

State of Governance within Social Protection Sector in Bangladesh

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1. Introduction

Any scrutiny of the Bangladesh development narrative will remain incomplete if it fails to acknowledge the substantial improvements in social services outcomes that amounted to improvement in living standards and socio economic indicators over the last four decades. In fact, the pace of progress during the 1990s was so rapid that by the 2000s, Bangladesh positioned itself ahead of some its' neighbors in the region. As noted by eminent political thinker and economist Amarta Sen, social service sectors within Bangladesh fares better than South Asian economic giants like India across key development parameters, despite entertaining relatively poorer income status.¹ However, in recent times, it is observed that failings in governance within the social sectors are likely to bring to halt this well achieved progress. More precisely, there is consensus that progress could have been faster in the past and that social policy challenges that persist will require some deep institutional - or governance – reforms (Hossain and Osman, 2007).

Against this context, this examination aims to provide an in-depth assessment of the state of governance within the social protection sector. Our objective is to isolate institutional arrangements that are likely to improve the quality of governance within the social protection sector by enhancing the effectiveness of the overall sector in delivering services. However, before we delve into such broad analysis, it is essential to mention what we understand by 'good governance' and why such concerns are crucial while we evaluate the prospects of any social protection sector. The idea of 'good governance' has received multiple interpretations, but there is a broad agreement that governance is about how authority is exercised over a country's economic, political and social affairs (Carothers and Gramont, 2011). In essence, it is about ensuring that public organs operate in an effective, transparent and an accountable manner.² Furthermore, focusing on the governance challenges in social protection programmes is of both intrinsic and instrumental importance. To be precise, given the absolute poor is dependent on various social protection schemes

¹ For more information, please see:

<http://www.risingbd.com/english/detailsnews.php?nssl=b0a665a28efd91535abb111d656ecd04&nttl=201307190932524438#.Uf4E-zvIs9I>

² A more elaborate definition includes: "Governance is the system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and private sector. It is the way a society organizes itself to make and implement decisions—achieving mutual understanding, agreement and action. It comprises the mechanisms and processes for citizens and groups to articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations. It is the rules, institutions and practices that set limits and provide incentives for individuals, organizations and firms. Governance, including its social, political and economic dimensions, operates at every level of human enterprise, be it the household, village, municipality, nation, region or globe" UNDP (2000).

for addressing their basic needs, the ethical case for ensuring good governance within social safety net programmes is substantial.³ Even to ensure the effective use of resources under various social protection schemes, one needs to implant institutional arrangements that minimize leakage to an optimal level.⁴ Yet, what exact institutional design will produce such outcome is little understood in social policy discourse. Moreover, one can prudently argue that effectiveness of any given institutional design (or programme design) to deliver social services will be sensitive to the ground-zero political realities of the society. Thus, a rigorous assessment of the state of governance within the social protection sector cannot ignore the political conditions within which the sector operates. These political conditions constitute formal and informal institutions, political norms and historical factors that interact with various aspects of a given social protection programme to determine its effectiveness in service delivery.

Hence, the present scrutiny will examine the state of governance within the social protection sector of Bangladesh from a political economy lens, so that the reforms we prescribe are not only economically sound, but are also politically feasible. In fact, any pragmatic reform prescription must ensure three core issues: (i) *feasibility*: the proposed reform must not conflict with the exiting institutional set-up and organizational processes. Thus, it highlights the need of an institutional analysis of any proposal to see how it sits within the institutions and organizational processes; (ii) *acceptability*: the prescribed reform must be acceptable to political decision-makers, administrators, the claimants and wider stakeholders (Fritz et al 2009); (iii) *suitability*: a proposed action must have ‘value for money’, which refers to the social gains added through enhanced effectiveness and efficiency of a proposed action (Stolk, 2010).

The paper, however, refrains from evaluating or providing a synopsis of the effectiveness of each individual programme within the social protection sector of Bangladesh. Rather, our aim is to evaluate the effectiveness of the macro-institutional arrangements within which the entire sector operates. Before we proceed to the main body of our analysis, in the next section we discuss the nature of politics that prevails within our society and its implications for services based on targeting. It also constitutes a discussion of the dominant narrative within the existing literature on state of governance in social protection sector of Bangladesh. Section 3 will provide an overview of Bangladesh’s social protection programmes. It starts off with a discussion on the historical evolution of social protection sector and

³ Even from the view point of ‘**need based distributive justice**’, acute needs should be provided with resources required to meet those needs. These groups should be given more resources than those who already possess them, regardless of their contribution in the tax pool. Hence, effective delivery of social safety net services must receive utmost priority within the public policy domain.

