

SOCIAL PROTECTION: LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

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1. Introduction

- Bangladesh achieved its independence through the supreme sacrifices of 3 million people with the vision of creating an equitable society free from exploitation, poverty, hunger and deprivation.
- The constitution of Bangladesh was based on the creed of equitable society free from exploitation. It is in that spirit mentioned social security as a provision of basic necessities in Article 15 and defined 'social security' as public assistance in cases of undeserved want arising from unemployment, illness or disablement, or suffered by widows or orphans or in old age, or in other such cases.
- The country has been a leader in the arena of social protection establishing an umbrella of safety net interventions that have eradicated food shortage and institutionalized an effective response to natural disasters and along the way showed commendable success in poverty reduction.
- In partnership with NGOs and Development Partners, the country is internationally recognised as an accomplished innovator in large-scale livelihood promotion programmes which have demonstrably lifted lives of millions out of poverty. Hence, starting as Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) as an innovation to response food shortage, the focus of social protection now shifts from relief to development.

2. Government's Commitment for Social Protection and Preparing a Comprehensive Strategy

- Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs), has been an integral part of the anti-poverty strategy of the present government. The strong commitment is materialized in the budgetary allocation in this regard. In 2008-09, the SSNP allocation was Tk. 13,845 crore which was 1.96 percent of GDP. During the current fiscal year the allocation increased to Tk. 37,546 crore denoting 2.19 percent of GDP.
- There has been a rapid decline in the rate of poverty measured in terms of the percent of population falling below the upper poverty line. The poverty incidence fell from 48.9% in 2000 to 24.8% in 2015. Commensurately, the percent of chronic poor (population below the lower poverty line) fell from 34.3 in 2000 to 12.9 in 2015.
- The Government has brought 24.57 percent of households under SSNP benefits. It is estimated that the contribution of SSNPs alone in reducing poverty in 2010 was 1.5 percentage points.
- SSNPs played a prominent role in reducing the inequality scenario from 2005 to 2010. During this period, *income Gini Coefficient* reduced from 0.467 to 0.458; *Poverty Gap* from 9.8 to 7.4 and *Poverty Severity* from 3.1 in to 2.2.

2.1 Background for Preparing a Comprehensive Strategy

- Notwithstanding past progress, out of 158 million population, some 39 million is still living below the upper poverty line and 20 million below the lower poverty line in 2015.
- The current Social Security System in Bangladesh is complex and multifarious with 145 programmes under the Social Security System currently financed through the budget and administered by 23 line Ministries/Divisions.
- The present system is running with a number of challenges:
 - In schemes directed at poor families and individuals, a high proportion of the poorest are excluded, while others who are ineligible are included;
 - Around 33% of recipients of the Old Age Allowance appear to be below the age of eligibility;
 - Procedures for identifying disability need strengthening and consistent application nationwide.
- With weakness in selection process, the system lacks a formal monitoring and evaluation (M&E) arrangement.

2.2 Background for Preparing a Comprehensive Strategy

- The impact on poverty reduction from the amount of money spent in the existing programmes is less than is possible with a better ***social security system***.
- The multiplicity of resultant programmes spread amongst a wide range of implementing agencies require rationalisation, harmonisation and coordination.
- The social protection needs of an industrialised and urbanised middle-income Bangladesh are very different from those of the predominantly rural-agricultural one.
- In coming decades, the shocks will be as much macroeconomic as natural; the problems faced will be less about famine and more about inclusive growth; and the key issues will be social cohesion and equity.
- Considering this backdrop, the Government of Bangladesh has recently approved the ***National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh 2015*** which will consolidate the on-going programmes emphasising a Life Cycle Approach and incorporate social insurance schemes as well as private voluntary pensions.

3. National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh

- The Government's Social Security policy has to be seen as a core element of the other policies and programmes that together comprise the broader Social Development Framework (SDF). The main objective of the SDF is to have a comprehensive and consistent set of policies that can help Bangladesh achieve better equity and social justice in the context of its development effort.

Long term vision of the NSSS

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.

Goal of the NSSS for next five years

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.

National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh (Continued)

- The NSSS benefits will be ***non-discriminatory*** and will be available to all poor and vulnerable people who satisfy the income criteria and other selection criteria relating to life-cycle or disability, **irrespective of religion, ethnicity, profession and location.**
- *Programmes for Children*
 - A child grant for children of poor and vulnerable family up to age 4. The child grant will be limited to a maximum of two children per family.
 - A school stipend for all primary and secondary school going children belonging to the poor and vulnerable households.
 - The children will also have the disability benefit, the school meals programme, the orphans programme and the legal provision to ensure that abandoned children get the financial support from the responsible parent.

National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh (Continued)

■ *Programmes for the Working Age*

- Strengthening education and training programmes to motivate the adolescents and youth to complete education and to enable the working youth and the older workforce to acquire required skills.
- Implementing a strengthened workfare programme for the unemployed poor.
- Exploring possibilities of providing unemployment, sickness, maternity and accidental insurance as a part of a National Social Insurance Scheme (NSIS).
- Implementing a programme of financial support to vulnerable women (widows, divorced, destitute, single mother, and unemployed single women including adolescent girls) and facilitate their participation in the labour market. The strategy advocates a consolidated income transfer under a reformed Vulnerable Women's Benefit (VWB) programme.
- Expansion of the Maternal Health Voucher Scheme (MHVS) administered by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh (Continued)

■ *Comprehensive Pension System for Elderly*

- The Old Age Allowance for senior citizens who are aged 60 years and above and belong to the poor and vulnerable population.
- Explore possibilities to establish a National Social Insurance Scheme (NSIS) based on the principle of employers and employees jointly paying contribution.
- Private Voluntary Pension (PVP), which are open to all citizens irrespective of occupation or formality of employment.

