



Enhancing the Participation of Community-based Organizations (CBOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Democratic Governance in Bangladesh



Efficiency of Delivering Social Protection Programmes in North-West Region

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Context

- ❑ Social protection and social safety net programmes (SSNPs) are **key enablers** to attain basically all the SDGs at the country level
 - This is particularly **pertinent in the context of the LNOB** spirit
- ❑ Delivering SSNPs at the **grassroots level** requires involvement of several actors including the **central authorities, local governments and local administrations**
 - At the aggregate level, it is the state's responsibility to deliver the SDGs. On the other hand, the **actions required from local authorities** are also **explicitly mentioned in the SDG** framework
- ❑ Functions carried out by **local-level government** are **critically important** since they provide 'accesses' to available government services and productive resources, make those 'affordable', and deliver those with accountability, so that an 'enabling environment' is created for the poor and marginalised

- ❑ In case of **public service provision** to the most marginalised and disadvantaged population in Bangladesh, in most cases **the gap between their expectation and reality** remains significant
- ❑ Several studies have pointed out a **number of shortcomings** pertaining to SSNPs
 - These include, among others, inadequacy of allocation and coverage, mis-targeting, leakages, coordination failure among the implementing agencies, high administrative costs and inefficiencies, and lack of an impact evaluation framework
- ❑ In this context, the present study focuses on the **efficiency of the delivery of five core life-cycle** based social protection programmes
 - These include: **maternity allowance, primary and secondary school stipend programmes, employment generation programme for the poorest and old age allowance**
- ❑ The study looks into the delivery of these programmes in **four districts** of Bangladesh viz. **Nilphamari, Rangpur, Kurigram and Gaibandha**
 - These districts belong to the Rangpur Division, the **poorest in Bangladesh** in terms of poverty level



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Nexus between SDGs and social protection

Social protection in the SDGs framework

← Directly mentioned →

← Indirectly linked →

1 NO
POVERTY



Target 1.3
Implement nationally appropriate **social protection systems** and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable

5 GENDER
EQUALITY



Target 5.4
Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and **social protection policies** and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

10 REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



Target 10.4
Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and **social protection policies**, and progressively achieve greater equality

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



Target 3.8
Achieve **universal health care coverage**, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all

8 DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH



Target 8.5
By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and **decent work for all** women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value

- Although social protection can be aligned with, either directly or indirectly, five of the 17 SDGs, **their role** in attaining the SDGs **is not limited to the aforementioned five Goals**
- Alignment of social protection with the 2030 agenda points towards considering social protection from **an equity viewpoint**. Social protection can be perceived as a tool which has the potential to simultaneously **address various drivers of exclusion and deprivation** (UNDP, 2016)
 - Social protection programmes can serve as critical tools capable of contributing to the **attainment of all three dimensions of the SDGs** viz. economic, social and environmental (UNDP World Centre for Sustainable Development, 2016)
 - Cabinet Division and GED (2019) elaborated how social protection may **contribute as both driver and enabler** to attain the SDGs
 - Giribabu et al. (2019) has illustrated how the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) programme is directly or indirectly contributing towards the attainment of all 17 SDGs in India



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Role of local actors in SSNP delivery

- ❑ Successful implementation of the SSNPs calls for **concerted efforts from the central government, sub-national and local authorities**
- ❑ In implementing the SSNPs, **local actors** such as Union Parishads (UPs) and Upazila Parishads **play key roles in** terms of beneficiary selection, implementation and monitoring
 - **UPs** generally serve as **the first point of access and information** as regards the SSNPs for people in their respective constituencies
 - In most cases, **Upazila Parishads** perform the role of **middle-men** between the central government and the grassroots
- ❑ Non state actors including NGOs, CSOs and CBOs could **play a complementary role** in all phases of SSNP implementation
- ❑ Of particular relevance, in this context, is the involvement of the **CBOs**, which are **well-positioned to support SSNP implementation** by helping in beneficiary selection, assisting in monitoring activities, and serving as proxies for grievance redress mechanism