⁴ Focusing on ‘good governance’, in general, is important as it can play a significant role in shaping long-run economic fortunes of nations. For example, Dani Rodrik mentions that “the long-run association between good governance and high incomes is incontrovertible.” For more information, see: Dani Rodrik, (2008) “Thinking about Governance” in *Governance, Growth, and Development Decision-making*” Washington D.C: World Bank pp: 19–20.

then discusses the institutional arrangements within which social protection programmes in Bangladesh operates. In section 4, the study pinpoints some key governance weakness in the present institutional arrangements. Lastly, section 5 discusses our suggested reforms.

2. Political Context and Governance in Social Protection Sector

A prominent definition of politics is that it is the art and science of explaining ‘who gets what’ in a society (Lasswell, 1958). In that respect, political scientists have used patron-client political framework, first pinpointed by anthropologist and sociologist to describe the hierarchical social relations that were very influential in peasant societies (Schmidt et al 1977), to better understand political dynamics that unfolded in many non-consolidated democracies. Moreover, such framework views politicians as patrons and citizens as clients and their interactions are understood through the lens of reciprocity: the patron distributes excludable resources (money, jobs) to dependents in return for their cooperation and support (votes, attendance at rallies, etc). The patron is argued to have disproportionate power and thus entertains considerable leverage and power over resource distribution decisions. In contemporary politics, most patrons are not viewed as independent actors, but as member of a wider grid of contacts, usually serving as a middlemen or intermediaries who pioneer exchanges of resources between local level and center (Kettering, 1988).⁵

The political arena of Bangladesh can also be adequately understood from the lens of patron-client framework. Even after the re-introduction of democracy in 1991, the democratic process remains non-consolidated (IGS, 2010-11), and qualitative political economy examinations have often pinpointed deep rooted patron-client tendencies in shaping such outcomes. To be precise, political parties in government tries to use patronage to establish loyalties and allegiance within state institutions⁶ to ensure they can distribute resources to their support base.⁷ This in essence creates a ‘winner takes all’ phenomenon in politics, which in turn enhances the returns from coming to power and increases the cost of losing it. Cumulatively, these factors created conditions for ‘confrontational politics’, which dictates that political actors

⁵ Patron-client political framework can experience numerous shapes under different cultural settings, but they generally involve three core characteristics: (i) the relationship is develops between agents of unequal power and status; (ii) it is based on the principles of reciprocity; (iii) the relationship is particularistic and private (Kuafman, 1975).

⁶ This takes the form of politicization of public bodies.

⁷ Such phenomenon is often categorized as ‘*pork barrel politics*’, usually referring to situation where political actors target spending to the support base or constituents in return for their campaign contribution or support (Shepsle and Weingast, 1981)

will employ both de jure and de facto tactics to either hold onto position or come to power (IGS, 2008).

Yet, the patron-client tendencies, which are often isolated to explain democratic deficit within the society, also had positive side effects. Under democratic political arrangements, politicians could not ignore citizens as they found an object for trade – votes, which in effect softly empowered the general population eligible for participation in election. Hence, political actors supported reforms and programmes that either advocated private participation of agents in economic activities that was previously produced by some state organs (such as private provision of services related to banking, education, healthcare, etc.) or they expanded social services that could reach their clients from whom they periodically seek support. As a result, it is no surprise that Bangladesh witnessed a massive expansion of social protection programmes in the 1990s as opposed to precious decades, and some governance narrative attribute this success to the nature of politics that prevailed within its landscape (Hossain and Osman, 2007). It is also argued that such local patronage politics have worked as an informal mechanism for ensuring protection (Hossain and Martin, 2007).

Nonetheless, the expansion of social protection programmes in the 1990s also coexisted with increase in leakage and corruption. In particular, political conditions that were sufficient to support the achievements of the 1990s were no longer conducive the reforms needed in 2000s. Since governance reforms in the 2000s in essence demanded greater accountability and transparency in the use of public resources, political incentives that supported reforms geared towards the expansion of social protection services could not see such reform prescriptions with similar enthusiasm. An issue that further complicates this scenario, in the context of social protection schemes, is the lack of comprehensive evidence on the magnitude of corruption that persist within respective social protections schemes.

