

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Cabinet Division
Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme
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Minutes of the 6th meeting of the Project Implementation Committee (PIC) of Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme

Chair : Zaheda Parveen
Secretary, Coordination and Reforms, Cabinet Division

Co-Chair : Dr. Monzur Hossain
Member (Secretary), General Economics Division (GED),
Bangladesh Planning Commission

Date & Time : 13 November 2025, 3.30 PM

Venue : Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka-1000

Participants : Annexure-A

Agenda of the Meeting

- 1) Progress review of the decisions of the Project Implementation Committee (PIC) meeting held in June 2024
 - a) Prepare a detailed plan for the pilot testing of the social protection model aimed at accelerating the rate of poverty reduction.
 - b) Workshop with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) to elaborate on the pilot study.
 - c) Facilitate a consultative dialogue aimed at consolidating social protection programs in order to foster consensus and strengthen the capacity of relevant officials to adhere to the provisions of the National Social Security Strategy regarding program consolidation.
 - d) A discussion will be held regarding the continued inclusion of government pensions and allowances for freedom fighters within the social protection budget. This matter will also be addressed in the Central Management Committee (CMC), if deemed necessary.
 - e) Consultative dialogue on the National Social Insurance Scheme (NSIS) to strengthen the contributory social protection programme.
- 2) Miscellaneous.

Zaheda Parveen, the Chair and Secretary of Coordination and Reforms at the Cabinet Division, extended a warm welcome to all attendees, including those participating in person as well as those joining remotely. She underscored the necessity of reviewing ongoing initiatives and establishing priorities for the future, particularly in light of the impending conclusion of the current tenure of the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) in 2026. Following her remarks, she invited the Co-Chair to provide his comments.

2. Dr. Monzur Hossain, Co-Chair and Member (Secretary) of the General Economics Division (GED) at the Bangladesh Planning Commission, expressed his appreciation to the Chair and participants. He emphasized the extensive scope of the SSPS activities, particularly regarding its support for research, dissemination of findings, and facilitation of policy dialogue. Dr. Hossain emphasized the necessity of initiating preparations for the upcoming National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) that extends beyond 2026. Furthermore, he underscored the importance of strengthening collaboration between the Cabinet

Division and GED, while also advocating for the identification of new engagement areas. He stressed the need for the Project Implementation Committee (PIC) to convene regularly to ensure effective progress.

3. At the request of the Chair, Ms. Murshida Sharmin, Project Director of the Social Safety Nets Programme (SSPS), presented an update to the meeting regarding the progress made on decisions established during the previous Project Implementation Committee (PIC) session. She provided a detailed account of the advancements related to each specific decision as follows:

a) Decision: The PIC has granted, in principle, approval for the proposed pilot testing of a social protection model designed to expedite poverty reduction efforts. Nevertheless, the committee recommended the preparation of a comprehensive plan for the pilot testing phase.

Progress: The General Economics Division (GED) undertook a baseline study aimed at the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This study identified five upazilas—Ulipur in Kurigram, Belkuchi in Sirajganj, Dumuria in Khulna, Doulatkhan in Bhola, and Bishwambarpur in Sunamganj districts—as potential candidates for the piloting of SDG localization. Subsequently, a representative from the GED of the Bangladesh Planning Commission opted to implement the pilot SDG localization in Ulipur of Kurigram and Dumuria of Khulna, considering the impacts of flood and climate-related shocks. The SSPS Programme comprehensively addresses the following SDGs: SDG 1: No Poverty; SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being; SDG 5: Gender Equality; SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth; SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities; and SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

The proposed pilot test study design, as presented by Ms. Murshid at the most recent PIC meeting, aims to advance the objectives of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16. Progress on the pre-pilot assessment is currently underway in the Dumuria and Ulipur upazilas of Kurigram and Khulna districts, respectively.

b) Decision: A workshop will be convened with representatives from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) to provide further elucidation on the aforementioned pilot study.