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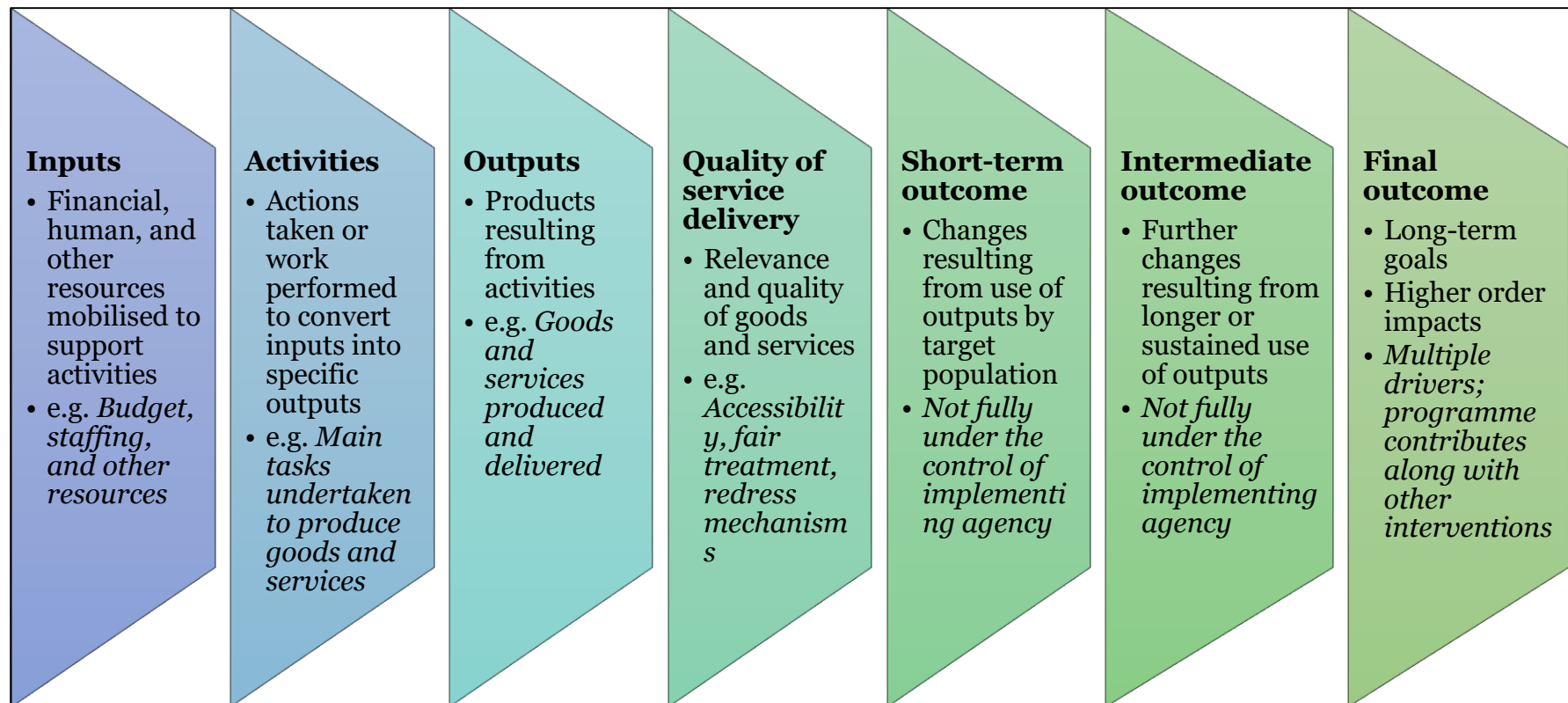


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Methodology

- ❑ The study **focused on** the ‘**activities**’ and ‘**quality of service delivery**’ segments of the results chain concerning the five selected SSNPs
- ❑ The issue of **governance** was incorporated as a **cross-cutting feature** of the aforesaid two broad dimensions

Figure: Expanded results chain by Rubio (2012)



- ❑ A **survey** was conducted **in four districts**, viz. Kurigram, Rangpur, Gaibandha and Nilphamari, of the North-West part of Bangladesh. The survey had **two parts**: qualitative and quantitative
- ❑ The **qualitative** part was carried out through a field study comprised of **24 FGDs and 34 KIIs**
- ❑ The FGDs were divided into **six categories**; one FGD from each category was carried out in each district. FGDs participants included both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the five selected SSNPs
 - People who applied for the safety nets but did not succeed in getting the benefits were considered as non-beneficiaries

