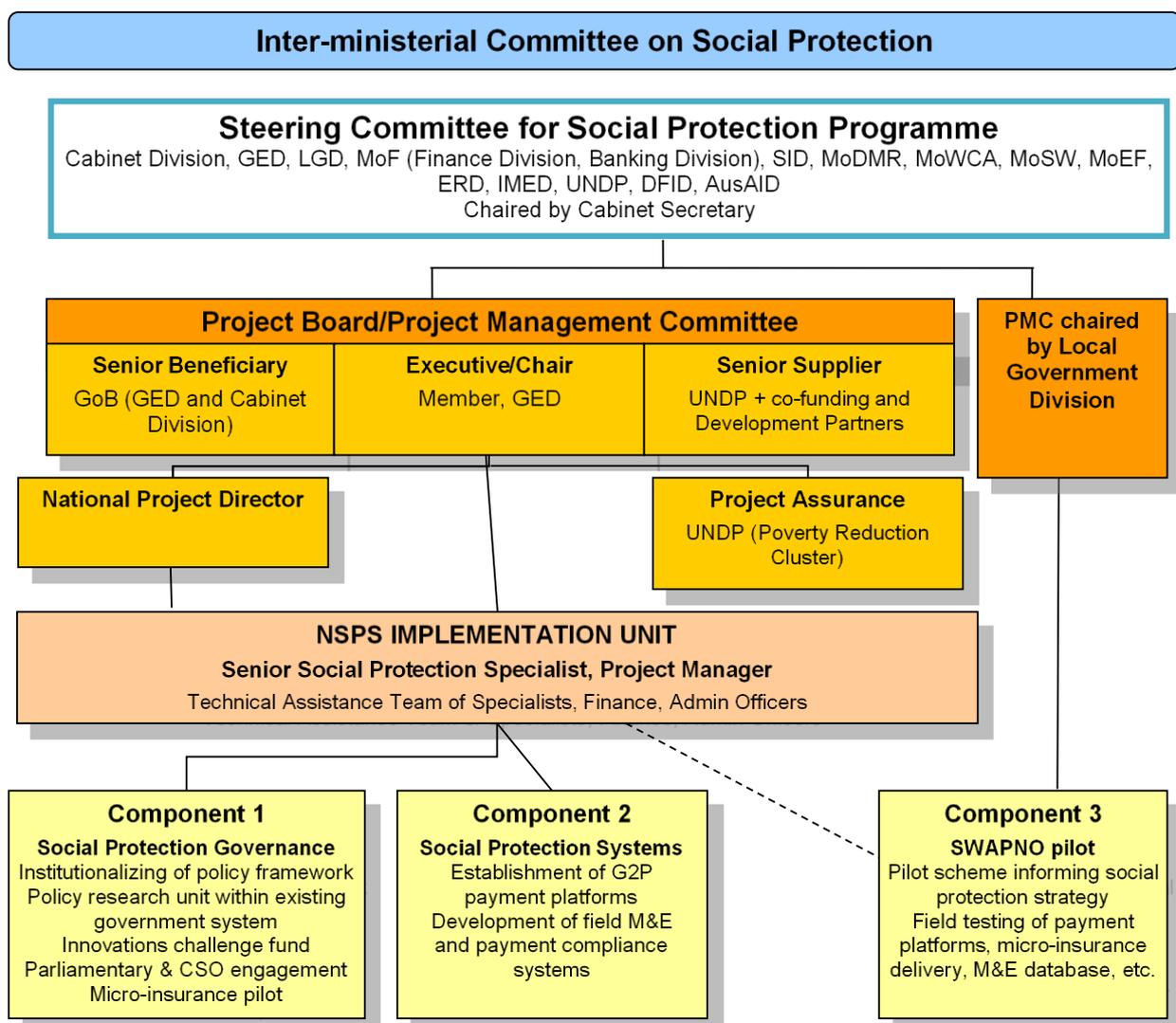
Despite serious attention to ensuring prudent use of resources, the project faced challenges in securing quality consultants and this has resulted in delays in several research outputs. UNDP has set up a procurement clinic to deal with risks of this kind that should ideally ensure not only fast track procurement, but also ensure procurement of quality services.

#### 4.5 EFFECTIVENESS OF MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

This section is based on an examination of the extent to which management capacities, governance arrangements were put in place to support the achievements of results. The SPPS Programme had instituted a management arrangement that appears to be strong and at par with some of the good global practices in relation to the management of complex and highly ambitious undertaking such as the SPPS. The management arrangements have met with a varying degree of capacity constraints impinging on the continued commitment and ownership at various levels of the government.

The following diagram shows the management and implementation structure as contained in the project design document:

**Figure 2: Management and implementation structure**



The key features of the management arrangement are described as under :

- In line with the project design document, oversight of the project was provided by a Central Management Committee (CMC)<sup>28</sup> which was originally called Project Management Committee. CMC is responsible for consensus management decisions for the project when guidance is required, including approval of project plans and revisions. CMC oversight is aimed to ensure accountability, transparency, effective project management and best value for money.
- Annual reviews, work plans and budgets were prepared and presented by the Project Management to the CMC for review and approval as and when required. Quarterly reports were prepared by the Project Manager, in collaboration with the National Project Director, and submitted to UNDP, for sharing the narrative and financial reports with co-funding development partners. The SPPS Programme works closely with the CMC which is meant to meet twice a year to oversee the implementation of the NSSS through 35 Ministries clustered into five thematic areas. Essentially, the CMC was formed as a high-powered implementing body entrusted with the responsibility for coordinating the implementing all social security reforms and to ensure inter-ministerial coordination, trouble-shooting and crisis mitigation supported by several committees each constituted with specific mandates relates to NSSS implementation.
- Inter-ministerial coordination has been a major concern across the various people consulted during the evaluation exercise. There are also evidences of long-time lag in the approval process of the minutes of these meetings, which need to be addressed for faster implementation of CMC decisions.
- A single Project Steering Committee (PSC) was established, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for policy guidance and co-ordination between all institutions and groups involved in the Social Protection Programme. Under the Government reporting system established, the Steering Committee reported to the Cabinet Division Inter-ministerial Committee on Social Protection.
- The SPSS project team is embedded in the government structures, within the General Economics Division (GED) of the Planning Commission and the Cabinet Division. Within the UNDP Country office structure, the project is one of the portfolios of the Resilience and inclusive growth thematic cluster and is supported by other areas of UNDP, such as Finance, Procurement, HR, and M&E. To support the project implementation framework by GoB, the SPPS Project Management Unit (PMU) was adequately staffed with three international staff, (intermittent), two national specialists on social protection, ten national and international consultants and four management staff who are called upon on specific assignments. A highly qualified National Project Director, deputed by the government (level of Joint Secretary) oversees the work of the PMU and serves as the conduit between the project and the GoB machinery, mainly GED and the Cabinet Division.
- In addition, the Government assigned six professional staff to the project. Moreover, necessary short-term consultants were made available by the SPPS Programme with specific ToRs. There have been some concerns raised during the evaluation regarding the quality of both project specific consultants and staff, as well as government deputed officials. While there limited scope to make a judgment in this regard, there are evidences of time delays on the part of UNDP in finding quality personnel, both for support for technical and research support, and for staff deployment. The monitoring and evaluation process within the Project

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<sup>28</sup> Also termed as a Board in the project design document which makes the nomenclature somewhat unclear. This should be either called a Board or a Project (Central, as changed subsequently) Management Committee. The latter term CMC is widely used in the project.

PMU and UNDP has been limited to regular oversight of the implementation of SPPS, and preparation of quarterly, half yearly and annual delivery review and reports. Monitoring and reporting also includes annual reports to donors; bi-annual progress meeting with the funding agency; and annual UNDP Results Oriented Annual Report (ROAR). The PCU has also been maintaining an annual updated Project Quality Assurance report.

- In connection with the above, the evaluation exercise acknowledged the views of several people interviewed that the historically fragmented social security system was streamlined and SPPS has been useful and catalyst in bringing these into a systemic process. Following the publication of the NSSS, coordination was easier and understood well among the various actors. However, while the Cabinet division was chosen as the right apex agency to undertake the coordination role, the capacity in this coordination is extremely limited with one (1) person at the Deputy Secretary level remaining responsible for day to day operational tasks as well as coordinating with 35 ministries and divisions, as well as with the SPPS Programme. Similarly, coordination and monitoring activities at the focal points in various ministries are marred by the perennial problem of capacity and lack of term presence of qualified personnel. For the proper coordination of the implementation of cluster activities and effective monitoring and evaluation towards achieving a life cycle-based approach to social security in Bangladesh, there is no option left but to urgently embark on an institutional strengthening actions in these two areas.
- Added to the capacity gap issue in the ministries, there exists the need to change the mind set among the actors at the ministry level so as to do away with the manual process of database management and replace with an electronic means cutting across all ministries. Speedy actions in developing a programme-based MIS in each ministry which can be then directed to the single registry is of utmost importance. The Finance Division had advised all ministries to establish on an urgent their respective dedicated MIS Unit, and assess their needs in terms of their staff strength capacity and financial needs to make the Unit operational. The Ministry of Women affairs has been named to have made a steady progress in this regard although the readiness and capacity in all relevant ministries need to be ensured.

Despite several challenges in the management and governance arrangements, some significant outcomes have emerged over the years. These are largely the coordinated results of UNDP and GoB's policy advocacy and the commitment of the government, including the GED, Ministry of Finance and the Cabinet Division at all times. It needs to be noted here that here has been an initial delay in the deployment of project staff from government, i.e. the Project Director, and others which was also compounded by a terror attack at Gulshan in 2016, and UNDP's global funding crisis that had impeded the progress of the project. Leadership change in the development partners also need to be mentioned here, although the SPPS Programme delivered the agreed deliverables in a timely manner, as committed in the signed agreement with development partners.

#### ***Risk analysis role of SPPS:***

The Prodoc contains a Risk Log as Annex 1 of the which was to be activated in Atlas and regularly updated by reviewing the various political, organisational and financial factors that may affect the project implementation. However, the evaluator was unable to access any updated copies of the Risk Log; thus, it is assumed that updating of the Risk Log was not a regular practice of the project.

The different levels of risks identified in the Risk Log were correct, as well as the various countermeasures that were identified alongside each of the identified risks. However, a regular review and analysis of the risks, and proactive actions by the PIC, PSC and the CMC could have led to the avoidance of several of the predicaments the Programme faced over its life, including issues surrounding the coordination mechanism, as well as retention of government staff in key areas of the implementation machinery. For example, the Prodoc acknowledged as a risk the perennial issue of

frequent transfer of GoB staff that could retard the implementation process. Probability foreseen as High (1) and impact as 2. The possible mitigation measure was foreseen as “agreement may be reached to retain key staff in their positions for at least three years”. Neither this ‘agreement’ was reached with the government, nor there was any evidence that this issue featured prominently in any of the key policy or implementation level meetings. There are other examples of similar nature that point to the need for future attention in risk identification, period review of risks, and appropriate mitigation measures through the various forums constituted by the Programme.

Despite the several predicaments as discussed in the various areas of this section, on the overall scheme of outcomes, a key demonstrable area of outcome is the increase in Government’s budget allocation for social security from USD 4.61 billion in FY 2015/16 to USD 6.6 billion in FY 2017/18. This corresponds to an increase from 2.19 per cent to 2.44% per cent GDP for social security programmes. The increased budget allocation reflects both enhanced allowance size for a number of lifecycle based programmes and extended beneficiary coverage. The total number of programmes has declined from 145 to 118. Around 97 per cent of annual social security allocations are spent through thirty major social security programmes. The contribution of SSPS Programme in the overall policy advocacy, capacity development and facilitation of governance practices in the social security landscape in Bangladesh has been well acknowledged by the government and external stakeholders.