For example, the Food-for-Education (FFE) programme began in 1993, when the government decided to transfer wheat to targeted poor households whose children met a set of primary schooling conditions. The primary objective was to help poor households to send their children to primary school. Consequently, the School Managing Committee (SMC) and ward Primary Education Committee were jointly responsible for the identification of poor beneficiaries at the local level.⁸ As depicted in Table-1, studies that tried to estimate leakage in the FFE programme produced dramatically different results. To be precise, estimates of leakage and corruption were far lower in Ahmed and Billal (1994) in comparison to estimates produced by the World Bank and BIDS. Furthermore, such inconsistencies concerning the estimates of leakage often armed opponents of governance reforms with the

⁸The selection of the deserving unions, within which all schools that met the criteria were to be eligible, took place in Dhaka (Hossain and Osman, 2007).

argument that prescriptions inspired by the possible existence of corruption are not grounded in solid evidence.⁹

Table 1: Estimates of leakage in the Food for Education (FFE) programme

7%	Ahmed and Billal(1994)
30%	BIDS (1997)
up to 75%	World Bank (2003)
14-17%	Ahmed and del Ninno,(2002)

The prevailing political dynamics also complicates one essential issue of various social protection schemes. That is, the principal targeting¹⁰ challenge experienced by most safety net programme in Bangladesh is exclusion: the scale of need is significantly larger than the size of provision. Hence, while all selected beneficiaries may be eligible, a large portion can be excluded despite their eligibility (World Bank 2003).¹¹These conditions coexisting with a patron-client political norm can allow political leaders to offer selective patronage without any formal corruption or bias against the poor. A more challenging concern also arises if the same sets of eligible people are included repeatedly, and less well-connected eligible population is left out social protection schemes. To exemplify the noted issue further, an examination of local party politics in two *Upazilas* undertaken by the State of Governance Report in 2006 project identifies that relief goods and safety net resources (VGD, VGF, old age and widows' allowances) distributed by Union Parishads roughly followed a pattern of distribution to each of the following group: i) needy eligible people; ii) vulnerable people with good political connections or vote bank potential, and iii) ineligible with local political influence or relations (IGS, 2006).¹²

⁹ Other studies also report varying estimates on programme leakage. More precisely, studies point to leakages of the magnitude of 10-50 percent for food-based programmes and 5-25 percent for cash-based programmes (World Bank, 2006). Even so, this remains higher than estimates revealed by an international benchmark study on fraud and error in social security systems undertaken by RAND Europe for the UK system which pinpoints leakage at 2 to 5 percent of overall government expenditure on social security (NAO, 2006).

¹⁰The usage of targeting has also received some strong critique in the social protection literature. To sum up these critiques, it is argued that any case for targeting has to adequately take note of the various costs of targeting, including the possibility of informational manipulation, incentive distortion, disutility and stigma resulting from such methods, administrative and invasive losses, and problems of political sustainability. For a more detailed discussion on this topic, please see Sen (1995)

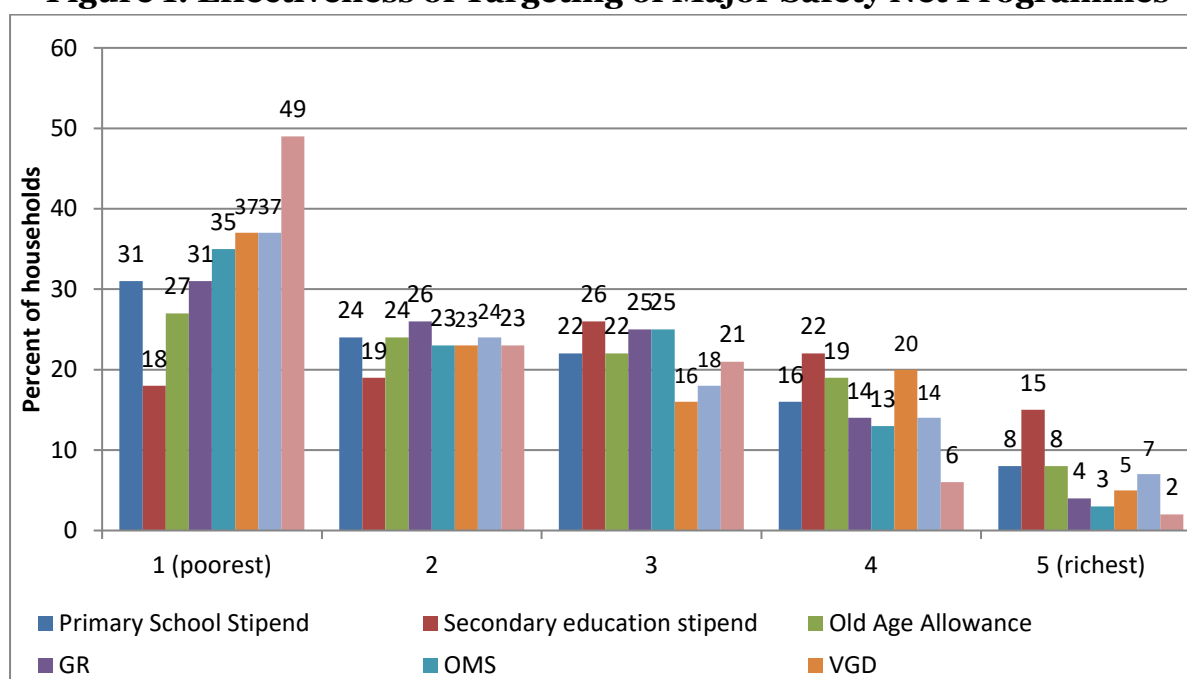
¹¹ A recent study by National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme (NFPCSP) has found that Social Safety Net (SSN) programme are not completely reaching the targeted group due to a lack of proper selection of beneficiaries. In fact, it is noted that 26.4% eligible households are being denied the facility while 14.2% of non-eligible households are receiving safety net benefits. For more information please see: <http://www.dhakatribune.com/editorial/2013/aug/31/target-social-safety-net-help-%E2%80%98poorest-poor%E2%80%99>

