

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme

Cabinet Division

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Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the Project Implementation Committee (PIC) of the Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme

Chair	Md. Mahmudul Hossain Khan, Secretary, Coordination and Reforms, Cabinet Division
Co-chair	Dr. Md. Kawser Ahmed, Member (Secretary), General Economics Division (GED), Planning Commission
Date & Time	08 October 2023, 11.30 p.m. on both physical and virtual platforms.
Attendance	Annexure-A

Meeting agenda

- i) Compliance with the decisions of the last PIC meeting;
- ii) Brief background of the SSPS Programme, its key deliverables, and key implementation progress July 2021- June 2023; and
- iii) Key deliverables of the SSPS Programme up to 2026 and detailed activity implementation plan of the 2nd revision of TPP.

1) The third meeting of the Project Implementation Committee (PIC)-the Executive Project Board of the Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme was held on 08 October 2023. Mr. Md. Mahmudul Hossain Khan, Secretary, Coordination and Reforms of the Cabinet Division chaired the meeting, while Dr. Md. Kawser Ahmed, Member (Secretary) of the General Economics Division of Planning Commission was the co-chair who concluded the meeting providing strategic guidance on activities and timely implementation of the project. The PIC meeting was held in a hybrid modality using both physical and virtual platforms. The members of agencies who attended the meeting are shown in Annex – A.

2) At the outset of the meeting, the chair welcomed the members of the PIC with a round of short self-introduction. In his opening statement, the chair reminded that the Cabinet of the Government of Bangladesh had approved Bangladesh's National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) in 2015 as a part of the vision of national development. Therefore, the Bangladesh Government considers reform issues, as enunciated in the NSSS, as priorities for institutional strengthening of the social protection system in Bangladesh. In response to a query from the chair, it was informed that reform procedures are time-consuming and require adequate orientations, consultations, intersectoral consensus, and meetings for making policy decisions. The SSPS Programme is a policy reform programme unlike a common project, and its PIC is the 'Project Board' jointly chaired by two Secretaries (high-level policy persons) of two different divisions for taking functional decisions relating to reforms. On the other hand, the Project Steering Committee (PSC) headed by the Cabinet Secretary takes strategic decisions. The meeting was also informed that DFAT – Australian Government and UNDP Bangladesh have recently signed an agreement for further assistance to the SSPS Programme up to 2026. In reply to another query, the meeting was informed that the SSPS Programme current ProDoc is valid up to 2025. The chair thanked the DFAT of the Australian Government and the UNDP for their extended support in taking forward the reform programme.

3) Mr. Mohammad Khaled Hasan, Joint Secretary of CRVS and Social Protection Branch of Cabinet Division proceeded with the meeting agenda, having a request from the Chair. Mr. Hasan placed the meeting agenda and invited Ms. Murshida Sharmin, Joint Secretary, Social Protection Branch, Cabinet Division, and National Project Director (NPD) of the SSPS Programme, to follow the first agenda.

4) Ms. Sharmin presented a succinct note on the compliance issues against the decisions taken in the last PIC. She updated the meeting that the draft RTAPP of the SSPS Programme up to 2026 is ready for submission. The social protection key reform-related dialogues with 39 ministries and key ministries,

development partners, and NGOs provided evidence built the case of NSSS Action Plan Phase – II, institutional linkage to work on shock-responsive adaptive social protection, NSSS M&E and yearly implementation progress, single registry MIS, GRS, and concept on mid-term evaluation of the NSSS.

5) Mr. Hasan provides the highlights of the key achievements of the SSPS Programme from 2021 up to June 2023. The SSPS Programme has been instrumental in developing the NSSS of Bangladesh since 2014 and playing a pivotal role in social protection reform in Bangladesh, and its accomplishments were: the NSSS Action Plan 2021-26 Phase – II dialogues with 39 ministries, thematic clusters, consultative groups, and partners, orientations of key government officials, diagnostics on gender-responsive communication, urban, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups, NGOs, study on shock-responsive adaptive social protection, social pilot concept notes on Universalism of Old Age and Persons with Disabilities Allowances linked to SDG localization, COVID-19 shocks in relation to social protection, shock-responsive migration, and urban social protection, study on social insurance built the case of Private Pension and developing the National Social Insurance Scheme (NSIS) Act, diagnostic studies on social protection strategy; feasibility and design a platform for the NSSS M&E reform and programme dashboard, design a single registry MIS platform with a road map of implementation.

6) Briefing on the third agenda, Mr. Hasan pointed out that the forthcoming key features of the SSPS Programme for 2023-2026: the M&E Dashboard analytics on gender-inclusive social protection reform and programme; support to different social protection governance committees in decision-making; Single Registry MIS and linked to SDG trackers at the BBS and pilot upazila; shock-responsive regional and national social protection framework; NSSS action plan mid-term review and final evaluation, and extended research using the BBS survey and census data for background support constituting the social protection, women and gender and marginalized chapters of the nine five year plan, and developing the next NSSS 2026+ for Bangladesh; regular dialogues and webinars on NSIS, and social and economic inclusivity addressing poverty reduction, inequality, employment, gender with emphasis to the persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and marginalized groups focusing the theme of Leave No One Behind; and ultimately shape and scoping of social protection future strategy and programming considering the AI, 4IR and computer things in upcoming decades build the case of NSSS 2026+. Mr. Hasan concluded his presentation by presenting the heads up about the implementation plan up to 2026 with an estimated cost of 9875.92 lakh Bangladesh Taka and referred to a letter from the UNDP Resident Representative to the Secretary, Economic Relations Division (ERD) on the contract signed with DFAT.