■ *Programmes for People with Disabilities*

- A disability benefit for children with disabilities
- A disability benefit for working age population with disabilities

- Apart from the life cycle based programmes, the schemes to support the *freedom fighters and their families* will continue under the consolidated Freedom Fighters' Benefit Programme.

National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh (Continued)

- The transfer of food during and after disaster will continue as a disaster management response under the management of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief.
- Open Market Sales (OMS) managed by the Ministry of Food will be expanded as necessary to tackle hunger and food affordability issues as appropriate.
- The Government has already adopted a long-term comprehensive health financing reform strategy, which will be fully implemented along with the NSSS implementation.
- GED will make proposals to Cabinet concerning the scaling up and consolidation of small schemes based on the business cases submitted by the ministries.
- The Government's programmes to address climate change and disaster prevention will be further strengthened as a part of its broader development effort.
- Longer-term programmes such as the planned Delta Development can be of further benefit in this regard.

National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh (Continued)

- 35.7 million poor and vulnerable people will benefit from the various life-cycle based programmes in FY17-18 when the NSSS is fully implemented (all poor covered).
- During the initial years of NSSS implementation, emphasis will be given to extreme poor and the most vulnerable sections of the population.
- The Government will initially introduce five thematic clusters for coordination and cooperation of Ministries/Divisions
 - Social Allowances
 - Food security and Disaster Assistance
 - Social Insurance
 - Labour/livelihood intervention
 - Human development and Social Empowerment
- The Central Monitoring Committee (CMC) on SSNPs under the Cabinet Division will ensure inter-ministerial coordination of social security programmes. In Phase 2 from 2026 onwards a strengthened and reformed Department of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Welfare will be responsible for implementation of all life cycle based social security programmes.

National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh (Continued)

- Implementing Ministries/Divisions will work closely with the Local Government Institutes (LGIs) and NGOs in the delivery programmes.
- The Government will establish a national Single Registry that uses the database from the national identity system and is based on building scheme-specific MISs that communicate with each other and deliver comprehensive information across government. Recently the Statics and Informatics Division (SID) has taken an endeavour to establish a Bangladesh Household Database using the PMT scorecard approach which will be completed by 2017.
- A further key reform that will be introduced is an initiative to transform the Government to Person (G2P) payment systems so that they promote financial inclusivity and prevent leakages.
- The Ministry of Social Welfare in close consultation with SID will develop a nationwide complaints and grievance redress mechanism.
- To move further towards a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System, once the NSSS has been designed and implemented, an ongoing process of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) will be needed.

4. Challenges in Streamlined Social Protection

- Full implementation of the newly adopted NSSS following the life cycle approach integrating with the development planning.
- Preparing a detailed implementation plan delineating each one's responsibility (role of CMC is pivotal).
- Allocating 2.3% of GDP for the Social Security Programmes of the Government.
- Preparation of Bangladesh Household Database within stipulated time.
- Preparation of a complete M&E Framework to assess the NSSS.
- Capacity development of the Government officials involved in the implementation of NSSS.
- Preparation of Programme specific MIS and inter-programme operability.
- Development of a nationwide complaints and grievance redress mechanism.
- Development of a mechanism to monitor the projects/programmes that is not funded by ADP of the government would be necessary.

5. Partnership for Implementing the NSSS

- Over the past decade, some significant investments in Social Security have been made by bilateral development partners.
- DFID continues as a significant funding source for BRAC and the Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP) – with DFAT (Australia) support – while the European Union has funded programmes such as the Food and Livelihood Security Programme (FLSP) and Food and Security for the Ultra-Poor Programme (FSUP).
- UNDP has supported the projects like Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets (REOPA) and Strengthening Women’s Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO).
- The World Bank’s main interests are in strengthening employment opportunities for the poor, improving targeting through the introduction of a national single targeting mechanism that uses the PMT methodology.
- The formulation of the NSSS provides a framework for broader engagement between the Government and development partners in the area of Social Security. The Government welcomes this interest of the development partners to engage on Social Security and will explore possible technical assistance to help the implementation of the NSSS and the implementation of M&E framework for assessing the NSSS.

6. Conclusion

- By adopting the NSSS, Bangladesh has already initiated one of the targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as of 10.4 which spells “Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.”
- ‘Leaving no-one behind’ is the overarching theme of the SDGs that all nations at the UN General Assembly adopted on 25 September 2015. It calls on all nations to ensure basic opportunities for all, with the aim of eradicating extreme poverty in a generation. Leaving no one behind is thus central to the global goals and for that global partnership is imperative.
- The success to achieve this set goal largely depends on well targeted, and well managed social security programmes for helping vulnerable, poor and marginalized populations in the finest sense of ‘leaving no one behind’, amongst anything else.
- Bangladesh is committed to implement and achieve the global set targets and goals, and the NSSS of Bangladesh is adopted which is succinct, well documented, global experience based, and focused on life cycle approach in compliance with the aim to reduce inequality and poverty contributing to ensuring more peaceful and inclusive society.

Thank You