¹²Arguably, this indicates a political settlement in which political representatives seek to use public resources intended for the poor to a) reflect a concern for the poor; b) build their own political capital; c) finance personal political activity; and d) serve personal and family interests.

Recent evidence on the effectiveness of targeting is suggestive that all major social safety net programmes allocate some portion of the resources to the top income quintile (figure-1). In essence, it indicates that mechanism employed for targeting are suffering from some core loopholes – allowing people towards whom the programme is not targeted to benefit from state resources. An earlier study also finds that almost 47 percent of beneficiaries of the Primary Education Stipend Programme are non-poor and are incorrectly included in the programme (Ahmed, 2004a).

While conditional factors that can assist the effectiveness of targeting is still not known, anecdotal evidence is indicative that leakages from programmes maintain a strong correlation with the number of intermediaries in the transfer process (World Bank, 2006). For example, VGD (and other food transfer programmes) and Primary Education Stipend Programme, which generally involves a large number of intermediaries – also experiences a large degree of leakage.¹³In contrast, a distinguishing characteristic of the Rural Maintenance Programme, which has an estimated leakage of less than 5 percent, have far fewer intermediaries.

Figure 1: Effectiveness of Targeting of Major Safety Net Programmes



Source: World Bank (2013)

Patronage politics have also undermined the effectiveness of health sector. For instance, Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) is the single most powerful interest group in health sector. The BMA became politicized along partisan lines during the 1991-2006 periods. These dynamics also ensured that appointments under each

¹³ For example, evaluations of Primary Education Stipend programme suggest that it has leakage of over 20 percent (Ahmed 2004)

political regime to key position in the health care administration is subject to party bias and are not merit driven.¹⁴

On the whole, the governance challenges in the social protections schemes are very much related to the political dynamics that prevail within Bangladesh. Prospective institutional reforms that this analysis will prescribe must take into consideration these existing political conditions so that the changes are both feasible from an institutional perspective and acceptable to the key stakeholders. In the next section, we provide a brief overview of the social protection sector in Bangladesh. In doing so we bring to attention the institutional arrangements that remain in place and how it is likely to result in governance deficiencies under our prevailing political dynamics.

3. Evolution and Overview of Social Safety Net Sector:

Historical Development of Social Protection:

The underlying causes of poverty are complex and multidimensional. As recognized in the Sixth Five Year Plan in Bangladesh it is associated with vulnerability, social exclusion, and lack of assets and productive employment; although the central symptom is often hunger. The poor are unable to adequately access health and educational infrastructure due to their low asset exposure and thus often fail to build up their capabilities. This in turn also acts as a constraint for them to participate in the entire process of economic growth.¹⁵ Hence in a given political space, as policymakers find it complicated to correct the distributional aspects of poverty, they are increasingly recognizing that social protection measures may assist in reducing the severe implications of the poverty (Priyadarshee 2011). Risks and vulnerability are mainstream problems in the lives of the average Bangladeshi and are recognized as such by governments, individuals and communities. Social Safety Net Programme have been an integral part of the anti-poverty strategy for the government (and previous ones) to address risk and vulnerability (Raihan, 2013).