#### **4.6 GENDER AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY (PWD)**

Social security is one of the key areas for women’s poverty reduction according to the National Women’s Development Policy 2011. Social protection budget and coverage have been increased under the Seventh Five Year Plan (SFYP 2016-2020). Social security programmes include targeted food security, social empowerment, and livelihood programmes that promote gender equality and women’s empowerment.

The first evidence of the Government’s commitment towards transformative social protection is the publication of a ‘Gender Diagnostic Study’ of the National Social Security Strategy of Bangladesh (NSSS) in late 2016. Based on the diagnostic study, a Gender Policy was approved by the CMC in 2018. The Gender Policy made a wide range of policy commitments aligned with the National Women’s Development Policy, the 7th Five Year Plan, and several SDGs to address the problems faced by women at individual, household, societal, and national levels.

However, in order to operationalize the policy, the line ministries within the thematic clusters would need to develop their respective sector-specific gender policy provisions, guidelines and gender-focused indicators for assessment of gender equality results of the social security programmes under the NSSS. An elaborate consultation process also took place in developing the Gender Policy at the Platform for Dialogue (P4P) to obtain views from NGOs and civil society. Both the Gender Action Plan and the Gender policy were developed based on national level dialogue, where civil society representatives were invited who played important role in the policy development.

A study on “Scope of Gender Responsive Adaptive Social Protection in Bangladesh” was also completed in 2017. Following an extensive review process, the final draft is now in place for publication and policy inclusion in the 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan which will mark a significant contribution of the SPPS Programme in the area of gender. As discussed earlier in the report, the Social Security Conference featured a dedicated session on gender and social protection, where the Gender Diagnostics Study and the Gender Policy, Strategy and Action Plan for Social Security in Bangladesh were presented and discussed.

#### ***Focus of the NSSS Gender Integrated Advocacy and Communication Strategy and Action Plan:***

The main areas of focus of the Gender Action Plan include: strengthening support for vulnerable women; introducing Child Benefit Programme, and Vulnerable Women’s Benefit programmes; workplace childcare services; Maternal Health Care; Maternity Insurance; empowering workfare

programmes; addressing social norms; expanding social allowance; skills enhancement and such others. In addition, the Action Plan focused on gender responsive planning, use of sex disaggregated data and effective grievance redress mechanism.

#### ***Impact on Gender issues:***

The project has played a critical role in supporting the development of the gender policy, strategy and action plan, preceded by the study on Scope of Gender Responsive Adaptive Social Protection in Bangladesh. The SPPS Programme supported NSSS Gender Policy, the Gender Integrated Advocacy and Communication Strategy, and the Action Plan will serve as roadmaps for next stage of critical reforms in the gender related area based on the 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan. The evaluation consultant was informed that individual reforms are underway with the line ministries, i.e. Finance Division, Financial Institutions Division of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and the Ministry of Social Welfare.

#### ***Person with disability (PWD):***

It merits special mention that in April 2019, the NSSS Gender Policy and the Gender Plan incorporated disability issues, as a special area of attention in the social security interventions. As noted in the Partner Performance Assessment (PPA) of DFAT, 2019, UNDP responded positively to DFAT's suggestion to improve disability inclusive approaches across SPPS activities. A significant proportion of the Bangladesh population is disabled, with prevalence rates at around 9 per cent of the population. It is estimated that 1.7 per cent of GDP in Bangladesh is lost annually as a result of the loss of income from a lack of schooling and employment of persons with disabilities and their caregivers. Further, there is a strong link between disability and poverty; for example, people with disabilities experience a higher multi-dimensional poverty rate than people without disabilities (88 per cent versus 75 per cent). People with disabilities also incur additional costs as a result of their disability, which leads to lower standards of living when compared to non-disabled people on the same incomes. Access to social security can significantly enhance wellbeing among people with disabilities by increasing their chances of a good education and employment.

Given that this is a priority area of the Government of Bangladesh, UNDP developed an action plan to ensure disability inclusion in all relevant stages of social security interventions in the country. Increased involvement of NGOs and civil society organizations in the NSSS could systematically improve the inclusion of disability factor in the service delivery by the government across all facets of social security.

#### ***Challenges of implementation of the NSSSB Gender Strategy:***

First, despite the formulation of the key documents and research studies surrounding gender issues, it would be a considerable challenge for the GoB to implement the NSSS Gender Strategy and Action Plan through a concerted and harmonised process where so many actors are involved. The successful implementation would be dependent on appropriate interpretation of the strategies into implementable actions by each ministry/division, within their own operational areas. Here again, the focal point strengthening issue across all line ministries, as well as qualitative and structural changes in the coordination unit in Cabinet Division are foremost considerations that need to be seriously undertaken.

Secondly, for the collection of sex disaggregated data, use of gender analysis and gender focused indicators for monitoring and reporting have been prioritized in both the Gender Action Plan and the Communication Action Plan. To measure the impact and effectiveness of social protection interventions on women's empowerment, a robust data collection system must be in place to gather accurate gender, age and geographically disaggregated data. In this connection, the need for speedy resolution of the MIS implementation issue in the line ministries, together with the early implementation of the Single Registry platform cannot be understated.

Thirdly, a targeted and practical capacity building and sensitisation exercise should be considered at the local government level amongst Union Parishads to effectively and efficiently manage and supervise pro-poor and gender sensitive safety-net programmes. It is also important that the government establish a strong high-level gender advisory panel to advise on and oversee the implementation of the Gender Action Plan in the context of the 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan.

#### **4.7 IMPACT ORIENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROJECT**

Impact and sustainability are long-term outcomes that are unlikely to be fully visible during the life cycle of the project, let alone in the immediate run. At this point in time, however, sustainability can be assessed through assessing the trends of progress and changes in the social security scene and practices in Bangladesh.

The evaluation has noted some immediate impact of the project that have surfaced and their potential to contribute to the project's long-term sustainability. One key factor in this connection has been the catalytic role played by the SPPS Programme to build awareness among the central and local level administrative machinery regarding the purpose, usefulness and potential impact of social security measures towards poverty alleviation, economic security, and social right of the citizens. This can be considered as the first step to achieve not only government's policy pronouncements, but to also fulfil the promises of the ruling party's election manifesto.

The contribution of the SSPS Programme and the prior SGSP Programme have been pivotal in shaping Government led social protection policy and strategy development in a number of ways. The main changes linked to impact can be understood in the following ways:

- i. The National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) and Bangladesh 7<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan for the first time opened a separate chapter on social protection, where attention have been paid for the inclusion of women, people with disability and other marginalized groups in the overall social protection agenda in Bangladesh. As a result, the main change is in achieving inter-ministerial consensus on a shared vision of social protection for the future of Bangladesh, towards achieving a universal and life cycle based social protection system.
- ii. Approval of the NSSS Action Plan presents new opportunities for strategic dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders, as well as aligning the government's and development partners, policies and priorities towards reform of the social protection sector in Bangladesh.
- iii. Intent of the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) was, for the first time, reflected in the government budget, with increased budget allocations in FY 2016/17 and 2017/18 for both extended beneficiary coverage and enhanced allowance size for a number of life-cycle programmes. The re-constituted Central Monitoring Committee (CMC) Cabinet Division under the Cabinet Secretary as a Central Management Committee with enhanced authority to lead and oversee the social security system reform process is an evidence of impact orientation instilled by SPPS. The other measures towards improvement in the social security governance process include establishment of coordinating NSSS Thematic Clusters, and initiating a number of committees and a coordination unit in the Cabinet Division. It is realized, however, that over time, and based on the lessons learned so far, further reforms are required in these areas.
- iv. The wide spread cross-institution activities and related outputs of the UNDP SPPS Programme has led the social security system from a mere subject of discussion in 2014 to its widespread adoption across all major functions within the GoB in 2019. The numerous capacity building activities undertaken under the aegis of SPPS, including local dialogues, workshops, high level consultative meetings, targeted overseas study visits, orientation training at the national and local levels have all led to gradual building of capacity within the Government and the NGOs/civil society organizations.

- v. The piloting of the Government to People (G2P) piggy-backed on UNDP-LGD SWAPNO Project at no extra cost has led to the confirmation that : i. NSSS objective of strengthening G2P payment of social security benefits through mobile banking money transfer is highly feasible and workable with seamless and highly effective public-private partnership (PPP) model; and ii. collecting high-quality real-time data for use in policy decision-making through an efficient M&E system can be established, subject to investments in standardised software and hardware from root (UP) level up to the participating ministries and central GoB level This PPP model can be replicated for national scale-up.
- vi. The delivery of social security through bKash and Rocket (the PPP model) did demonstrate an increased layer of accountability and transparency as bulk funds are transferred from the Local Government Division to UNDP to the service providers, which then is then transferred to all individual accounts, all of which is maintained in records by all three parties. The opportunity for leakage is also significantly reduced through this method rather than relying on beneficiary manual pick up at bank locations, as now cash is directly, digitally, transferred to their mobile-money wallets.
- vii. A number of fragmented social security programmes have been consolidated thereby reducing the number of programmes for better and systematic management of the GoB NSSSB initiatives, although the impact in terms of allocation per beneficiary is yet to be assessed.

***Sustainability:***

The evaluation assessed whether the outputs of the project are worth continuing after its termination, financially, institutionally, and in relation to development of partnerships, and effectiveness in terms of carrying for the NSSS. Early indications show signs of sustainability – social, institutional (systems and processes) and financial as affirmed by respondents interviewed. Given the shortcomings in the design (refer to Section 4.2) that lend to overwhelmingly broad and open implementation canvas; the project team has diligently attempted to narrow down the focus of the project within the three identified components. However, it would be appropriate for the project team to consider realistic and achievable targets while updating the Work Plan periodically in the possible new phase. A neat design of the subsequent phase with a Results Framework will be important.

Anecdotal evidences show sustainable results emanating from capacity building endeavours, and research related support for policy, strategies and plans of the government, although no strong baseline information or post capacity building outcomes are readily available. This affirms the need for a dedicated Knowledge Management and M&E Unit in SPPS and for a mandatory reporting by the trainees of perceived outcomes and results of the study tours and other in-country activities. This having said, there exists several evidences of the use of the many key strategic research and other documents feeding into the government plans and the NSSS. This has been adequately discussed throughout this report. It is understood that the SPPS Programme is not a one-off assistance to an isolated venture of the government. Rather, the programme has been supporting a very comprehensive large scale long term national Social Security Strategy impinging on the core area of economic and social priorities of the government. These interventions has enjoyed the strong political commitment at the highest level in the country.

As mentioned earlier, the SPPS Programme has successfully assisted the Government in laying the foundations for an integrated social security system in the country. The successful support of SPPS Programme so far do point out to its continued relevance, and potential contribution it can make in successive phases until the NSSS objectives are fully reached by 2030, coinciding with the SDGs. Thus, the results of the SPPS Project are highly sustainable in the long term, results shows the promise of high impact that can be maintained or even scaled up.

Furthermore, the pilot projects on G2P, M&E and GRS are by default scheduled to be replicated and scaled up by project partners over the years successively with the assistance of the SPPS Programme to install fully working and sustainable systems of G2P, M&E and GRS, all together supported by the Single Registry MIS. Together, these systems are expected to culminate in the successful and complete implementation of the national social protection system by 2030, coinciding with the SDG target period. Thereafter, social protection framework should be able to operate on its own without external support, a key indicator of financial sustainability.

Ultimate sustainability, however, will depend on the government's continued ownership and effective leadership in carrying forward the social security reform agenda in Bangladesh, and support the home grown NSSS to the extent possible independently.