7) Discussions

The meeting highly appraised Ms. Sharmin and Mr. Hasan's deliberations and recognized the importance of the SSPS Programme and its role in social protection reform. Referring to the UNDP letter and the importance of the SSPS Programme in strengthening governance and social protection system, Ms. Azizun Nahar, Deputy Secretary, ERD, emphasized the immediate start of the process of RTAPP approval for the period 2023-26, and cost and time extension of approved ProDoc from December 2025 to June 2026. Agreed with the statement, Ms. Afroza Aktar Chowdhury, Deputy Chief, Socioeconomic Infrastructure Division (SEID) of the Planning Commission, mentioned that SEID is aware of this project and will initiate the approval process without delay once the revised document is available to their office. In reply to a query, the meeting was informed that the Cabinet Division Project Coordination Meeting headed by the Cabinet Secretary decided on the SSPS Programme revision for the 2023-2026 period in May 2023.

8) Regarding the progress of social protection reform on single registry MIS, the Chair of the meeting mentioned that the NSSS has recommended establishing such a registry for instituting a comprehensive social protection delivery system in Bangladesh. He specified that the registry would contain different databases and MISs, which will build the case for efficient management of the social protection beneficiaries, avoid duplications, reduce access to multiple payments from different sources, and remove the ghost beneficiaries. In reply to a query, the meeting was informed that the Finance Division has developed a platform that connects the MISs of beneficiaries of different ministries, and accordingly, the Finance Division transfers cash/allowances using iBASS++ platform, which is now recognized as a single registry MIS, and connecting with National Household Database (NHD) yet to establish. A high-level consultation dialogue headed by the then Cabinet Secretary agreed on a road map provided by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Division. A team composition of the

Cabinet Division, Finance Division, Statistics and Informatics Division (SID), and General Economics Division (GED) has been working on this reform initiative.

9) Mr. Asif Kashem, Senior Programme Manager, Gender focal point and Social Protection Lead, DFAT, Australian High Commission Bangladesh, mentioned that the activities incorporated in the revised version of the SSPS Programme are very much consistent with NSSS and in line with the last mid-term review of NSSS, and relevant to inclusive social protection, supplement to the government's vision, and forthcoming NSSS after 2026.

10) The Co-chair of the PIC, Dr. Kawser Ahmed, took the floor and provided valuable guidance for better implementation and visibility of the reform efforts made by the SSPS Programme. He categorically mentioned that the present government has effortlessly been working on establishing a poverty and hunger-free society, where social protection is one of the significant adherences. He commented that the SSPS Programme's efforts to bring social protection programme under a plan is not only a piece of evidence for better coordination, but also support for strengthening social protection programmes implemented by ministries. The Co-chaired praised the contribution of the SSPS Programme in five-year plans and SDG localization and emphasized the future scope of work of the SSPS Programme in the area of climate-induced shock-responsive adaptive social protection, NSIS, national employment and wage policy, and pilot study linked to SDG localization. He also emphasized the issue and reform-focused regular dialogues, conferences, webinars, and knowledge-sharing programmes, which will give the SSPS programme a new shape and a think tank in social protection.

11) Decisions:

After the deliberate discussions, the meeting took the following decisions:

- a) The SSPS Programme will expedite the reform initiatives as outlined in the RTAPP and maintain close coordination with the key ministries in implementing the key reform activities. The concerned section of the Cabinet Division will process the submission of the signed RTAPP at soonest. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting may be called immediately to inform the social protection reform results and consent of submission of RTAPP for the 2023-26 period.
- b) The PIC highly appreciates the Australian Government's and UNDP's technical support for Bangladesh's social protection reform initiative.
- c) The SSPS Programme will regularly organize meetings, workshops, dialogues, communication activities for social protection reform visibilities and consultations to track the progress of the NSSS action plan and to share the experience of NSSS implementation within ministries and divisions.

12. There being no further agenda items for discussion, the chair concluded the meeting with a vote of thanks to all the participants.



Dr. Md. Kawser Ahmed
Member (Secretary)
General Economics Division (GED)
Planning Commission



Md. Mahmudul Hossain Khan
Secretary
Coordination and Reforms
Cabinet Division

Dr. Md. Kawser Ahmed
Member
General Economics Division
Planning Commission
Govt. of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Annex – A

List of the participants (not according to the seniority)

Sl. No.	Name of the Participants	Post Title and Ministry/Organization
1.	Dr. Md. Mosharraf Hossain	Additional Secretary Coordination and Reforms, Cabinet Division
2.	Zahir Raihan	Director General Implementation Monitoring Evaluation Division (IMED)
3.	Forhad Siddique	Joint Secretary General Economics Division (GED)
4.	Mohammad Khaled Hasan	Joint Secretary Civil Registration and Social Protection, Cabinet Division
5.	Murshida Sharmin	Project Director, SSPS Programme Joint Secretary, Social Protection Branch Cabinet Division
6.	Azizun Nahar	Deputy Secretary Economic Relations Division
7.	Tawhid Elahi	Deputy Secretary, Finance Division
8.	Md Shakir Ahmed Choudhury	Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare
9.	Afroz Akter Choudhury	Deputy Secretary, Social Economic Infrastructure Division, Planning Commission
10.	Md Saklin Miah	Senior Maintenance Engineer, Cabinet Division
11.	Khatuna Jannat	Maintenance Engineer, Cabinet Division
12.	Asif Kashem	Senior Program Manager (Gender Focal and Social Protection Lead) Australian High Commission, Bangladesh
13.	Aminul Arifeen	National Project Manager SSPS Programme, UNDP Bangladesh