As discussed above, initially social protection focused on keeping people out of poverty by guaranteeing a minimum support to meet their basic needs. The concept and practice of social protection in developing countries has advanced at an astonishing pace over the last few decades or so which, in part, has shaped the nature of the current social protection system. In the late 1990s, it did exist in the vocabulary of a number of development partners, but very few had major spending programmes. At present, however, it is scarcely a subject of discussion anymore rather has evolved as a buzzword among key policy makers particularly in developing nations, engaged in designing policies to reduce poverty.

¹⁴For more discussion on this, please see Hossain and Osman, (2007).

Box 1: ‘Quiet Revolution’ of Social Protection in some countries

After the 1997 East Asia crisis, protective measures became a key to development and political stability tool for South Korea. In Indonesia, the 1997 economic and political crises led to a fairly rapid institutionalization of a social welfare/security system. China remained fiscally conservative after the 1997 crisis, but was gradually expanding social services and social security (which it had let collapse with ‘growth-first’ reforms since 1978), and the 2008 crisis led to enhanced push to create a social safety net. In India, the ‘Inclusive Growth’ aspirations of the post-2004 Congress-led government and the civil society advocacy for rights-based development gave a major push to development of social protection schemes, most notably National Rural Employment Guarantee Act(NREGA), and (subsequently shelved) planned legislation for informal sector workers.

Source: Haan (2011), Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex

Box 1 shows how social protection programme shaped in terms of the East Asian crisis. At independence the main social protection scheme available in Bangladesh was the civil service pension which was targeted only for the formal sector employees providing them with a lump sum on retirement¹⁶. The crisis of 1974 and 1980s in Bangladesh with the famines and floods saw the emergence of social protection schemes (Rahman and Chowdhury 2012). Public works started in 1975 in response to the 1974 famine along with the food aid programme ‘Food for Work’ (FFW). The FFW was implemented with the help of foreign assistance namely USAID and WFP.

The 1990s saw several other major developments which is reflected by the fact that the proportion of the population living in poverty was estimated to have declined by 9% over that period (Hossain and Osman 2007). During this time the transformation of FFW to Cash for Work (CFW) was seen. Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) focused on girl education were initiated in early 1990s. The lifecycle approach was also taken by the government with the introduction of schemes such as school stipend programme (both primary and secondary) and an extension allowances programme covering the elderly and destitute women such as widows and abandoned women (Rahman and Chowdhury 2012). Lastly as studied by Khondker and Kidd (2013) the 1990s also saw a lot of donor financed activities in the domain of social services, including social transfers. BRAC has become the most notable provider of these services with its primary schools being a safety net for children who drop out of state schools.

The current decade experienced multidimensional evolution. Geographical targeting was given importance because of the monga (hungry season) in the north-west of the country, the haors (wetlands) in the north-east and more recently the coastal belt. The focus on employment was initiated with the government launching the 100-Day Employment Generation Programme in September 2008 because access to the basic necessities of life was challenged for the extreme poor and the unemployed poor as result of the price hike of essential commodities (Khuda 2011).

Lastly the 2013-14 budget speech enhanced the various rates and widened the coverage of allowances given to senior citizen, widows, destitute women, expecting

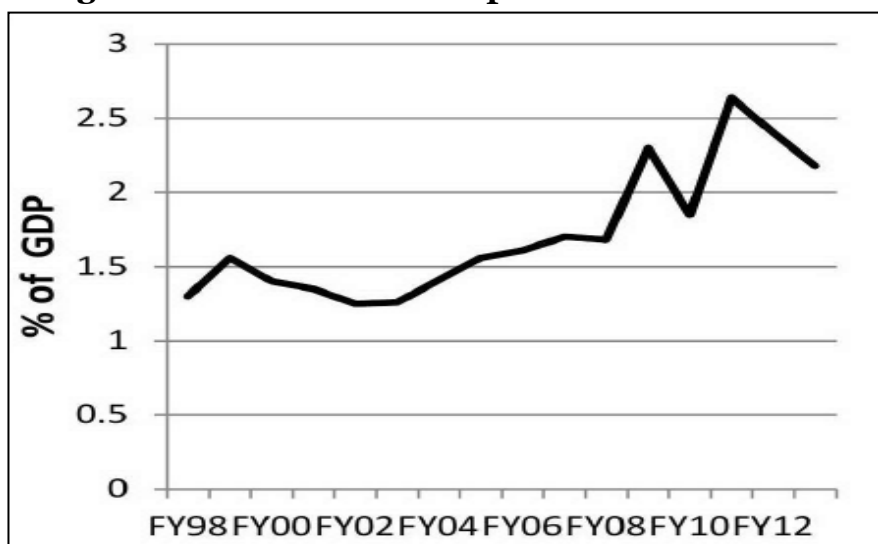
¹⁶ See: Mahmood et al. (2008) and Alam (2012).

and lactating mother and insolvent disabled persons in fulfillment of the Awami League governments election pledge on expanding social security programmes for the extreme poor.