The evaluation has noted a number of gaps from which lessons can be learned in the context of the SPPS Programme. These observed lessons lead to a set of recommendations proposed in the section that follows, for the Government of Bangladesh, the funding DP and UNDP's consideration for future design and implementation strategy:

- Strong commitment and ownership of the government is the key to initiate, innovate and deliver programmes that align with various strategic pronouncements of the government. The SPPS programme is a notable example of such, a lesson that can be used in different developmental initiatives, aiming at raising economic and human development standard in Bangladesh. The success of the SGSP / SSPS Programme can be highly attributed to the political will of the government of Bangladesh to formulate and approve the NSSS and subsequent development of a plan of action.
- Notwithstanding the above, at the initial stage, the understanding of NSSS at various levels of the government, and capacity for implementing the plan have slowed down the reform process articulated in the SSPS design document. A critical lesson that can be derived here is that, before embarking on an ambitious programme such as this, impinging on political, economic and key national priorities, a few factors need to be reassured. These include, but not limited to: i. institutional readiness of the government; ii. assessment of existing and absorptive capacity to deliver that could be incrementally increased; iii. commitment of full funding, thus not compromising the intended results; and iv. consideration of a practical timeline within which the host of activities can be achieved.
- Key stakeholders, including the GED and line ministries, as well as members of the CMC were mindful regarding the need for a timely process with regard to SSPS, in line with the NSSS. Initially, the NSSS indicated a good prospect for its successful implementation and the Action Plan. However, it was noted that an unanticipated lengthy consultation process delayed the formulation of the plan, although it eventually ensured valuable inputs to the NSSS and facilitated its buy-in by a wider stakeholder environment. A lesson that can be learned here is that, a balance must be struck in future between the need for an inclusive and extensive consultation process. An agreed practical timeline needs to be considered for the outcomes to occur in the interest of timely and efficient delivery of key outcomes. Absence of this may lead to opportunities being lost, together with the loss of the validity of the contextual conditions for the intended interventions.
- The perceived 'possessiveness' of the line ministries/divisions over their respective social protection programmes has both positive (commitment) and negative (turf protection) dimensions. This makes the work of the government's difficult in the coordination process, and scrutinizing the large number of social security schemes to bring these to a manageable limit to ensure coherence in the social security delivery process. The task of reducing the number of social security programmes through consolidation was also made more difficult by development partners continuing to suggest new programmes based on their strategic aid objectives. Thus, the government needs to base its judgment on evidences from researches, specific needs of the population, and best practices that have been learned from elsewhere.
- One of the key lessons learned is that quality research and assessments can indeed effectively contribute to government's policy and strategy development. The MTR findings as well as findings from key researches, such as the 'Political Economy Assessment (PEA)' undertaken by SPPS Programme demonstrated that there is a high level of political will in implementing the NSSS. These two documents, are being used in the formulation of the 8<sup>th</sup> FYP. Commissioning the PEA was of critical importance for broad-based acceptance of the strategy draft. The PEA not only aimed at mapping the level of bipartisan support of the NSSS, but also gave advice

on near term actions on the NSSS development and adoption process to ensure that the strategy becomes more than a paper-based formula for a change.

- Following advice of the PEA on near term actions, the final draft of the NSSS and Action Plan could be further refined to ensure the much-needed effective management and coordination arrangements that remained a major weakness of the project. This relates largely to the coordination lead by the Cabinet Division, its structure and functional arrangements, as well as reassessing the over daunting committee system that exists, often risking duplication of functions, and time delays.
- Further, as the Government continues to take increasing ownership over the outcome of NSSS implementation, the project is more able to focus on providing experts for technical policy support that should be seriously pursued in the proposed next phase of the project. A word of caution, however, needs to be highlighted here. Quality assurance in the formulation of the Terms of Reference of prospective studies, together with a full understanding of the prospective outcomes of the studies must be ensured at the very beginning.
- The NSSS underpins the whole SGSP's approach (including the SPPS) to open up the policy space, allowing the programmes to deliver outputs with more confidence and pursue outcome level objectives. The NSSS outlines improved coordination and delivery to enhance social protection effectiveness, as well as to reconfigure a programmatic approach to coordinate and consolidate the current fragmentary structure. However, the coordination process and mechanism has been one of the challenging aspect of the Programme, with a scanty Unit established in the Cabinet Division, marred by lack of adequate and appropriate level of human resources which is by far inadequate for effective coordination with the 35 ministries, UNDP and host of other stakeholders, as well as the over stretched committee system that exists.
- A lesson to be learnt here is that the UNDP implemented SPPS project has not demonstrated the required level of effectiveness in ensuring that an effective coordination mechanism is installed, especially in the Cabinet Division, as discussed earlier in this report. UNDP has been a lead player in the Local Consultative Group (LCG) meeting which also discusses the SPPS related activities, with no visible outcome in relation to addressing the long pending issue of social security programme coordination and governance. The possible next phase may take the opportunity to reassess the over daunting committee system that exists, often risking duplication of functions, and time delays.
- UNDP management has been instrumental in decision making, though PSC and PIC meetings. However, these meetings were not held frequently given that these committees were led and co-led by three secretaries, and management of their time was always difficult. CMC is the Cabinet Secretary lead Secretarial committee, purely government lead to take supreme decisions on social protection related policies, strategies, coordination, and monitoring. There was no scope for any development partners' participation in the CMC. This lesson leads to the possible consideration by the government to include UNDP in the CMC to facilitate decisions from the perspective of programme implementation, as well as technical and advisory support from the development partners' end.
- The designated focal points also often lack substantive knowledge about the type and level of inputs required from them. The Thematic cluster ministries do not meet regularly or as frequently as these should. Moreover, decision to incorporate all Thematic Cluster leads, other line ministries, and Registrar General Office in the M&E Committee led to dilution of the Committee making it less effective. Like many other GoB projects, the NSSB is also subject to frequent institutional memory loss because of the usual transfer and promotion rules of the civil service.

- Also important is building a sustainable capacity within the government agencies in knowledge management and M&E, perhaps stretching it to MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning) so that these learning materials and tools can be accessed by relevant people and institutions, including think tanks. There is also a perceived need for regular media interactions occurring around these knowledge products. Thus, the issue of knowledge management and communication should assume a high priority in any further continuation of the current SPPS phase.
- Another lesson learned that is linked to the above is the uncompromising need to instill a full understanding of M&E process, and sustainable and ‘portable’ capacity within the government agencies, mainly ministries in systematically monitoring, ideally on a real time basis<sup>29</sup>, the outcomes of the social security interventions. The Situation Assessment feasibility study toward supporting the developing of a national Single Registry (2019), asserted that relevant platforms require improvements to proceed with Single Registry, as part of operational readiness. While this is still being done, the ministries need to demonstrate their readiness and capacity to operate the Single Registry simultaneously across all the relevant line ministries.
- Another key lesson relates to innovation based on the many success stories in Bangladesh around digital banking and ICT sector in general. The ‘Digitized Government-to-Person (G2P)’ 2019 is one of the notable innovations that could not have occurred without the strong commitment of the government and openness to embrace Public-Private partnership with several service providers. The piloting of this innovation piggy-backing on the already established SWAPNO project involved high-quality, randomized controlled trial data findings meeting many positive comments from the stakeholders. Findings need to be incorporated without delays at a more detailed level for a potential universal old age pension and benefits for persons with disability. The evidence-base must serve as a high-quality policy tool for the government to scale up nationally for all beneficiaries of social security cash transfers, and support service providers and government administrative operations.
- The common perception that local power politics and national level political realities remain a considerable risk in relation to the retention of the current level of inclusion and exclusion errors. In this respect, the observations of Mid Term Review (MTR) serves as a lesson learned. The MTR reports that *“the high inclusion error is a major factor responsible for the low poverty impact of social security programmes. Simulation results show the headcount poverty to decline to 17.7 per cent (against the rate of 24.3 per cent) when the inclusion error is eliminated. The resultant saved resources are distributed among the households below the poverty line in a manner that would be just enough to make them non-poor. This would imply, without any further cost implications, an additional 10.7 million people, belonging to 2.6 million households, could be lifted out of poverty”*. Correcting such a systemic anomaly that is deep rooted in the local grass root culture of Union level leadership and entrenched in vested interests since more than half a century would be a considerable challenge for the NSSS and the SPPS Programme. •
- With regard to the study visits, selected officials received orientation regarding in-country and opportunities for study tours. A lesson to be learned here is that capacity building must be based on assessment of capacity needs, absorptive capacity of the institutions, and qualitative outcomes expected from the capacity building interventions. At this stage, trainings are without a systematic impact assessment, or a follow up tracer study. The evaluation notes

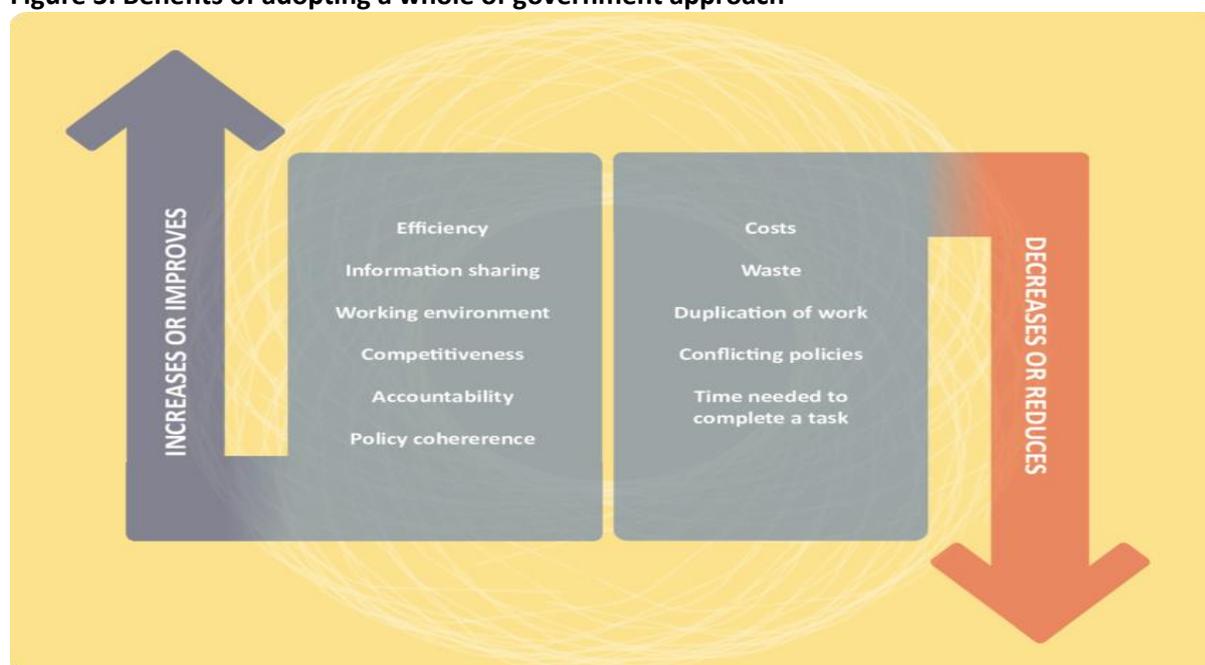
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<sup>29</sup> The author of this report advocated for and assisted in the establishment of a real time M&E for micro-finance /financial inclusion programme funded by DFID for the Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) while working as the International Leader for the PROSPER project during 2008-2013. Similar initiative can be replicated in the social security sector also, based lessons learned by PKSF.

that the post-study visit reports and action plans delineating how their learning could be put to use were not followed up which appears to be a missed opportunity for best practice knowledge utilization in the context of Bangladesh.

- The NSSS and its support through SSPS, engaging 35 ministries and divisions, offers a huge opportunity for whole-of-government (WoG) approach to social security reform. This was the original intention of the programme but capacity constraints did not lead to attaining a mature attention in this area. The social security system in Bangladesh is an excellent example of multi-stakeholders and multi-intervention model towards a common approach that can justify the Whole of government approach<sup>30</sup>. Eventually, over time, the government may consider adoption of a Sector Wide Approach (SWAP)<sup>31</sup> under the lead role of one social service-related ministry and a stronger financial management by the Finance Ministry/Treasury. The contemplation to handover the coordination by the Ministry of Social Affairs is the first right step in this direction.