Table: Details of the FGDs conducted

Category	1	2	3	4	5	6
SSNP	Maternity allowance	Primary school stipend	Secondary school stipend	EGPP	EGPP	Old age allowance
Gender ratio of participants	All female	All female	Mixed	All female	All male	Mixed
Beneficiary/Non-beneficiary ratio	50/50	100/0	70/30	80/20	80/20	50/50

- **34 KIIs** were conducted in the four selected districts as part of the qualitative survey. The **interviewees** included actors from **local administration** and representation from the **local government, NGOs** and **civil society**
 - Among the 6 local administration interviewees, 5 were UNOs with the remaining one being an Upazila Social Welfare Officer. Among the 18 local government respondents, 7 were UP chairmen, 5 were female UP members and 6 were male UP members. 6 CSO representatives from six upazilas and 4 NGO representatives from each district were also interviewed
- For the quantitative part of the survey, **1500 households** (HHs) with at least one SSNP beneficiary were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire
 - From the aforesaid 1500 HHs, data on **2020 individual beneficiaries** was collected
- Unit level data of Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2016 was also analysed to generate relevant statistics



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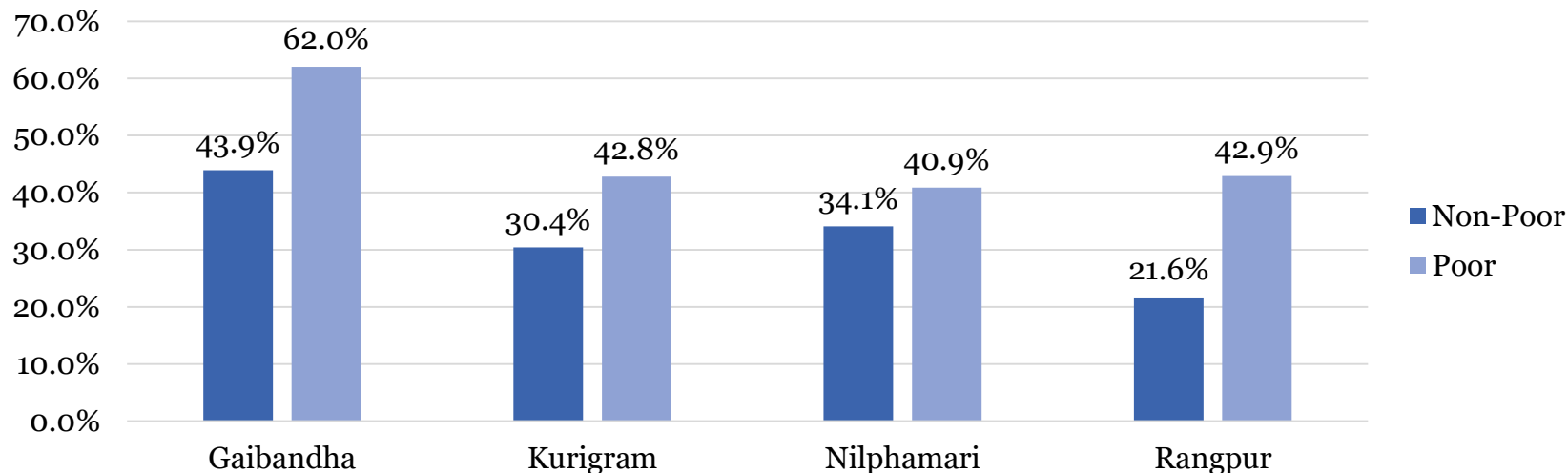
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Findings

Findings from secondary data

- ❑ **Present SSNPs** in Bangladesh are able to **cover only a proportion** of the **total poor population**. As per HIES 2016 data, only 32.5% poor HHs received some form of assistance. On the other hand, about 19.8% among the non-poor HHs were included in such programmes
- ❑ In terms of coverage of poor HHs, the **four poverty prone districts selected** under the present study were **better than national average**
 - However, a significantly **higher share of** the so-called **non-poor HHs** was included