Overview of Bangladesh’s Social Protection Sector:

The Government of Bangladesh recognizes that shocks and vulnerability are mainstream problems for the poor. To address chronic poverty and vulnerability, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) implements a large number of public social safety net (SSN) programmes of varying sizes (World Bank 2013). While pinpointing an exact figure might be difficult, it is prudently noted that these programmes reached 20.9% of the poor population in 2005 and 34.4% of the poor population in 2010. Furthermore, in line with the rise in the number of programmes, the government has increasingly allocated more resources for social protection programmes as a share of GDP over the last one decade.

Figure 2: Share of SSNP Expenditure as % of GDP



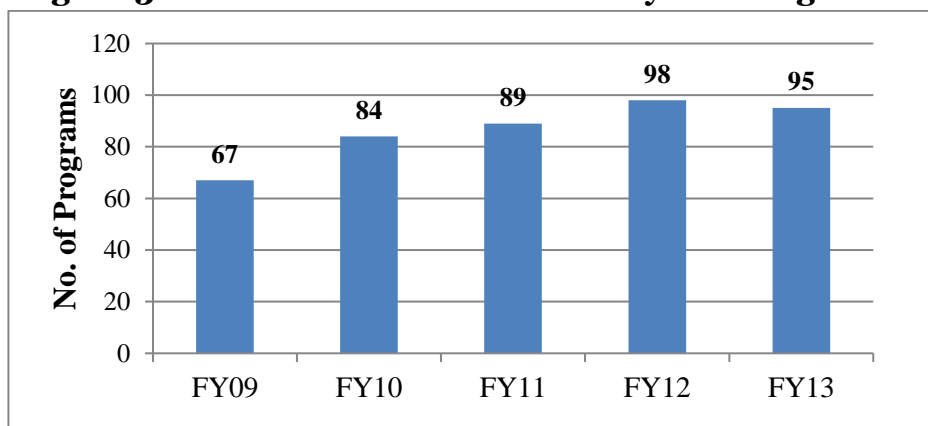
Source: World Bank (2013)

In addition, these programmes provide benefits in the form of food, cash transfers, or a combination of the two, and are administered through the Government administrative bodies and elected local government officials. There is no single department or agency taking the lead in developing and implementing programmes for the social protection and development of poor, vulnerable and marginalized people. Recognizing that a coherent, effective and re-engineered social protection system is central to Bangladesh’s future economic and social development, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has now committed itself to a process of reviewing its social protection portfolio and developing a Comprehensive Social Protection Strategy. The current safety net portfolio includes 95 schemes¹⁷, which are

¹⁷ Source: Budget documents, MOF, GOB and author’s own compilations

fragmented across various sectors, geographical areas and ministries, as well as having overlapping objectives and beneficiaries. It must be stated here, that over the last one decade, the number of social safety net programmes witnessed a large increase – which

Figure 3: Total Number of Social Safety Net Programme



Source: Budget documents, MOF, GOB

After a thorough review of the literature and safety net budget documents, it can be concluded that the safety net programmes are administered through a wide variety of line ministries. These include, among others, the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, and the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs. Many of the programmes are implemented in collaboration with NGOs and are often co-financed by development partners. The important programmes as recognized in Raihan(2013) covered under SSNPs are: Food for Works (FFW), Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), old-age allowances, allowances for retarded people, allowances for widow and distressed women, grants for orphanages. There are also micro-credit programmes, allowances for freedom fighters and so on. Distressed people particularly women, children and disabled persons have been given priority under Social Safety Net. The Ministries and the major programmes they are responsible for are set out in the Table-2.