**Figure 3: Benefits of adopting a whole of government approach**



Source: Centre for Effective Services (CES), Ireland 2018 (adapted).

- The programme and institutional reforms suggested in the NSSS Action Plan (pages 6 to 8) appear to be over-ambitious for the period 2016-2020. Whether the changes suggested will automatically lead to delivery of intended results is open to question. A phased approach over a longer period of time (say by 2025) with a detailed step by step plan specifying outputs from each step expected would be a more practical approach.

<sup>30</sup> Started by the Australian government in the late 90s the Whole of Government (WoG) approach denotes public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an integrated government response to particular issues. They can focus on policy development, program management and service delivery.

<sup>31</sup> Sector-Wide Approach (SWAP) is an approach to international development that brings together governments, donors and other stakeholders within any sector. It is characterized by a set of operating principles rather than a specific package of policies or activities. Bangladesh has been a pioneer in this approach with the first SWAP adopted in the health sector in 1998, followed by four in the primary education sector. The secondary education programme and TVET sector is in the process of implementing SWAP in Bangladesh.

- As Bangladesh prepares to graduate to a full middle-income country in the coming years, it is logical for the country to be increasingly involved in South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSC and TrC). The country's success in various socio-economic areas over the years can offer opportunities to partner with the traditional supporters of South-South and Triangular Cooperation (in Asia and Africa) in undertaking social protection programmes where Bangladesh can be both a beneficiary, and a provider of experience based knowledge.
- Finally, UNDP's comparative advantage based on its neutrality, independence, and long history of working in Bangladesh on major policy reforms in the governance, human development and poverty alleviation programmes, was equally useful in the SSPS Programme. However, government could have leveraged better on UNDP's capacity to support the SSPS coordination mechanisms. Also, UNDP could have effectively utilized its long-standing partnerships at the highest levels of government in instilling the changes that was need to strengthen the coordination and monitoring mechanism in the social security sector.

The much written and discussed topic of demographic dividend that Bangladesh has enjoyed helping drive economic growth is coming to an end. Instead, population is aging rapidly, requiring policy and strategic changes as to how social security landscape should be reshaped to bring to its fold, both the aging older population and the working age people alike. Around this ‘rethinking’ process, the forthcoming 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2021-2025), preparation of which is underway is likely to focus on several key areas for Bangladesh socioeconomic development<sup>32</sup>: that are linked to the pronounced commitment of the government towards meeting social security reform targets by 2030 in line with the NSSS, and also meet the SDG target by the same year. Over the last one-decade, steady progress has been made in the Bangladesh social security scene although the impact is yet to rise to an optimum level.

The current state of Bangladesh’s social security system is to a large extent, characterized by low coverage and transfer values, as well as high exclusion errors. There are significant gaps in coverage across the lifecycle. Also, over 70 per cent of the population are excluded from Bangladesh’s social security system. This is despite the fact that the majority of those on middle incomes are living on low and insecure incomes and would benefit from access to various evolving social security priorities being promoted by the government. The exclusion of those on middle incomes – the so-called ‘missing middle’ – from social security and other public services cannot be an option for Bangladesh in the long run<sup>33</sup>

Even if these initial limitations of the social protection sector are to be considered in assessing the overall sectoral performance, by no means, these should be attributed to the implementation of the SPPS project. The sector has still not attained the state of maturity although the learning curve is in the upward trend. Many of the issues being experienced, such as coordination in the first place, are the product of systemic enigma in the government system, and the inherent quandary of the policy makers to choose the most workable path.

The DFAT supported UNDP’s SSPS Programme has largely played its intended part. It played an important catalytic role that, to begin with, confirms the counterfactual impact through its support to the implementation of the NSSS. What if the SPPS was not initiated? This section focuses on the aspect of counterfactual aspect to a large extent. The counterfactual is an estimate of what would have happened in the absence of the SPPS Programme, which implicitly is the key element of the evaluation exercise.

The nature of the SPPS Programme is, mainly policy, systems and process oriented. Thus using a counterfactual in a rigorous approach, using Randomized Control Trials (RCT) could neither be undertaken that could provide strong evidence for programme outcomes at this early stage, nor the counterfactual was considered during programme design, exploring options at the outset for creating a control group or a credible comparison group. The nature of SPSS Programme does not demand such an approach. However, the discussions in the preceding sections do sufficiently provide the data and information, albeit in some cases, anecdotal evidences (such as outcomes of capacity building training) that can safely confirm a stronger body of evidences towards strong outcomes generated by the

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<sup>32</sup> Shamsul Alam, Key Note Paper in Bangladesh Forum, January 2020 lists the following : boasting saving investment; harnessing the potential of young generation; consolidating effort for revenue mobilisation; big push for rapid implementation of mega infrastructure; supporting SME development; eradicating poverty and reducing regional disparity; promoting modern and sustainable agriculture for nutrition for all; focusing quality education; ensuring power and energy security; ensuring quality health care; empowering ethnic minorities, the marginalised and the disabilities; encouraging women empowerment; managing urban transformation; tackling climate change, managing disaster and protection environment; eradicating corruption, making accountable administration, and ensuring good governance; empowering local government and decentralisation; and building partnership for achieving SDGs.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

project. Where possible, RCT was used such as in the piloting of the G2P mobile money transfer, and the results, despite the rapid nature of the test, did confirm the usefulness of the system for potential replication in a larger scale.

One of the early evidences of outcome of SPSS is its critical advocacy and policy support role that saw a significant increase in Government's budget allocation for social security from USD 4.61 billion in FY 2015/16 to USD 6.6 billion in FY 2017/18. This corresponds to an increase to 2.44 per cent of GDP for social security programmes in a span of only two years. The increased budget allocation reflects both enhanced allowance size for a number of life-cycle programmes and extended beneficiary coverage. As was expected by the project rationale and proposed outcome indicator, the total number of programmes has declined from 145 to 123.

The SPSS Programme has also been a useful learning process for the government, DPs, think tanks and the policy setters as to how best to support the social security sector in Bangladesh. This was largely achieved while undertaking and supporting some of the key strategic research and knowledge products. The robust and most inclusive consultation process in developing the NSSS, as well as building 'buy-in' support across all possible spheres of the government for its implementation were also possible through the presence and painstaking role of the SPSS Programme. Thus, here again, the counterfactual element is important. Simultaneously, innovating, learning and applying the learning into strategies have displayed a strong cohesive interplay. Two major areas of innovation: the social accountability tool, Grievance and Redress System (GRS), and the successful test of the alternative online payment method under the Government to People (G2P) need special mention here.

A critical trajectory has been the policy and operational level consultations flowing to a strong body of awareness building and understanding of the fact that social protection is not just an undertaking of the government to support the poor. Social protection is now integral to the mainstream activities of all the ministries and agencies of the government, and represents the Whole of Government approach. The awareness and support generated should create a receptive environment to embrace the ambitious and complex scope of NSSS in the coming years. The NSSS Action Plan in the coming decade is expected to incorporate much broader spectrum of inclusivity, adopt the life cycle approach in social protection, and build measures to effectively deal with covariate shocks and climate change effects.

The coordination aspect has been noted to be one of the weaker areas of the SPSS. UNDP's support to the Cabinet Division in particular to strengthen the coordination across the 35 Ministries engaged in social security has met with limited success. Here again, the senior management of UNDP's role in advocating for strengthened coordination could be more proactive by raising in various forums including the CMC and the LCG. However, much of the responsibility for limited results (discussed throughout this report) stems from systemic issues in the civil bureaucracy and capacity gaps in the line ministries, especially with regard to coordination. What UNDP could achieve well was assisting in the development of the agreed Action Plans for each ministry, towards the implementation of the NSSS. However, the Action Plans need to be read and understood across the ministries at all levels, and fully integrated with an M&E Framework in each ministry feeding to the overall M&E process in the social security sector. Linked to this is the pressing need for a high-level monitoring of reform activities. Given that most of the Action Plans' timeframe against the specific tasks assigned to various ministries has now elapsed, a revised plan with a new set of deadlines with revised monitoring indicators could be useful in bringing the implementation targets back on track.

Indeed, there are some notable initiatives of SPSS in providing platform for stakeholders for dialogues and to share knowledge about the state and challenges of social security reform in Bangladesh. Yet, the programme was not able to make adequate investments to build demand for a more progressive social security system from law makers, civil society, and other non-government actors. Involvement of media was observed to be scanty, as was the case in relation to communication and advocacy

material dissemination. It is imperative that SPPS broaden its engagement to strengthen the capacity of non-governmental actors – such as civil society organisations, the private sector, parliament and the media – while also packaging its communication outputs so that they effectively reach these actors.

Against this background, striving for universality in social protection is part of a broader social trend. Universality, after all, is a defining and one of the innovative features of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Goals). This includes both the universality of principles — the 2030 Agenda rests on a set of universal principles and human rights applicable in all countries, in all contexts and circumstances, and at all times — and the universality of reach—the 2030 Agenda is for all people in line with the call to ‘leave no one behind’, a central pledge by member states.

Lastly, social security as enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights along with education and health is also about equity<sup>34</sup>, as well as access and inclusion. While those with equal needs should have equal access, those with greater need should have greater opportunities to access. Applied to social protection, this implies that, while the risk helps determine the type of support, the need should determine the extent of support provided. Yet, equity can be addressed not only on the side of service delivery, but also on the side of service financing. Thus, universal social protection aims to ensure equitable access to all people and protect them throughout their lives against poverty and risks to their livelihoods and well-being through a Bangladeshi home-grown social protection system of policies and programmes. The process is visible, but actions need to be initiated sooner, rather than later.

The challenge, no doubt is enormous, and given the current low baseline of only 27.8 per cent of household in Bangladesh having access to at least one safety net<sup>35</sup>, attaining the goal of Universal Social Protection (USP) by 2030 may seem out of reach. However, through the SPPS, the government and the policy makers are able know by now what has not worked, and started to understand what may work. Achieving USPs by 2030 in line with the NSSS would require drastic increase in domestic resources – using both new and existing sources of funding, and most importantly, increased efficiency in the government actors, and a strong coordination and monitoring mechanism. To make this possible, the perception of social protection within the government needs to change more, so that providing social protection for all must be prioritized, including streamlining the task environment from 35 ministries to an absolute manageable number, and installing a robust and effective monitoring mechanism

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<sup>34</sup> As reflected in the UHC 2030 Joint Vision for Healthy Lives and the Incheon Declaration for Education 2030.