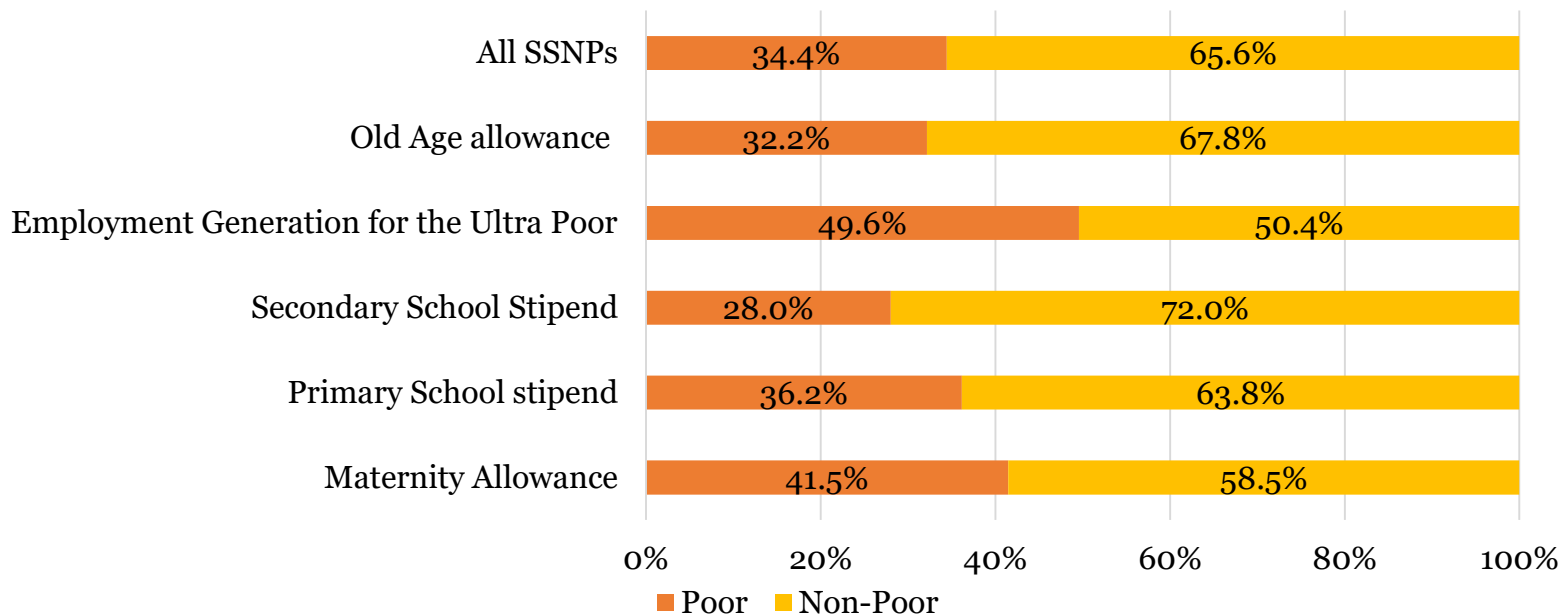
Figure: Percentages of poor and non-poor HHs under all SSNPs in four districts



Source: Estimated from HIES 2016 data

□ **Among all the HHs receiving SSNP assistance, about 65.6% were from the non-poor category. Among the five SSNPs covered under the study, EGPP had the best targeting while the secondary school stipend programme had the worst**