Table 2: Ministries responsible for major social protection schemes

Ministry	Scheme
Social Welfare	Old Age Allowance
	Widows' Allowance
	Disability Allowance
	Injured Freedom Fighters
	Insolvent Freedom Fighters ¹⁸
Women and Children's Affairs	VGD
	VGD for Ultra Poor Women
Primary and Mass Education	Primary Stipend
	Drop-outs Stipend
Education	Secondary Stipend
Local Government	Rural Maintenance Programme
Disaster Management	Employment Generation
	Food for Work

Source: Khondker and Kidd (2013)

Budget Allocation in Social Safety Net Programmes:

Analyzing the 2013-2014 budget documents on SSN programmes, Social protection schemes can be classified under the following broad heads – cash transfer programmes including allowances and special cash transfer, food security programmes, miscellaneous fund programmes, microcredit, and development sector programmes. All these programmes are further categorized into social protection and social empowerment schemes according to the beneficiary profiles and objectives of the programmes. Furthermore, as shown in figure-4, number of social protection schemes within development programme category witnessed 250%+ growth between FY09 and FY13.

Looking at the expenditure side, Bangladesh spends a substantial portion of its GDP in social protection schemes - 2.22 % of GDP for FY 13¹⁹. This situation was aided by the fact that Bangladesh witnessed robust economic growth over the last one decade (World Bank 2007). In terms of responsibility for budgets, the leading ministries for social protection are set out in Figure-5.²⁰ The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management manages the largest social protection budget, although this is dependent on the inclusion of the Food for Work programme. The Ministry of Social Welfare is the other prominent Ministry in terms of the number of schemes. Furthermore, as mentioned in the preceding sections and as pointed out in Table-3, a large number of ministries and government agencies are involved with the social

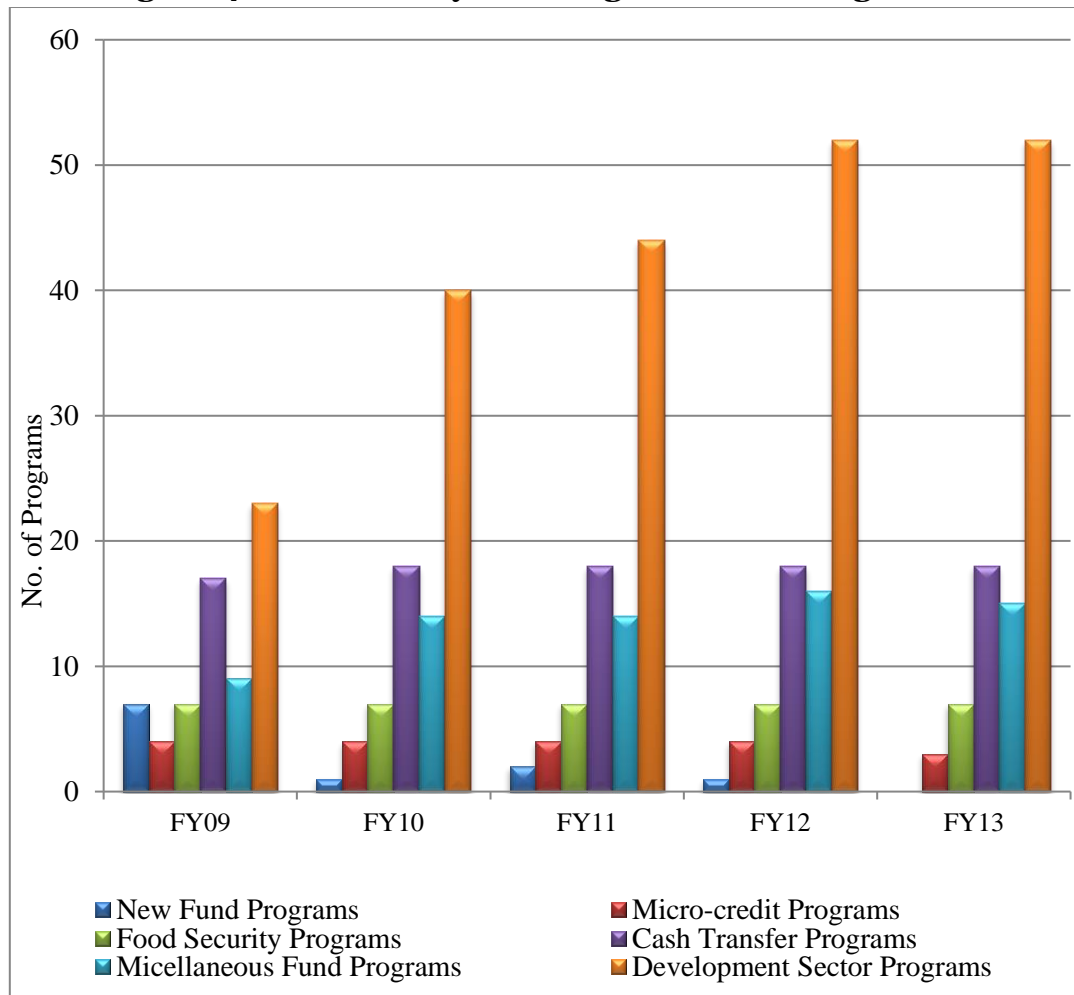
¹⁸ The Insolvent Fighters Programme is overseen by the Ministry of Liberation Work Affairs, but it is administered by the Department of Social Welfare, under the Ministry of Social Welfare.

