



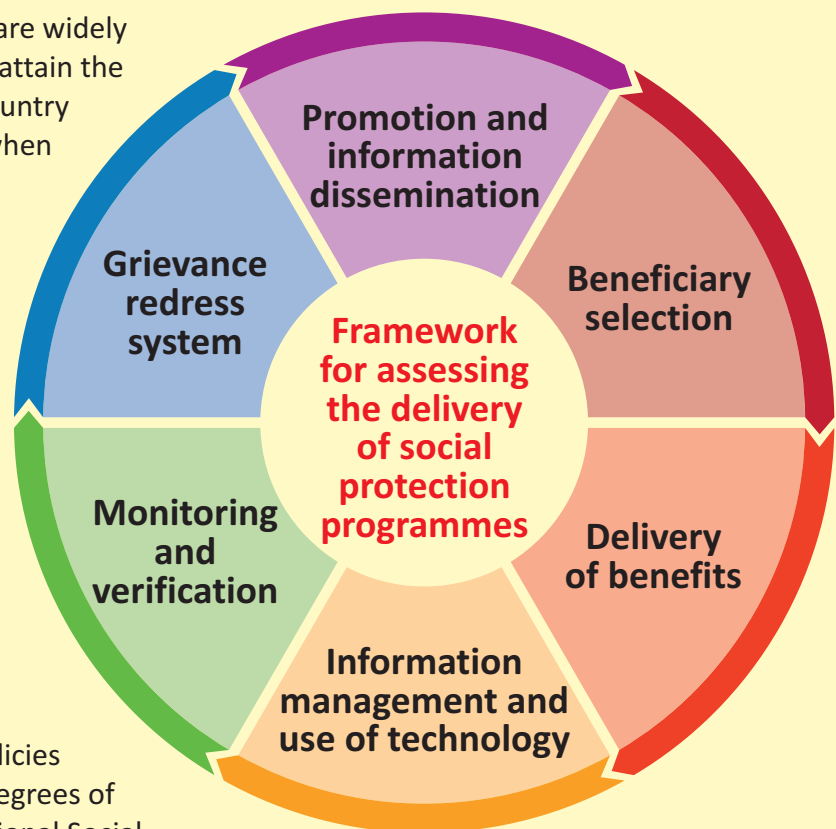
Need for Right-based Social Protection Programmes and the Role of Citizens in Governance

Social protection programmes are widely recognised as key enablers to attain the majority of the SDGs at the country level. This is particularly pertinent when one keeps in mind the implementation of the SDGs in line with the spirit of ‘leave no one behind’. SDG 1.3 specifically states, “Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.”

In this backdrop, Bangladesh, as in the case with many other developing countries, has been increasingly trying to adopt comprehensive social protection policies and strategies, albeit with varying degrees of success. It has also developed a National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) to meet the attendant objectives.

However, there remain considerable gaps between the policies and practices on the ground.

To highlight these gaps and offer possible solutions, two studies were undertaken as part of this programme at the sub-national level. These include ‘Efficiency of delivering the social protection programmes in Bangladesh’ and ‘An assessment of the effectiveness of delivering the relief supports to cope with COVID-19 in Bangladesh.’ Both the papers assess the state of delivery effectiveness (e.g. dissemination, beneficiary selection, payment, information management, monitoring and grievance redress). The first paper deals with five core life-cycle social protection programmes viz. ‘Maternity Allowance’, ‘Primary Stipend’, ‘Secondary Stipend’, ‘Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest (EGPP)’, and ‘Old Age Allowance’. These programmes are earmarked to provide basic social protection to the citizens in order to help dealing with risks at various stages of life-cycle viz. early childhood, school age, working age, and old age. The second paper deals with three COVID-targeted relief support programmes, including ‘Gratuitous Relief (Rice)’, ‘Gratuitous Relief (Cash)’, and ‘BDT 2,500 for five million families’.



The findings of these two studies were shared among national level policymakers and policy implementers at the local levels, and concerned and interested stakeholders. The key challenges and recommendations in delivering the social protection programmes were shared by organising eight sub-national dialogues and one national dialogue. A set of joint action mechanisms were designed based on these dialogues. These were documented, shared, and discussed in the half-yearly meetings of the district-level networks, which were followed-up through several other activities.

It should be noted that the SDG framework explicitly mentions that while it is the state's responsibility to deliver the SDGs at the aggregate level, concrete actions are required from local authorities, including local governments and local administrations to deliver the outputs and outcomes. It has been also found that integrated community-level strategies are required to deliver at least 12 of the 17 SDGs. Thanks to dialogues and disseminations, and several follow-up activities implemented under the project, the grassroots citizens and CBOs in the project areas were successful in bringing a number of positive changes in the delivery process of Social Protection Programmes.

Citizen inclusion in beneficiary selection committee

- Two CBO leaders from Gourichanna union in Barguna were included in the VGD selection committee, thanks to improved interactions and collaboration between district network members and associated LAs and LGs.

Citizen engagement in beneficiary selection

Following the implementation guidelines and eligibility criteria, the district network members and CBO leaders were instrumental in selecting:

- A total of **48, 69, 90, and 31** beneficiaries for **disability allowance, old age allowance, maternity allowance and widow allowance**, respectively in Netrakona;
- A total of **18, 18, 16, 13, 8, and 4** beneficiaries for **EGPP, old age allowance, disability allowance, VGD, allowance for deserted and destitute women, and widow allowances** respectively in Pirojpur;
- 150 extreme poor women, of which **61** were ultimately selected to receive **VGD card** in Gaibandha;
- A total of **50** extreme poor disabled persons for receiving **blankets (relief)**.

Citizens partnering with service providers in delivery of services

- District network members supported proper distribution of **relief supports and allocated** houses in Pirojpur;
- CBO members contributed to the distribution of **30 kg rice** among **82** fisherfolk households, and **semi-paka and paka houses** among **14** extreme poor households in partnership with Upazila Fisheries Department and Upazila Parishad respectively in Roumari, Kurigram.

Citizens getting services through applying to the 'Grievance Redress System'

- A CBO member from Chatirchar union in Kishoreganj submitted a complaint to DD-Women Affairs regarding irregularities in **Maternity Allowance by calling the mobile number of DDWA**. An investigation committee was constituted based on the complaint. The committee found the complaint valid, and based on its report, real beneficiaries were included in the list.



A national study on social protection issues concerning the elderly citizens of Bangladesh has been conducted under this project. The study report outlines the needed legal, institutional, and financial requirement for introducing a 'Universal Pension Scheme' in the country. To disseminate the study findings, CPD organised a national dialogue titled **'Introducing a Universal Pension Scheme in Bangladesh: In Search of a Framework'** which was held on 6 November 2019 in Dhaka. About 120 participants, including policymakers, economists, development practitioners, academicians, researchers, international development partners, and media professionals attended the event. Policymakers and members of the parliament present at the dialogue appreciated this pioneering work and felt that the study findings would contribute to the foundation of the framework for the National Universal Pension Scheme that the government is planning to formulate. The dialogue and the subsequent media reports helped raise awareness about the need to implement such a scheme as an important step towards attaining the SDGs in Bangladesh with leaving no one behind.

For more information, please visit:
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