<sup>35</sup> Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES); Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Ministry of Planning, 2016

A number of recommendations emanate from the discussions in this report, and the discussion in the section on lessons learned. These recommendations, are by no means in order of priority, as considerations can be given to implement these in gradually as the government, UNDP and DFAT may deem fit :

- 1. Completion of the pending activities:** The project needs to be proactive in ensuring that several pending activities which are critical to the various outcome areas of SPPS are followed up and implemented in appropriate phases, some of which can be carried forward to the next phase as indicated by the project management. These include, but not limited to: i. Initiate the Innovation Challenge fund that can involve the NGOs, civil society and the private sector; ii. Facilitating the Social Insurance system (see full discussion below); and iii. Undertake proactive steps for potential twinning arrangements with some of the best practice institutions overseas, based on learning from the study tours; and iv. Undertake steps to have the Bangladesh Social Security (Coordination) Act 2019 enacted that focuses on social security governance at both national and sub-national levels, and addresses beneficiary selection. This Act needs to be expedited so that it can be passed during the Parliament session during the mid-2020.
- 2. Strengthen the coordination structure and process:** A number of angles relate to this recommendations: i. The coordination Unit within the Cabinet Division needs strengthening with a revised Terms of Reference, appropriate human resource structure in place and continuity of staff therein. A rapid organization development (OD) study can be undertaken at an earliest opportunity in this regard; ii. Given that equal level of capacity is difficult to be built across the 35 ministries, and that most ministries have small schemes, some of which may not, arguably fit into the character of life cycle based social security, the SPPS should focus on the core ministries which may range between 5 and 8. The coordination and technical knowledge support by SPPS to the key line ministries would be more effective in building an inclusive and results oriented lifecycle based social security system. Together with this remains the need to install a robust and effective monitoring mechanism.
- 3. Gradual strengthening the coordination capacity for the Ministry of Social Welfare:** In tandem with support to key line ministries, technical support should continue with respect to other line ministries in an appropriate scale depending on their needs. Special attention should be given to strengthen the Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW), which will take the lead by 2026 for the social security programme coordination and implementation. A consideration can be given to create a separate Division (Social Security Division) in the MoSW headed by a Secretary that will oversee the full delivery of social security services, and play the coordination role in this area.
- 4. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) functions:** Building a robust and strong M&E System in tandem with an equally robust MIS linking all the implementing ministries, the local government bodies, the GED and the Cabinet Division on a single unified platform is of paramount importance. This could comprehensively serve all aspects of the NSSS through a Single Registry data platform. Given that the M&E Framework implementation is a nationwide issue, a new mechanism must be found that can function independent of the ministries. This entails eventually a dedicated M&E Office exclusively created for monitoring the social security interventions nationwide as a universal system. The locus of such an office is extremely important, resourced with dedicated M&E professionals with necessary knowledge and expertise. Ideally, this can be housed within the GED or the Ministry of Finance. A piloting assisted by an external agency/private sector entity for such independent monitoring and evaluation can be useful. SPSS can consider supporting this activity.

5. **Updating of M&E Framework:** The M&E framework should be updated with identification of data collection requirements as well as find ways and means to expand on nationally available data at a frequency higher than the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES). There could be also the need for identifying sub-level indicators, including proxy indicators that do not require national data. The idea of regular, smaller panel surveys was laid out in the NSSS; however, this never was funded by any stakeholder. This could potentially be pursued in the next phase as a means of institutionalizing regular, high-level data collection for informed decision-making.
6. **Integration of Single Registry MIS with M&E system:** The import of HIES Data from BBS, Upazila level training data, financial and budget information, G2P records, and GRS. Every beneficiary could be brought under two key data (i) the NID number, and (ii) biometric identification. Therefore, there is a need to develop and unified IT structure from the Upazila level to the higher levels. The IT architecture design of this nation- wide system would require design of the entire hardware and software architecture of the IT system and a budget to support procurement and commissioning of hardware, development of software (including proposing a few options of dashboards), maintenance and systems support contract for at least five years for both hardware and software, and, trainings as may be required. The Strengthening Public Financial Management for Social Protection (SPFMSP) funded by DFID is an example of a possible intervention route that can continue to support the MIS strengthening process.
7. **Knowledge management linked to M&E in SPPS Office:** A dedicated Knowledge Management and M&E Unit in SPPS is highly recommended for conducting the standard project monitoring and reporting functions; and secondly, for supporting communication and advocacy functions, as well as consolidating and disseminating the various studies undertaken by the project. Also important is building a sustainable capacity within the government agencies in knowledge management and M&E, perhaps stretching it to MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning) so that these learning materials and tools can be accessed by relevant people and institutions, including think tanks. The area of knowledge management and communication should assume a high priority in any further continuation of the current SPPS phase. In this connection, also important is the full operationalisation of the advocacy and communication strategy and the Gender Integrated Advocacy and Communication Strategy. Lessons can be learnt from the piloting of communication campaign e.g., posters and leaflets, that were distributed at the Ward level during pilot testing of GRS in the focused UPs in Kurigram under the SWAPNO project.
8. **Activating the Social Insurance scheme:** Devising a social insurance scheme that would be affordable by the target beneficiaries as well as offer adequate coverage (particularly including covariate shocks) is complex and challenging. Such a scheme cannot be delivered as a component of the existing programme given the complex scope and highly specialized inputs that this demands. A separate dedicated intervention should be closely tied to the future SPPS phase as a facilitating instrument for its full implementation. Thus, the subsequent phase of the SPPS should undertake this pending task on a priority basis.
9. **Support the habit of saving:** As saving is a major cultural shift it will require some time and adjustment before the beneficiaries can begin trusting the accounts to keep their money and start saving. Going forward, this output should become a major component in a subsequent phase alongside the establishment of the G2P process replication. Substantial investment in educating and motivating the beneficiaries to develop the habit to save would be needed as they keep graduating to the G2P platform with scaling up.
10. **Consolidating the social security schemes:** Current number of social security programmes stands at 123, brought down from 145. In support of the MTR, it is strongly recommended to

review the smaller schemes and consolidate these to a manageable number. This does not mean eliminating the existing benefits, but to rationalise the schemes/programme with identical or complementary objectives. The GED and the Cabinet Division have already taken some positive steps in this direction. Future dialogues to reach a consensus should be supported by SPPS in its new phase.

11. **Increased engagement of multiple stakeholders:** Increased engagement stakeholders beyond the current list need to be pursued. Regular interactions with NGOs, think tanks, universities, parliamentarians, private sector and trade bodies, and most importantly media should be pursued towards implementing more progressive and universal policies, together with innovations in the sector.
12. **Scaling up innovations:** With SPPS Programme's possible long-term engagement with local-level implementation through piloting of ideas, such as the G2P, innovations should be tested and results disseminated as part of knowledge management functions. The testing of innovative approaches to social security at local level would play an important complementary role in influencing government, enabling policymakers to see for themselves the impact of these approaches on the ground, and potential roll out nationally.
13. **Study tour outcomes:** Capacity building priorities must be based on assessment of capacity needs, absorptive capacity of the institutions, and qualitative outcomes expected from the capacity building interventions. At this stage, trainings are without systematic impact assessments, or a follow up tracer study. In future, post-study visit reports and action plans delineating how their learning could be put to use should be followed up, as well as, rapid tracer studies to see how well the investments have been in this area.
14. **Design and results framework:** SPPS, before embarking on a new phase must ensure that the design errors of the earlier phase as discussed in this report (4.2) care should be taken in articulating a proper and SMART Results Framework, delineate the logical link between the development objective, immediate objective(s) and draw up a theory of change that contains elements to facilitate future evaluation of the project.

**Terms of Reference (ToR)**

<b>POST TITLE</b>	Individual Contract (International Consultant)	Empowered lives. Resilient nations.
<b>AGENCY</b>	UNDP Bangladesh	
<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	Final Project Evaluation - Social Protection Policy Support (SPPS) Programme	
<b>COUNTRY OF ASSIGNMENT</b>	Bangladesh	
<b>DURATION OF CONTRACT</b>	24 Working Days between 16 February to 22 March 2020	
<b>1. GENERAL BACKGROUND</b>		
<p>Bangladesh was a global leader in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and shaping the discourse for the Post 2015 development, resilience, urban poverty reduction and social protection agendas. In the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) era, UNDP Bangladesh (UNDP) looks to continue to act on its portfolio of programs to achieve the national objectives of Bangladesh and eliminate poverty. It has originated many of the most exciting and innovative solutions to development challenges. UNDP's mission is to help create open and inclusive civic spaces, within which the government and people are empowered to realize national development goals and fully engage in global sustainable development efforts.</p> <p>UNDP Bangladesh is supporting the Government to find innovative solutions to its development challenges based on the new Country Programme Document, which began in 2017. A key cross-cutting theme behind UNDP's work in Bangladesh is institutional development, ranging from environmental resilience to urban development to improved governance.</p> <p>In the area of improved governance, UNDP and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT: Australia) is partnering with the Government of Bangladesh in significant ways, particularly in improved institutional development in social protection and aid effectiveness. Specifically, Social Protection Policy Support (SPPS) Programme, through expert, evidence-based support, is working with the government to reconfigure the current social security system so that economic growth is achieved in a more inclusive manner, with economic opportunities reaching the rural and urban poor and the protection of vulnerable groups against shocks. The programme will help the government in two areas namely governance of social protection and strengthening of systems. This work includes enacting a national Single Registry Management Information System to improve social protection delivery, improving upon the country's Grievance Redress System to ensure accountability and transparency, develop holistic Monitoring &amp; Evaluation approaches to measuring social protection outcomes, strengthening Government to Person (G2P) delivery of social protection cash benefits, and identifying knowledge gaps and conducting research to fill such gaps to inform evidence-based policy decision-making. The SPPS Programme is centered around supporting the Government to implement the National Social Security Strategy.</p> <p>UNDP, DFAT, and the Government of Bangladesh recognize that a coherent and effective social protection system is central to Bangladesh's future economic and social development, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has committed itself to a process of reviewing its social protection portfolio and therefore developed a comprehensive social security strategy. The Cabinet Division took the lead role to take forward developing a national strategy and gave responsibility to the General Economics Division (GED) of the Planning Commission to lead the process of formulating a NSSS, which is overseen by an inter-ministerial committee, widely called Central Management Committee (CMC) for Social Safety Net Programmes (or Social Security Programmes),</p>		

convened by the Cabinet Division. This process has yielded a strategy that has been approved by the Cabinet. The NSSS was approved in mid-2015 and on-going reforms have been taking place since.

Phase I of the current SPPS Programme is coming to an in January 2020, and UNDP, in deliberations with development partners has been developing a project document for Phase II. Successes and lessons learned are being examined alongside the NSSS Mid-Term Implementation Review, completed in 2019.

The objective of this assignment, in alignment with UNDP internal policy to conduct final evaluations of all projects is to assess and evaluate the performance of the project against its planned outputs and results and what was actually achieved. There was no mid-term project evaluation completed.

This evaluation will examine, through a policy-lens focus, and in an independent manner, the project’s delivery of objectives in relation to the project document and its intended purpose. It should consider how activities have contributed to advancing, if at all, to the reforms and implementation of the NSSS. The project evaluation will consider effectiveness, efficiency, delivery of outputs, and any support to Government institutions (such as committees, coordination, policy, logistics). The evaluation should consider the entire working period of the project’s duration up until the present time. The assignment should be carried out using a public policy model for evaluation.

The consultant will work with members of the project, relevant GoB members, and other stakeholders to obtain information, including key informant interviews and document reviews

The consultant will work under the direct supervision of the UNDP Assistant Resident Representative to complete the final project evaluation.

## 2. GUIDANCE FOR CONDUCTING THE STUDY

The output should be accomplished in line with following guidance notes:

- Preliminary discussions with necessary stakeholders and review of all necessary project documents and outputs completed over the project period;
- The consultant should have a clear understanding of the project design, logic and strategy.
- The primary reference point for the consultant should be: 1) SPPS Project Document; 2) National Social Security Strategy of Bangladesh; 3) project outputs; and 4) project reports to funders.

Non-binding Guidance:

Evaluation criteria	Description
Relevance and strategic fit of the project	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiary requirements, country needs, global priorities and partner and donor policies.  The extent to which the approach is strategic, and UNDP uses its comparative advantage.
Validity of project design	The extent to which the project design is logical and coherent.
Project progress and effectiveness	The extent to which the project’s immediate objectives and end of project outcomes were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.