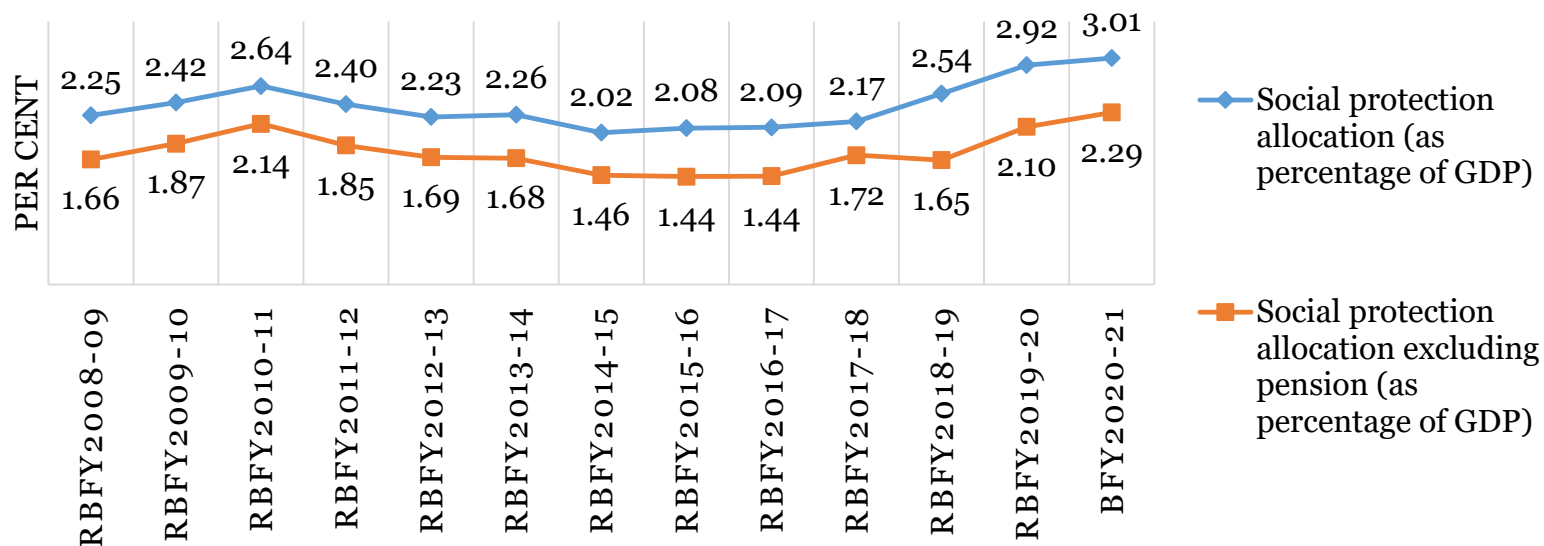
Figure: Percentages of poor and non-poor HHs under SSNPs



Source: Estimated from HIES 2016 data

- ❑ Increase in **allocation for SSNPs failed to match** the pace of overall **rise of budgetary allocation** or the size of the **GDP**
- ❑ Almost **a-third of the total safety net budget is accounted for by pension** for retired government employees and their families. This makes the actual resource envelope even smaller, than it appears

Figure: Social protection allocation and pension allocation (as % of GDP)



Source: Estimated from MoF Data

Findings from field study

□ Current practices involving selection and implementation process

- ***Problems as regards information dissemination is pervasive throughout the programme cycle***
 - In the **absence of proper information dissemination** campaign, potential beneficiaries **depend on middlemen**. For instance, according to the FGD respondents in ‘T’ village of ‘F’ union, those **who maintain good relationship with the UP chairmen and members**, as also with the **secretary or the dofadar**, always get to know about the **maternity allowance or old age allowance cards first**
- ***Beneficiary selection process often deviates from the policies***
 - Although the SESP policy give the **directive to prepare a new list** of 30% poor female students and 20% poor male students **from each class every year**, the field study found that the **school authorities often do not follow** the guidelines. For example, in ‘T’ Dakhil Madrasah in ‘F’ upazila, the authority selects the students **once in class six for SESP** instead of repeating the process in each class every year. In other words, the **lists never include new students** who get admitted in upper classes, but **only exclude students** if they fail in the final examination or get married

- ***Selection meetings do not take place or get publicised on the pretext of insufficient allocation***
 - For example, a programme officer of an NGO in ‘N’ district stated that **chairmen and members get only a fraction of what is actually needed**. As a result, **following the policy directives and properly advertising** the beneficiary selection meetings **would put them in a difficult situation**
- ***Errors of exclusion or inclusion can occur as a consequence of selection criteria, timing of selection and wrong interpretation of policies***
 - For instance, while the **EGPP policy** stipulates that the beneficiaries **selected in the previous year cannot be changed in the next year**, in some of the unions studied, the **local elected representatives** have assumed that **once selected**, the **beneficiary list cannot be changed altogether**. This has resulted in **mis-targeting** as beneficiaries who have **graduated continued to receive benefits** from the programme. A representative from East ‘C’ union gave the example of Mr. ‘R’, whose economic situation improved significantly over the period when he was a beneficiary. At present, even though he does not go to work regularly, his name stays on the list