Progress: It is essential to collect data through the Sample Vital Statistics (SVRS), which is routinely gathered by the BBS. The necessity for SVRS participation in this pilot initiative was discussed during a coordination meeting chaired by the Secretary of the Statistics and Informatics Division (SID), which included representatives from the General Economic Division (GED) and the Cabinet Division. The meeting noted that the SVRS program is currently transitioning from a development budget to a revenue budget system, encountering challenges in incorporating a significant number of enumerators into the permanent government framework.

c) Decision: A consultative dialogue will be organized to consolidate social protection programs, with the aim of fostering consensus and enhancing the capacity of relevant officials to align with the provisions outlined in the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS).

Progress: Under the SSPS Program, the Cabinet Division, in partnership with the UNICEF-assisted project “Support to CMC,” has facilitated district-level orientations and consultative dialogues. It was determined that there exists a deficit of skilled personnel at the upazila level to adequately support the vulnerable population. Furthermore, the adequacy of the Mother and Child Benefit Allowance was questioned, and delays were reported regarding cash transfers through mobile financial systems.

Under the SSPS Program, the Cabinet Division, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Bangladesh, is actively developing a roadmap for the National Social Insurance

Schemes (NSIS). This initiative aims to engage stakeholders and build capacity for the effective institutionalization of the NSIS in Bangladesh.

During the National Conference on Social Protection 2025, attended by policymakers, program planners, academics, social protection practitioners, and key officials from 40 ministries and divisions, an inaugural presentation provided an overview of the social protection program in Bangladesh.

d) Decision: The ongoing discourse regarding the inclusion of government pensions and allowances for freedom fighters in the social protection budget may not be addressed within the framework of the PIC discussion; instead, this matter may be deliberated in the Central Management Committee (CMC).

Progress: The topics of pensions and freedom fighters' allowances have been examined in various policy-level discussions across different platforms. It is noteworthy that government pensions have historically formed part of the social safety net program, while the freedom fighters' allowance was originally initiated as the "Poor and Vulnerable Freedom Fighters Allowance." The Finance Division conducted a comprehensive review of social protection programs prior to the budget presentation, resulting in a consolidation from 140 to 95 social safety net initiatives.

e) Decision: Within the context of the SSPS project, initiatives will be undertaken to organize the Bangladesh Social Security Conference, and a program leaflet/flyer will be prepared by August 2024.

Progress: The National Conference on Social Protection 2025, which was held with the theme "A Journey Towards an Equitable Society," in September 2025.

f) Decision: The SSPS Programme will facilitate a consultative dialogue focused on the National Social Insurance Scheme (NSIS) with the aim of strengthening the contributory social protection programme.

Progress: A collaborative partnership has been established between the SSPS Programme and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Bangladesh, during which several discussions regarding the implementation roadmap for the NSIS have taken place. Furthermore, plans are underway to provide assistance to the newly formed social protection unit within the Ministry of Labour and Employment to institutionalize the NSIS within the governmental framework. National dialogues and policy discussions are also being organized under the auspices of the SSPS Programme.

Discussion:

4. Dr. Monzur Hossain, Member (Secretary) of the GED at the Bangladesh Planning Commission, informed the attendees that, based on a baseline study, Ulipur in Kurigram and Dumuria in Khulna districts had been selected for the SDG Village pilot project. He mentioned that GED has launched a project to pilot the SDG Village and requested further coordination support from the Cabinet Division. Dr. Hossain inquired about the relationship between the SSPS Programme and the localization of the SDGs. He expressed concern that the pace of consolidation was slower than anticipated and emphasized the need for a background study to explore options for accelerating reforms. In response to inquiries about the timeline for the next generation NSSS, he stressed the importance of developing a five-year social protection strategy aligned with the national five-year plan. He noted that the rising vulnerability among the population indicates a need to transition toward a more universal and climate-responsive social protection system. A comprehensive background study would be essential before drafting the next social protection strategy to ensure that the strategy is built on current evidence, trends in climate vulnerability, and international best practices. Regarding the consolidation of social protection programs, Dr. Hossain stated that a proper assessment is necessary for effective program integration.