	<p>Confirm that a documented M&amp;E arrangement is in place</p> <p>Validate that the M&amp;E information supports the tracking of progress and assessment of effectiveness.</p>
Efficiency of resource use	<p>A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results. This would be based on the overall, total expenditure of the project.</p> <p>Validate whether M&amp;E information supports the assessment of efficiency through monitoring both expenditure and the delivery of outputs.</p>
Effectiveness of management arrangements	<p>The extent to which management capacities, governance and arrangements put in place supports the achievement of results.</p>
Impact orientation and sustainability of the project	<p>The strategic orientation of the project towards making a significant contribution to broader, long-term, sustainable development changes.</p> <p>The likelihood that the results of the project are durable and can be maintained or even scaled up and replicated by project partners after major assistance has been completed.</p> <p>The extent to which the project was harmonized / aligned with the work of other donors and the partner governments' systems for the efficient achievement of all end-of-investment outcomes</p>

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The broader objective of the assignment is to evaluate to what degree has the SPPS project, if at all, through its activities, and from a public policy perspective, advanced the NSSS reform agenda. Also, the aims are to get the views of whether the project has delivered on its agreed upon outputs and outcomes. And, what benefits, if any, has the Government received from having the project exist. The final output should provide an evidence-based and expert based evaluation on the contributions of the project, including both positive and negative results. The consultant should use a mostly qualitative methodology based on key informant interviews and desk reviews, with partial quantitative on delivering against planned results.

### 4. SCOPE OF WORK /EXPECTED OUTPUT

#### Methodology

- The purpose, scope and evaluation questions presented in the different sections should be used by the consultant to determine the most appropriate approach for the present evaluation. The methodology must be developed in line with the evaluation approach chosen and support the answering of evaluation criteria using credible evidence.

- The consultant will prepare an evaluation plan that will operationalize and direct the evaluation. The evaluation plan will refine and elaborate on the information presented in these ToRs to bring greater precision to the planning and design of the evaluation.

### **Key Tasks**

#### **Preliminary**

- 1 pre-assignment meeting with the SPPS project team to ensure that all parties are in specific agreement on the details and nature of the assignment, at the SPPS project office in Dhaka.
- 1 work plan, stating planned activities of the evaluation, including key informant interviews and documents for desk review, and timeline for delivery of the draft and final evaluations.
- 1 project briefing meeting with SPPS project team to provide background context and purpose of the project. The consultant should obtain a clear understanding of the project design, logic, and strategy from this meeting.
- At least 10 Key Informant Interviews with NSSS related GoB officials (SPPS project available to support in coordinating the meetings).
- At least 3 Key Informant Interviews with the NSSS project members (must include National Project Director and Project Manager)
- At least 2 Key Informant Interviews with DFAT, DFID officials engaged with the SPPS project
- Desk review of key project documents (see here for more information: <http://socialprotection.gov.bd/en/category/publications/>)

#### **Effectiveness**

- Analysis of the extent to which project contributions achieved outcomes in the Project Document.
- Analysis of project reports to funders and funder responses
- Analysis of project contributions against the Project Document.
- Analysis of institutional support provided by the project to the Government:
  - Coordination
  - Committees
  - Logistical
  - Policy
  - Advocacy
- Analysis on project's contribution overall to the NSSS including policy reforms, political economy, and strategic components
- Identification of key achievements, if any

#### **Efficiency**

- Analysis of the project's efficiency
- Value for money in achievement of any results, if any
  - To what extent did the project use its resources (human, technical and financial) to achieve its planned results?
  - Analysis of program management to ensure timely delivery

**Relevance**

- Analysis on project's contribution overall to the NSSS including policy reforms, political economy, and strategic components
- Identification of key achievements, if any
- To what extent did the project contribute to advancing the GoB's NSSS reform agenda?
- What impact did the project have?

**Gender**

- The extent to which the project makes a difference to gender equality
- Availability of budget to achieve gender equality results and staff and partners had full access to gender expertise
- Evidence of gender analysis undertaken

**Risks**

- The extent to which risks were managed with effective controls and mitigating strategies
- Identification of risks and challenges, if any

**Lessons learned**

- Identify what has worked and what has not, focusing on assessing the relative effectiveness of different types of interventions (which interventions were most effective?) and making comment on the role and value-add of UNDP as a change agent within government systems
- Observations related to the project design and M&E, management and operation of SPPS, and the extent to which they supported the achievement and reporting of results, timely delivery, and management of challenges and risks.
- what has worked and what has not as well as observations related to the project design, management and operation of SPPS

**Recommendations**

- Recommendations, if any, on programmatic or operations of the project, if the project were to continue from 2020-2025.

**Deliverable Guidance**

- Prepare a draft evaluation
- Incorporate any relevant changes based on 1 round of feedback, at the discretion of the consultant
- Prepare a final evaluation

**4) DELIVERABLES:**

The details of the deliverables are as follows:

- Will prepare an evaluation report including all headings under Key Tasks.
  - Inception Workplan (3 days) by 19 February
  - Draft Evaluation report (16 days) by 8 March
  - Final Evaluation report incorporating feedback and comments (5 days) by 17 March

#### 5) DURATION OF ASSIGNMENT, DUTY STATION

The assignment is scheduled for 24 Working Days between 16 February to 22 March. The duty station will be home-based with 1 mission to Dhaka, Bangladesh of at least 14 full days.

#### 6) SUPERVISION, REPORTING AND PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

The consultant will work under the direct supervision of the UNDP Assistant Resident Representative. Deliverables must be approved as satisfactory by the UNDP Assistant Resident Representative.

#### 7) DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST AND AVAILABILITY

The consultant shall disclose his / her interest and availability by filling up the form "OFFEROR'S LETTER TO UNDP CONFIRMING INTEREST AND AVAILABILITY FOR THE INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTOR (IC) ASSIGNMENT" in Annexure I.

#### 8) FINANCIAL PROPOSAL

##### Lump sum contracts

The financial proposal shall specify a total lump sum amount, and payment terms around specific and measurable (qualitative and quantitative) deliverables. Payments are based upon output, i.e. upon delivery of the services specified in the TOR. In order to assist the requesting unit in the comparison of financial proposals, the financial proposal will include a breakdown of this lump sum amount as indicated in Annexure II.

#### 9) TENTATIVE PAYMENT SCHEDULE

##### Payment of the Consultant as per deliverables:

SL.	Deliverables/Outputs	Days to required	% of Total *Payment
1	Inception Workplan	03	20%
2	Draft Evaluation	16	50%
3	Final Evaluation	05	30%

#### 10) INPUTS

The consultant will be provided space during the mission to Dhaka, Bangladesh at the Planning Commission, SPPS Office. Internet at the office is available. The consultant is required to have his/her own computer.

##### Travel and DSA

The consultant is required to arrange their own travel to and from the duty station, and to and from the office during the mission to Dhaka, or to other meeting locations within Dhaka.

DSA for days in Dhaka during the mission should be included in the financial proposal at the prevailing UN DSA rates.

#### 11) COMPETENCIES

*Core competencies:*

- Excellent communication, reporting, and professional writing skills;
- Critical thinking skills and ability to provide material supported by evidenced bases research;
- Ability to work with a multicultural environment and a multidisciplinary team
- Plans, prioritizes, and delivers tasks on time and produces quality results to meet established goals;
- Demonstrated understanding of social protection themes and concepts;
- Willingness to travel to project site.

*Functional Competencies:*

- Experience developing professional level reports in technical, but clear English;
- Experience with data collection, evidence assessment and analysis, citations, and policy projects;
- Experience with project evaluations and result based M&E;
- Strong skills and experiences in communicating and presenting evidence and ideas for policy and programmatic interventions;
- Consistent approach of work with energy and a positive, constructive attitude;
- Demonstrates openness to ideas and the ability to manage complexities of the situations.
- Ability to work independently to meet deadlines

## 12) REQUIRED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

*Education:*

- Minimum Masters in Public Policy, Public Administration, International Development, Economics, Social Security Administration, Programme Evaluation, Development Management, or related field.

*Experience:*

- Minimum 15 years experience in conducting review, evaluation, assessment assignments for Government or INGO institutions;
- At least 5 years high level evaluation experience with UNDP / UN agencies or Donor
- Proven work experiences with policy formulation, analysis, evaluation, design, and assessment related to vulnerable and marginalized communities in the South Asian Countries.
- Have experience of conducting at least 3 previous evaluation assignments.

*Language:*

Excellent oral and written English communication skills, and technical writing and presentation capabilities.

## 13) DOCUMENTS TO BE INCLUDED WHEN SUBMITTING THE PROPOSAL

Interested individuals must submit the following documents/ information to demonstrate their qualifications:

- Duly accomplished **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability** using the template provided by UNDP including **Financial Proposal** that indicates the all-inclusive fixed total contract price, supported by a breakdown of costs, as per template provided. If an Offeror is employed by an organization/company/institution and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the

process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the Offeror must indicate this at this point and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP.

- **Personal CV or P11**, indicating all previous experiences from similar projects, as well as the contact details (email and telephone number) of the Candidate and at least three (3) professional references.

#### 14) EVALUATION

##### Evaluation process

Applicants are reviewed based on Required Skills and Experience stated above and based on the technical evaluation criteria outlined below. The selection of the best offer from the candidates will be based on a Combined Scoring method – where the qualifications and experienced will be weighted a maximum of 70 points and combined with the price offer which will be weighted a max of 30 points out of 100 points.

Technical evaluation (desk review) - Total 70% (70 points):

- Educational qualification and relevance (20 marks)
- Demonstrated experience in high-level evaluations with emphasis on policy projects (25 marks)
- Overall experience in the provision of services to Government and INGO institutions related to reviews, assessments, expert analysis', and high-level outputs (25 Marks)

Only those applicants obtaining a minimum of 49 points (70% of points obtainable in the desk review) will be considered for further evaluation.

Financial evaluation - Total 30% (30 points)

The following formula will be used to evaluate financial proposal:

$p = y (\mu/z)$ , where

$p$  = points for the financial proposal being evaluated

$y$  = maximum number of points for the financial proposal

$\mu$  = price of the lowest priced proposal

$z$  = price of the proposal being evaluated

##### Contract Award

Candidate obtaining the highest combined scores in the combined score of Technical and Financial evaluation will be considered technically qualified and will be offered to enter into contract with UNDP.

Name of Individual	Institution	Designation
<b>Government of Bangladesh (GoB)</b>		
Dr. Shamsul Alam	General Economics Division Planning Commission	Member (Senior Secretary)
Md. Azizul Alam	Finance Division	Additional Secretary
Mohammed Shahidul Islam	Cabinet Division	Deputy Secretary
<b>SPSS Programme</b>		
Faizul Islam	General Economics Division Planning Commission	Joint Chief & National Project Director, SPSS
Aminul Arifeen	SSPS Programme	Project Manager, SPSS
Daniel Winstanley	SSPS Programme	Social Protection Policy Consultant
<b>UNDP</b>		
Khurshid Alam	UNDP Bangladesh	Assistant Resident Representative; and Head, Inclusive Growth and Resilience Portfolio
Ashekur Rahman	UNDP Bangladesh	Head of Poverty and Urbanization
<b>Development partners</b>		
Asif Kashem	DFAT, Australian High Commission in Bangladesh	Senior Program Manager
Anowarul Haq	DFID, Bangladesh	Social Development Adviser and Deputy Team Leader; Extreme Poverty, Resilience and Climate Change Team; DFID Bangladesh
Meriem El Harouchi	Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh	Programme Manager, Social Protection
Manfred Fernholz		Team Leader of the Food and Nutrition & Sustainable Development
Andrew Kettlewell		Team Leader, EU funded TA support to NSSS

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UNDP. *Proposal to Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) on The Social Security Policy Support (SPPS) Programme*, 16 February 2020, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

**(Based on the RESULTS AND RESOURCES FRAMEWORK From the Project Document)**

<p><b>Intended Outcome as stated in the Country Programme Results and Resource Framework:</b></p> <p><b>Outcome 2.1:</b> Economic growth is achieved in a more inclusive manner, with economic opportunities reaching the rural and urban poor and the protection of vulnerable groups against shocks</p>
<p><b>Outcome indicators as stated in the Country Programme Results and Resources Framework, including baseline and targets:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of women’s participation in labour force; percentage of poorest quintile in national consumption; rate of extreme poverty headcount in urban areas (CBN)</li> <li>• Number of households benefiting from United Nations social safety net programmes (Baseline 2010: 24,000; Target 2016: &gt;100,000)</li> <li>• Female-headed households as percentage of United Nations social safety net programme beneficiaries (Baseline 2010: n/a; Target 2016: &gt;50%)</li> <li>• Number of households with increased incomes in project-based areas (Baseline 2011: n/a; Target 2016: 50,000)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Applicable Key Result Area (from 2008-11 Strategic Plan):</b> Poverty reduction and Millennium Development Goals achievement</p>
<p><b>Partnership Strategy</b></p>
<p><b>Project title and ID (ATLAS Award ID):</b></p>