- ***Beneficiaries have only scant knowledge as regards SSNP implementation guidelines***
 - From the HH survey, it was found that an astounding **90.5% of the respondents did not know** about the **grievance redress system** of the SSNPs they are beneficiaries of. This regrettable situation **can also be observed** in case of their awareness **about the implementation guideline** of the SSNPs

□ **Corruption, nepotism, and political pressure**

- ***Allegations made about political pressure and corruption during beneficiary selection process***
 - For example, the field study found allegations of corruption regarding the maternity allowance and old age allowance cards in a significant number of unions. The corruption **mainly happens** on the **pretext of doing the administrative works** (e.g. opening bank accounts) on behalf of the beneficiaries and **for covering the expenses of the UP**. The husband of a maternity allowance beneficiary in ‘T’ village of ‘F’ union said he had to give Tk. 5,000 to the UP member for processing a card. The field study also received complaints of corruption in beneficiary selection process of SESP. In ‘KK’ union, some of the beneficiaries and all the non-beneficiaries reported that **guardians have to bribe** the principal or the office clerk of the ‘D’ Government High School **to get their children in the stipend programme**

- ***Political consideration, nepotism and clientelism result in mis-targeting of beneficiaries***
 - For example, according to the statements of a number of UP chairmen and members, and government officials during the field study, **most of the targeting errors** in case of **maternity allowance and old age allowance** occur in the **form of cards being given away on political consideration**

❑ **Benefits distribution process**

- ***The problems while withdrawing the transfers appear to be very programme specific***
 - **In case of PESP and SESP**, the field study found that the school authorities helped the guardians in opening mobile money accounts. Although the **beneficiaries are not supposed to pay anything to withdraw** the stipend money, **the mobile money agents charge Tk. 20-30 for each withdrawal**. In case of **old age allowance**, the FGD participants reported that the **requirement of going to the bank** for withdrawing transfers often **caused difficulties** for them

- ***Delays in receiving programme benefits are quite commonplace***

- For instance, the students are supposed to get the **SESP transfer twice every year**. However, the field study found that the stipend always gets distributed **two to three months later than the stipulated time**. In ‘T’ madrasah of ‘F’ union, students were supposed to get the first instalment of 2019 in June, but they received it in September

□ **Perceived contribution of the selected SSNPs**

- ***The general perception as regards the contribution of the selected SSNPs is positive***

- In the HH survey, **97.1% of the total beneficiaries** mentioned that they **benefitted from the support** which they receive through the SSNPs. Among them, 33.9% claimed that their **food and nutrition situation have improved**, 22.5% stated that their **economic situation has bettered**, 20.6% reported that they can now **spend more on healthcare**, 19.1% informed that SSNPs have **contributed to their children’s education** in terms of continuation or entrance. The respondents also claimed that receiving the benefits from SSNPs has resulted in **increased dignity** of their families



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Policy recommendations

□ Recommendations in the national context

- ***Implementation of the NSSS should be brought back on track through mid-course corrections***
 - As most of the **proposed deadlines** for the various **activities under the NSSS Action Plan** are **already over**, a **revised version** of the action plan, with a **new set of deadlines** and with **regular monitoring**, may be **helpful** in bringing the implementation trajectory of the NSSS **back on track**. The upcoming **8th Five Year Plan** provides a **useful opportunity** to this end

- ***Finalisation of National Household Database should be a key priority***
 - **No notable progress** has been observed as regards **strengthening the beneficiary selection** process of the SSNPs as envisaged under the NSSS. **Much of this**, perhaps, **can be attributed** to the **persistent delays** in the implementation **of the NHD** by the BBS. Indeed, **lack of such a comprehensive database** was very **strongly felt** in recent times while disbursing supports to people affected by COVID-19

- ***Centralised online grievance redress system should be revisited to make it inclusive***
 - **A centralised online GRS is currently operational.** However, **to what extent** those people will be able to **receive the benefits of an online-based system** remains a question. **Raising awareness** about the paper-based system available at the **local levels** could be a more useful way to deal with the issue. **Local NSAs** can play an **important role** in assisting the SSNP beneficiaries while **accessing the online or paper-based GRS**