5. Mr. Aminul Arifeen, Project Manager of the SSPS Programme, clarified the integration of the social protection pilot with the SDGs for several reasons: 1) to achieve comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the SDG and social protection indicators, which would be reflected in SDG and M&E web-based dashboards; 2) to address national priorities, such as poverty and inequality reduction; 3) to ensure that a cost-effective pilot requires regularly available data to measure progress, with the Sample Vital Statistics System (SVRS) of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) applying poverty, gender, and social protection modules from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) being the most cost-effective data generation and performance measurement strategy; 4) to develop comprehensive need-based interventions to achieve targets and identify inclusion and exclusion errors; and 5) to identify and activate both formal and informal committees to establish accountability and good governance at the local level. Mr. Arifeen further explained that SVRS data would be crucial for the pilot, although data collection had been temporarily disrupted due to the program's shift from the development budget to the revenue budget.

6. Mr. Abul Basher Md. Amir Uddin, Joint Secretary of the Finance Division, elaborated on the methodology and administrative considerations behind the consolidation, explaining how overlapping benefits were merged, certain small schemes were eliminated, and coordination across ministries and divisions was strengthened, resulting in a reduction from 140 to 95 schemes.

7. Mr. Khaled Hasan, Additional Secretary (Coordination) of the Cabinet Division, clarified that the Cabinet Division had already issued a circular with instructions for program consolidation. He noted that consolidation follows a specific pattern that requires thematic cluster coordination. However, he pointed out that the role of Thematic Clusters in program consolidation was not adequately represented in cluster meetings for various reasons. Some programs are uncertain regarding their classification under social protection criteria, and those programs need to be excluded from the social protection budget. Excluding these programs will not affect the allocation of the social protection budget. Regarding the future development of the NSSS, Mr. Hasan mentioned that initial discussions had considered a ten-year horizon for the next phase of the social protection strategy. The next generation of the NSSS may incorporate modified thematic clusters to improve social protection coordination and governance. He informed that the National Conference on Social Protection 2025 had addressed this topic, and that the review of the NSSS and its Action Plan was progressing, which could provide valuable suggestions and insights for developing the next generation of the NSSS for 2026 and beyond. He also highlighted that the next-generation social protection strategy may place greater emphasis on climate-related, shock-responsive social protection.

8. Mr. Asif Kashem, Senior Programme Manager, Development Cooperation, Governance and Social Protection Lead, and Gender Focal Point at the Australian High Commission in Bangladesh, emphasized the importance of reflecting on the findings of the National Conference on Social Protection 2025. He noted that all critical points discussed in the meeting should be considered as significant issues in the upcoming reflection workshop. He highlighted that, from the perspective of development partners, several critical issues need to be addressed in the future development of the new strategy, such as focusing on fiscal sustainability and the innovative use of technology linked to Artificial Intelligence (AI), development partners' collective alignment of programmes, and a strategy based on detailed discussions on the progress linked to the expected outcomes and outputs.

9. Mr. Tanvir Mahmud, Senior Governance Specialist at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), extended his gratitude to the Cabinet Division officials. He indicated that the current phase of the Social Safety Net Programme (SSPS) is anticipated to conclude by mid-next year, with a final evaluation actively progressing. This evaluation will focus on assessing the impact of the programme, as

noted by the Senior Programme Manager from the Australian High Commission, and will explore strategies for leveraging the findings in subsequent phases of social protection programming.

Mr. Mahmud recommended incorporating successful initiatives—such as those aimed at supporting female-headed households, vulnerable women, alleviating poverty among the urban poor, and enhancing middle-class social protection—into policy discussions facilitated by the SSPS Programme. This integration is essential for establishing the next-generation social protection strategy. He emphasized that reflecting on lessons learned and aligning them with national policy will equip policymakers to make evidence-based decisions. On behalf of the UNDP, he expressed appreciation to the Cabinet Division and its team for their efforts in fostering coordination among various ministries and divisions engaged in social protection.