INTENDED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT TARGETS FOR YEARS	INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES	RESULTS
<b>OUTPUT 1</b>	<b>TARGETS YEAR 1</b>		
Better governance of social protection by strengthened coordination, M&E and reporting functions and stronger research and analysis capacities building a more effective evidence base for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plan for permanent NSPS institutional arrangements is approved by GoB</li> <li>- Inter-ministerial core committee on social protection is operational</li> <li>- Linkages maintained to national planning processes</li> <li>- Prototype programme and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop plan for permanent GoB institutional arrangement for supporting social protection policy and delivery analysis</li> <li>- Engagement with core Ministries and implement plan</li> <li>- Develop common Indicators for data</li> </ul>	<p>140 social support activities implemented by 35 ministries were brought down to 123 schemes and further work on this by GoB in progress.</p> <p>High powered Central Management Committee (CMC) established as a permanent institutional arrangement reporting to Cabinet Division.</p>

INTENDED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT TARGETS FOR YEARS	INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES	RESULTS
<p>policy development</p> <p><i>Baseline:</i> Ad hoc studies are available, no dedicated institutions in place</p> <p><i>Indicators:</i></p> <p>1.1 Permanent Institutional arrangement for supporting social protection policy and delivery analysis established</p> <p>1.2 # of meetings of inter-ministerial committee on social protection</p> <p>1.3 Standing database / repository of programmes and analytical inputs established and maintained</p> <p>1.4 Micro-simulation model for ex ante policy analysis and research developed</p> <p>1.5 Reviews and analyses of impact assessments (including lessons learnt briefs) for ex post policy analyses</p> <p>1.6 Network of social protection policy</p>	<p>analytical data repository designed and approved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prototype micro-simulation model designed</li> <li>- National impact assessment strategy for ex post policy analyses designed and approved by GoB</li> <li>- Proposal presented for first of two formal twinning arrangements</li> <li>- Two regional/international study visits held</li> <li>- Professional association of social protection practitioners established</li> <li>- Political economy study undertaken</li> <li>- Policy research unit within existing government system established</li> <li>- Social protection research needs identified</li> <li>- Quarterly newsletter produced and disseminated</li> <li>- Government website on social protection produced</li> <li>- Training manual and other capacity building tools for government officials developed</li> </ul>	<p>collection from different ministries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hand over institutional arrangement for supporting social protection policy and delivery analysis to the Government</li> <li>- Bring the NSPS inter-ministerial core committee to a policy forum to address cross-cutting issues – specifically on education, health, nutrition and climate change</li> <li>- Resource on-going capacity within GoB, building on the NSPS to maintain linkages to the national planning process, including drafting of the social protection section of 7th 5-year plan</li> <li>- Facilitate inter-ministerial core committee meetings on social protection</li> <li>- Design prototype of standing database of programmes and repository of other analytical inputs</li> <li>- Bring core programmes into the database</li> <li>- Bring all government SP programmes into the database</li> </ul>	<p>All 35 implementing ministries brought under five thematic structure each led by a lead ministry.</p> <p>Cross cutting agencies of GoB made responsible for M&amp;E, Information system, grievance redress and exclusion/ inclusion.</p> <p>10 high quality policy researches including a policy research analysis to support creation of governance policy and system undertaken.</p> <p>Substantive high quality research capability built within GED.</p> <p>M&amp;E Committee formation comprising M&amp;E and MIS approved after Consultative workshop held with M&amp;E focal points of all 35 ministries.</p> <p>Draft M&amp;E framework and data collection tool approved by CMC.</p> <p>M&amp;E System in place to support evidence led policy actions. However to make M&amp;E effective across the country investment is standardised hardware and software for MIS by all related ministries and agencies needed so everybody can plug in real time data.</p>

INTENDED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT TARGETS FOR YEARS	INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES	RESULTS
<p>practitioners set up</p> <p>1.7 # of twinning arrangements set up</p> <p>1.8 Policy research unit within existing government system set up</p> <p>1.9 # of nationally authored research reports</p> <p>1.10 # of policy briefs</p> <p>1.11 # of newsletters issued</p> <p>1.12 # of manuals and other capacity building tools</p> <p>1.13 # of government officials trained</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training plan for the life cycle of the project developed</li> <li>- One conference held, along with experience sharing workshops on specific issues</li> <li>- Design of pilot delivery of micro-insurance, training of intermediaries; awareness raising of clients</li> <li>- Innovations Challenge Fund designed, criteria and rules of business approved by GoB and call for proposals of piloting activities published</li> <li>- M&amp;E and QA scheme for local delivery established</li> <li>- Parliament and civil society are engaged with the Social Protection strategy and its implementation</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>TARGETS YEAR 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Permanent institutional arrangement operational and supporting core ministries</li> <li>- Linkages maintained to national planning processes, including social protection section of good quality in 7th 5-year plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expand database to include non-governmental SP programmes</li> <li>- Build a micro-simulation prototype for ex ante policy analysis and research to inform policy makers on the design of social protection initiatives</li> <li>- Apply micro-simulation model to core SP programmes</li> <li>- Apply micro-simulation model to all SP government programmes</li> <li>- Actively employ micro-simulation model for prospective social protection programmes</li> <li>- Design national impact assessment strategy for ex post policy analysis</li> <li>- Offer guidance on programme and systems design drawing from best practices internationally</li> <li>- Synthesis of key lessons learned to support more effective policy analysis</li> <li>- Publication of key lessons briefings</li> <li>- Commission core impact assessments</li> </ul>	<p>Success of M&amp;E is entirely dependent on a robust Single Registry MIS capable of capturing the entire host of data to feed the M&amp;E process, the Grievance Redress System, the G2P transactions, and other macro level data as all the systems are inter-related and contribute to each others' success.</p> <p>42 study tours for the top level officials from the Cabinet Division, the GED, the CMC and the implementing Ministries in India, Thailand, Kenya, Indonesia and Turkey. (results not evident in the absence of proper outcome reporting &amp; tracer study)</p> <p>Consultations on NSSSB implementation strategy held with the stake holders including 121 parliamentarians, the civil society. Meetings held at the UN Theme Group for Social Protection to review the draft NSSS.</p> <p>The high level Political Economy Analysis (PEA) research was consulted with a broad range of stakeholders to ensure their engagement, support and inputs in finalizing the NSSSB document and ensuring their ownership of the NSSSB initiative.</p>

INTENDED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT TARGETS FOR YEARS	INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES	RESULTS
<p>1.14 # of training events for policymakers and research institutions</p> <p>1.15 # of conferences, workshops and seminars held</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quarterly Inter-ministerial core committee meetings held on social protection</li> <li>- Programme database operational for core programmes</li> <li>- Micro-simulation model assessing core SP programmes</li> <li>- Micro-simulation model applied for prospective social protection programmes</li> <li>- First phase key lessons published</li> <li>- National impact assessment strategy operational, and core impact assessments commissioned</li> <li>- Two regional study visits held</li> <li>- Proposals are presented for second (of 2) twinning arrangements</li> <li>- Knowledge network based on UNDP's Solution Exchange model established</li> <li>- Two major nationally authored research reports and policy guidance notes are commissioned</li> <li>- Quarterly newsletter produced and disseminated</li> <li>- Website maintained and updated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Compile reports from core impact assessments and ensure transfer of key lessons learnt into government records</li> <li>- Establish a professional association of social protection practitioners, incorporating government and non-government members</li> <li>- Develop twinning arrangements and knowledge sharing</li> <li>- Conduct regional/international study tours to promote experience sharing</li> <li>- Establish a knowledge network based on UNDP's Solution Exchange model for local deliverers (UPs) to share knowledge and access national TA and advice</li> <li>- Commission political economy study to map the interest and influence structure of social protection in Bangladesh</li> <li>- Set up research centre to provide evidence on cross-cutting issues and facilitate innovations</li> <li>- Consultations through research centre with policy</li> </ul>	<p>A national consultation to understand the need for research based evidences for policy decisions, monitoring and evaluation of reforms on NSSS Research Needs, Results-based M&amp;E Framework, and Adaptive Social Protection Issues in the context of climate changes in Bangladesh held.</p> <p>Bangladesh Social Security Conference and Fair held in 2018 and 2019 inaugurated by the Prime Minister. Both these events were attended by all the relevant government ministries and agencies, the consultative group members, the donors, the NGOs, the civil society and the business community.</p> <p>Micro-insurance pilot clients, Innovations and Research Challenge Fund and pilot schemes under Innovations and Research Challenge Fund could not be set up or executed due to capability and execution issues.</p> <p>All parliamentarians were briefed at the parliament in batches over three days about the NSSS to ensure their support. (Outcomes not clear, especially the Social Security Act is still in the process of approval).</p>

INTENDED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT TARGETS FOR YEARS	INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES	RESULTS
<p>1.16 # of micro-insurance pilot clients</p> <p>1.17 Innovations and Research Challenge Fund set up and operational</p> <p>1.18 # of pilot schemes implemented under Innovations and Research Challenge Fund</p> <p>1.19 Established scheme for local and programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social protection training materials for incorporation in training curriculum of Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre developed</li> <li>- Training of trainers for Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre conducted</li> <li>- 2 training events for policymakers and other government officials</li> <li>- One conference held, along with experience sharing workshops on specific issues</li> <li>- Micro-insurance pilot project(s) delivered</li> <li>- Challenge Fund operational; awards made to a minimum of 30% of its value, of which one award on the key issue of climate vulnerability and adaptive social protection</li> <li>- M&amp;E reporting structures established</li> <li>- First annual M&amp;E report, and local ones where operational, prepared and published</li> <li>- Parliament and civil society are engaged with the Social Protection strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>makers and academia respectively to map social protection research needs</li> <li>- Facilitate nationally authored research reports and policy notes, based on empirical evidence, to inform public dialogue and decision-making</li> <li>- Core research group provides evidence on cross-cutting issues to a NSPS national technical group or any other policy forum</li> <li>- Facilitate national policy dialogue on the basis of reports from policy research unit within existing government system</li> <li>- Translate key findings into social protection policy</li> <li>- Disseminate findings from policy research centre dialogue into social protection framework to civil society, academia, delivery agents and other stakeholders</li> <li>- Develop newsletter including information on social protection programmes and activities</li> <li>- Develop website and share social protection related</li> </ul>	<p>Several civil society organizations, NGOs, P4D and private sector business community members were engaged and consulted at various points particularly during the Gender Strategy Development and during the National Workshop and Fair in 2018 and 2019.</p> <p>Social security education curricula for all levels in the civil service training institutions; and, a massive number of trainings of trainers and implementers on NSSS implementation from mid to root (UZ) operational level.</p> <p>Training modules for Training of Trainers and Implementer have been developed and are currently in use.</p> <p>BPATC and NILG assigned as lead training institutes for both ToT and training implementers. A book on ABCS of Social Security has been published as a ready reference guide for civil service practitioners.</p>