- ***Awareness building and engaging local citizens and non-state actors should be an integral part of programme implementation***
 - It is **important** that **local people remain engaged in disseminating information** and be part of the **selection process**. The **NGO representatives** in various committees **must coordinate** with other **CSO representatives** to **disseminate information** as regards selection process of various programmes. **List of all SSNP participants and selection process** of these programmes should be **made available** through **union information centres (UICs)**. **The government** can also **initiate a process to engage the UICs** in identifying potential programme participants

- ***Independent monitoring at the local level led by general citizens should be encouraged and institutionalised***
 - **The M&E system of SSNPs should not be limited to the official process. An independent M&E conducted by citizens or by citizen-led organisations can help provide real time feedback on implementation status of SSNPs at the local level. Indeed, such monitoring and data collection tools (such as social accountability tools, community score card etc.) are globally recognised methods. Many CSOs and NGOs are currently promoting use of such tools at the local level. Public hearing based on these tools should be institutionalised within the local governance system**
- ***The SSNPs should graduate from a supply driven approach to a demand driven approach***
 - **At present, implementation process of the SSNPs is dominated by the supply side. A detailed demand side assessment using a bottom-up approach could be more representative of the actual scenario at the grassroots level. This would also give the government the right pointer as regards priority areas that needed attention and geographic locations to act on. The official data from NHD and other national surveys should be used as a guide in estimating the national demand concerning these programmes**

□ Programme specific recommendations

▪ Maternity allowance

- **Proper information dissemination** throughout the programme cycle, as per policy, **has to be ensured** in order to raise the efficacy of implementation process
- Recipients need to be **made aware** as regards **implementation process** of the programme so that **middle-men do not take advantage** on the pretext of doing administrative works on behalf of the beneficiaries on for covering the expenses of the UP
- The **yearly enlistment system** in implementing the **programme should be reformed**. Enlistment should be done on a **quarterly basis**

▪ Primary school stipend

- The recipient students, as well as their guardians, **need to be made aware** of the **eligibility criteria, beneficiary selection, and benefits distribution process**
- The **blanket approach** used for beneficiary selection was, perhaps, the reason behind almost **no complaints** as regards the selection process. Such approach could be taken **in case of other applicable** SSNPs if adequate resources are available
- Both teachers and beneficiaries' guardians will have to be **made adequately aware** of **grievance redressal system**

- Secondary school stipend
 - **Timely completion of the administrative works** pertaining to **beneficiary selection process** could be crucial in terms of dealing with errors of exclusion
 - **Lists of beneficiaries** have to be **publicised** in the school premises as the policy stipulates. **Updating of the beneficiary list**, following the implementation guideline, **has to be ensured** so that mis-targeting can be curbed
 - To **streamline the benefit distribution process**, **adequate training facilities** for relevant government officers, teachers, guardians and mobile money agents, need to be **built-in within the programme**

- Employment generation programme for poorest
 - It has to be ensured that **open meetings** for beneficiary selection are **publicised** and **held** as per policy and that identified beneficiaries in these meetings are indeed finally enlisted
 - Errors of inclusion can occur as a consequence of **wrong interpretation of the policies**. The **union committee** and **higher implementing bodies** must be **adequately trained** to solve this issue
 - It has to be ensured that the **projects** taken up under EGPP **do not get delayed** due to **administrative hassles**

- Old age allowance
 - The **beneficiary selection** process of the old age allowance programme has to be **made free** of any form of **corruption or political influence**
 - **UP level distribution** of beneficiary cards must follow a **clearly stated method**, in a well-publicised manner so that confusion is avoided and questions do not arise
 - **Access to allowance** should be **hassle-free** and here **greater use of digital platforms** should be the way forward

- ☐ At the **grassroots level**, **LA and LG** representatives **have a defining role** to play to **increase the efficiency** of SSNP delivery
 - Special **focus** should be put on **adequate information dissemination**, **proper beneficiary selection** and operationalisation of **grievance redress system**

- ☐ The attendant challenges can be addressed in a proper manner if **citizens' groups at the local level** are more closely and effectively **involved at every stage**, from beneficiary selection to implementation to grievance redressal
 - **Active participation** of organised citizen groups such as **CBOs/CSOs** and **other non-state actors** should be seen by local level public service delivery agencies as a **key support to draw upon** in their SSNP delivery activities



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Thank You