He underscored the importance of considering the upcoming phase of social protection, with a focus on models that address the needs of the urban poor, the "missing middle," and migrant populations disproportionately affected by climate vulnerabilities. It is imperative to integrate all these demographic groups into social protection programming. Mr. Mahmud highlighted the significance of the ongoing final evaluation of the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS), particularly in relation to outcome harvesting. He called for the assimilation of lessons from programmes such as the SWAPNO Project and urban poverty pilots. Furthermore, he identified persistent challenges regarding data interoperability and stressed the necessity of addressing these issues to enhance both targeting and monitoring. Development partners collectively reaffirmed their commitment to advancing social protection reforms in Bangladesh.

10. Representative from the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) requested that the detailed Gantt chart and activity completion status for the period 2023–2026 be reviewed in the next Programme Implementation Committee (PIC) meeting to ensure clarity regarding remaining deliverables. Mr. Amir Uddin, Joint Secretary of the Finance Division, emphasized the need for transparent consultations with ministries and divisions during future budget preparations, particularly concerning the consolidation and prioritization of social protection expenditures.

11. Md. Siddiqur Rahman, Joint Chief of the General Economic Division (GED), expressed gratitude to the Cabinet Division for its leadership in flagship initiatives such as the SSPS Programme. He highlighted the ongoing engagement of the GED in strategic planning, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) monitoring, macroeconomic analysis, and population dynamics, expressing the division's readiness to collaborate more closely with the Cabinet Division in the future.

12. In this context, Dr. Monzur Hossain, Member (Secretary) of the GED, emphasized the importance of the GED's deeper involvement in future study-related initiatives under the SSPS Programme to ensure quality and coherence with national planning frameworks. He commended the recent collaboration between the SSPS Programme and the GED and expressed confidence that this partnership would further strengthen in the future.

13. The Chair thanked participants for their attendance, both in person and virtually. She acknowledged the necessity of convening more regular PIC meetings and underscored that the technical preparations for future strategy development must proceed in conjunction with the national political transition. She expressed appreciation for the collective contributions from the ministries, divisions, GED, and development partners before adjourning the meeting.

14. Key Decisions/Recommendations:

a) The Project Director of the SSPS program will initiate the organization of a reflection workshop engaging stakeholders. This workshop aims to review the progress made, consolidate lessons learned from the current phase, and commence preparatory discussions for the forthcoming strategy cycle.

b) Decisions and recommendations arising from the National Conference on Social Protection 2025 will be advanced through a structured "Call for Action." This initiative will be developed by the Cabinet Division and the General Economic Division (GED) in consultation with relevant ministries, divisions, and development partners.

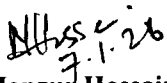
c) Regular meetings of the Project Implementation Committee (PIC) shall be convened in accordance with the committee's Terms of Reference (ToR).

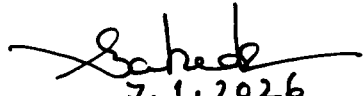
d) Should it be deemed necessary, the topic of allowances for freedom fighters may be addressed within the Central Management Committee (CMC).

e) Furthermore, a consultation workshop will be organized with Social Protection focal point officers from line ministries to assess the status of program consolidation.

As there are no additional agenda items, the meeting was concluded with a formal expression of gratitude.

15. There being no other agenda, the meeting was concluded with a vote of thanks.


Dr. Monzur Hossain
Member (Secretary)
General Economics Division (GED)
Bangladesh Planning Commission


Zaheda Parveen
Secretary
Coordination and Reforms
Cabinet Division

Annexure – A: Participants of the Meeting

Name	Designation	Ministry/Division
Zaheda Parveen	Secretary, Cordination & Reforms	Cabinet Division
Dr. Monzur Hossain	Member (Secretary)	General Economics Division (GED)
Mohammad Khaled Hasan	Additional Secretary, Coordination	Cabinet Division
Murshida Sharmin	Joint Secretary	Cabinet Division
Abul Basher Md. Amir Uddin	Joint Secretary	Finance Division
Md. Siddiqur Rahman	Joint Chief	General Economics Division (GED)
-	-	Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED)
Asif Kashem	Senior Program Manager	DFAT
Tanvir Mahmud	Sr. Governance Specialist, Democratic Governance	UNDP Bangladesh
Aminul Arifeen	Project Manager	SSPS Programme