INTENDED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT TARGETS FOR YEARS	INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES	RESULTS
<p>based M&amp;E and QA functions</p> <p>1.20 # of parliamentary engagements (workshops, breakfast meetings, study tours etc.) strengthening social protection policy engagement</p> <p>1.21 # of civil society engagements (workshops, breakfast meetings, study tours etc.) strengthening social protection policy engagement</p> <p>1.22 Expressed satisfaction by policy-makers and other stakeholders with the quality of evidence informing policy formulation</p> <p>1.23 Demonstrated improvements in policy development and implementation (specific indicators to be defined when designing evaluation methodology)</p> <p>1.24 Contributory impacts of improved policies and programmes</p>	<p>and its implementation</p> <p><b>TARGETS YEAR 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Permanent institutional arrangement operational and supporting all ministries</li> <li>- Linkages maintained to national planning processes</li> <li>- Quarterly Inter-ministerial core committee meetings held on social protection</li> <li>- Programme and analytical database/repository operational for all government SP programmes</li> <li>- Micro-simulation model assessing all government SP programmes</li> <li>- Second phase key lessons published</li> <li>- Second wave of impact assessments commissioned</li> <li>- Two major nationally authored research reports and policy guidance notes are commissioned</li> <li>- Activities and delivery mechanisms of stakeholders are informed by research centre findings</li> </ul>	<p>information through platform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop user-friendly training manual and other capacity building tools for government officials</li> <li>- Develop training plan for the life cycle of the project</li> <li>- Include social development issues in civil service training linked to the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre – development of relevant modules and training-of-trainers support</li> <li>- Provide training and coaching activities that will enable policymakers and research institutions to make use of mainstream statistical packages</li> <li>- Training sessions for government officials on how to interpret and analyse poverty data to inform planning and policy making</li> <li>- Arrange conferences, workshops and seminars</li> <li>- Selection and design of micro-insurance products</li> <li>- Devise micro-insurance delivery</li> </ul>	<p>Mid term review report reviewed by M&amp;E Committee.</p>

INTENDED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT TARGETS FOR YEARS	INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES	RESULTS
<p>on key outcome indicators (to be defined when designing methodology)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quarterly newsletter produced and disseminated</li> <li>- Website maintained and updated</li> <li>- 2 training events for policymakers and other government officials</li> <li>- One conference held, along with experience sharing workshops on specific issues</li> <li>- Results of pilot delivery project(s) of micro-insurance are available to all stakeholders</li> <li>- Challenge Fund operational; awards made to a minimum of 30% of its value</li> <li>- Second annual M&amp;E report, and local ones where operational, prepared and published</li> <li>- Parliament and civil society are engaged with the Social Protection strategy and its implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>partnerships and mechanisms</li> <li>- Training of micro-insurance intermediaries on approaches, roles and responsibilities</li> <li>- Awareness raising of intended clients in understanding the insurance concept</li> <li>- Implement pilot delivery of micro-insurance</li> <li>- Conclude and evaluate pilot delivery of micro-insurance; compile lessons learnt and disseminate to all stakeholders</li> <li>- Scale up micro-insurance delivery</li> <li>- Establish an Innovations and Research Challenge Fund to enable the piloting of new technologies and approaches within individual delivery programmes and within the system</li> <li>- Develop fund criteria and rules of business, advertise for applications</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>TARGETS YEAR 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Permanent institutional arrangement fully operational and independent of Project (and any other external) support</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transmit funds to approved Challenge Fund projects and monitor progress</li> <li>- Develop a scheme for local and programme based M&amp;E and Quality Assurance</li> </ul>

INTENDED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT TARGETS FOR YEARS	INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES	RESULTS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Linkages maintained to national planning processes</li> <li>- Quarterly Inter-ministerial core committee meetings held on social protection</li> <li>- Programme and analytical database/repository operational for all government and non-governmental SP programmes</li> <li>- Third phase key lessons published</li> <li>- Reports from core impact assessments completed and integrated into Government lessons learnt</li> <li>- Two major nationally authored research reports and policy guidance notes are commissioned</li> <li>- Activities and delivery mechanisms of stakeholders are informed by research centre findings</li> <li>- Key research findings are translated into government policy</li> <li>- Quarterly newsletter produced and disseminated</li> <li>- Website maintained and updated</li> <li>- 2 training events for policymakers and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(QA) functions to link into the national M&amp;E framework</li> <li>- Design a national M&amp;E system, linking into SFYP M&amp;E goals, housed within the Planning Ministry (potentially attached to BBS)</li> <li>- Set up M&amp;E reporting structures</li> <li>- Roll out the national M&amp;E system</li> <li>- Provide annual M&amp;E reports</li> <li>- Share NSPS with parliamentarians and civil society</li> <li>- Policy dialogue with parliamentarians and engagement with relevant Parliament sub-committees</li> <li>- Develop and publish advocacy materials and tools for dissemination in Parliament and civil society</li> <li>- Form a Parliament group with special focus on social protection with members of Government and opposition</li> <li>- Conduct two study tours to visit best practice Social Protection Programmes for learning in different parts of the world</li> </ul>	

INTENDED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT TARGETS FOR YEARS	INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES	RESULTS
	<p>other government officials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One conference held, along with experience sharing workshops on specific issues</li> <li>- Delivery of micro-insurance scaled-up</li> <li>- Challenge Fund operational; awards made to a minimum of 30% of its value</li> <li>- Third annual M&amp;E report, and local ones where operational, prepared and published</li> </ul> <p>Parliament and civil society are engaged with the Social Protection strategy and its implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct national level campaign on Social Protection programmes</li> </ul>	
<b>OUTPUT 2</b>	<b>TARGETS YEAR 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Select/design inclusive banking platform(s) to employ in G2P electronic cash transfers</li> </ul>	
<p>Modern social protection infrastructure developed and capable of supporting a nationally integrated delivery system for reliable, transparent and developmental GoB social transfers, while promoting linkages to ensure effective coordination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plan drafted for inclusive banking platform to employ in G2P electronic cash transfers</li> <li>- Inclusive banking platform(s) for G2P electronic cash transfers designed/selected</li> <li>- Design of an m-banking solution</li> <li>- Arrangements with banking institutions (including m-banking &amp; post offices) concluded (for pilot in two districts)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Procure and provide hard &amp; soft inputs including central IT works and local equipment</li> <li>- Concluding arrangements with banking institutions (including m-banking &amp; post offices) to facilitate the operation of the payments system</li> <li>- Selection and training of local payment</li> </ul>	<p>The project has laid a solid foundation to develop a modern infra-structure for social protection as targeted by the NSSS by 2030.</p> <p>The Single Refistry MIS IT Sustum is not feasible at the moment as the IT Systems across the board are not uniform.</p> <p>Before the IT System can be rolled out for adoption a standardized IT architecture system has to be designed and commissioned from the Thana level to the MIS, M&amp;E and the</p>

INTENDED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT TARGETS FOR YEARS	INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES	RESULTS
<p><i>Baseline:</i> No tailored infrastructure in place, rudimentary data recording systems</p> <p><i>Indicators:</i></p> <p>2.1 Developed IT payment platforms for progressive roll-out and adoption of the selected IT approach and delivery plan</p> <p>2.2 Specification of an m-banking solution</p> <p>2.3 User interfaces (smartcards and/or mobile phones) and their roll-out secured, within pilot areas and then rolled out</p> <p>2.4 # of people trained in usage and maintenance of the IT payment system</p> <p>2.5 # of arrangements with payment agent institutions to facilitate the operation of the payments system</p> <p>2.6 # of local payment agents selected</p> <p>2.7 Cost-effective delivery systems measured by unit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local payment agents selected and trained on usage and maintenance of the system (for pilot in two districts)</li> <li>- Awareness raising of clients on payment platforms and financial inclusion in two pilot districts</li> <li>- Procurement of hard and software for payment platforms and M&amp;E interface</li> <li>- M&amp;E/MIS plan prepared and published</li> <li>- M&amp;E/MIS system designed</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>TARGETS YEAR 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Platforms of G2P electronic benefit transfers rolled out in two districts for piloting under Component 3</li> <li>- Implementation of m-banking solution with user interface in two pilot districts</li> <li>- Union Parishads trained on payment platforms in two pilot districts</li> <li>- Union Parishads trained on M&amp;E interface with payment platforms in two pilot districts</li> <li>- BBS supported to develop downstream planning and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>agents including via the A2I Project</li> <li>- Commence pilot platforms of G2P electronic benefit transfers in two districts</li> <li>- Undertake training and awareness building within Union Parishads</li> <li>- Undertake awareness raising of clients on payment platforms and financial inclusion</li> <li>- Gather evidence from pilot platforms through surveys of beneficiaries, MIS data and other tools</li> <li>- Conceptualization and specification of an m-banking solution based on agency banking arrangements</li> <li>- Secure user interfaces such as smartcards and/or mobile phones and their roll-out, initially within pilot areas</li> <li>- Continuously monitor and evaluate pilot payment platforms</li> <li>- Undertake cost-effectiveness appraisal of piloted payment platforms to inform scaling up across core social protection programmes nationally</li> </ul>	<p>SR MIS bodies along with plugging-incapability with HIES database. A massive investment in infra-structure and related training is required along with system maintenance support.</p> <p>M-Banking has been found to be feasible on the basis of the G2P experience at the SWAPNO Project. The success suggests that the G2P system may be replicated in wider scale, The system is as reliable as physically handing over physical cash and greatly eliminates the possibilities of system leakages.</p> <p>Once replicated and installed the G2P system can use the help of M-Banking through bKash, Rocket and rural agent banking of any scheduled bank. Post Office can remain an option although it is no longer a preferred option by the beneficiaries.</p> <p>Massive M&amp;E trainings would be needed when the total M&amp;E system with</p>

INTENDED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT TARGETS FOR YEARS	INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES	RESULTS
<p>costs of key delivery elements</p> <p>2.8 MIS and M&amp;E system in place</p> <p>2.9 # of people trained on M&amp;E interface with payment platforms</p> <p>2.10 # of downstream applications of BBS's new social protection MIS for policy and programme planning purposes</p> <p>2.11 # of civil society partnerships with linked delivery systems for monitoring rights protection</p> <p>2.12 Quality of service delivery including adherence to service standards, timeliness, reliability, and low private costs for participants</p>	<p>programme coordination linkages and exploiting the database platform for delivery of allied sectoral services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Civil society supported to implement grievance systems and other rights-protection mechanisms</li> </ul> <p><b>TARGETS YEAR 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pilot platforms of G2P electronic benefit transfers expanded to core social protection programmes in two districts</li> <li>- Interface with M&amp;E platforms expanded in parallel</li> <li>- Expansion of electronic payment platforms initiated in tandem with scaling up of the SWAPNO project</li> <li>- Lessons learnt report on pilot platforms, including cost-effectiveness appraisal, compiled and disseminated to all relevant stakeholders</li> <li>- Continued support of BBS for downstream applications of social protection MIS</li> <li>- Civil society supported to implement grievance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Full M&amp;E/MIS systems specification and planning</li> <li>- Sourcing of supporting software (links to M&amp;E, QA systems)</li> <li>- Building of M&amp;E, payment and management systems to deliver data for wider M&amp;E of IT systems</li> <li>- Provision of appropriate training at all levels to enable usage and maintenance of the system</li> <li>- Promote linkages among payments, management information and monitoring systems both at pilot level and with existing civil society interventions</li> <li>- Exploit the database platform and IT support to deliver allied sectoral services – notably in health</li> <li>- Support BBS to develop downstream planning and programme coordination linkages</li> </ul> <p>Support civil society to implement grievance systems and other rights-protection mechanisms, particularly linked to</p>	<p>standardised IT interfaces are installed at all levels.</p>

INTENDED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT TARGETS FOR YEARS	INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES	RESULTS
	systems and other rights-protection mechanisms	BBS's management information system	
	<b>TARGETS YEAR 4</b>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- G2P electronic payment platforms rolled out and mainstreamed nationally</li> <li>- Assessment of downstream applications of social protection MIS to inform policy brief (under Component 1)</li> <li>- Civil society supported to implement grievance systems and other rights-protection mechanisms</li> </ul>		



**Cabinet Division and  
General Economics Division (GED) of  
Bangladesh Planning Commission  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**