¹⁹ Revised budget figure taken from budget documents, MOF, GOB http://www.mof.gov.bd/en/budget/13_14/safety_net/safety_net_en.pdf

²⁰ In reality, the Ministry of Finance manages the largest social protection budget as the value of the Civil Service Pension is Tk39,900 millions (Khondker and Kidd 2013).

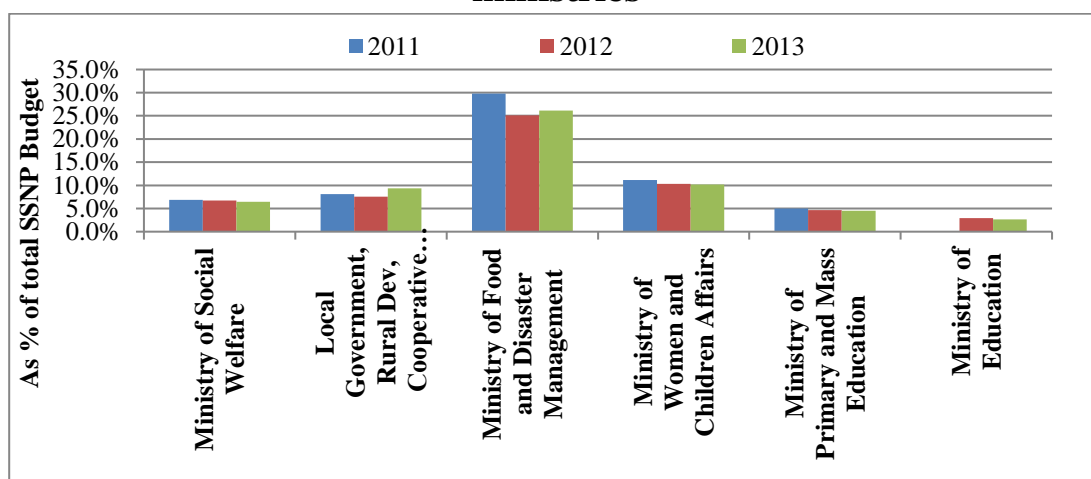
protection schemes and it is noted that there is little coordination among them, raising the likelihood of duplication of instruments, beneficiaries, resulting in wastage resource(World Bank, 2007)

Figure 4: Social Safety Net Programmes (Categorized)



Source: Budget documents, MOF, GOB and author's own compilations

Figure 5: Social Protection Budget Managed and implemented by ministries



Source: Budget documents, MOF, GOB and author's own compilations

Table 3: SSNP Budget Allocation Sorted by Ministries

	No. of Programmes	Budgetary Allocation (BDT in millions)			As % of Total SSNP Budget		
		2011	2012	2013	2011	2012	2013
Total SSNP Budget (BDT in millions)					208935.2	219752.3	227505.5
Ministry of Social Welfare	13	14304.1	14719.9	14603	6.8%	6.7%	6.4%
Ministry of Primary and Mass Education	5	10474.4	10230	10228.3	5.0%	4.7%	4.5%
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	5	4912	6367	7990	2.4%	2.9%	3.5%
Local Government, Rural Dev, Cooperative Division	11	16933.9	16664.4	21309.6	8.1%	7.6%	9.4%
Ministry of Women and Children Affairs	8	23247.7	22631.4	23111.2	11.1%	10.3%	10.2%
Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts	1	2240	2340	2370	1.1%	1.1%	1.0%
Ministry of Education	2	0	6403	5950	0.0%	2.9%	2.6%
Ministry of Food and Disaster Management	10	62212.4	55173.2	59483.6	29.8%	25.1%	26.1%
Ministry of Liberation War Affairs	4	4700.7	4667.3	6846.5	2.2%	2.1%	3.0%
Ministry of Cultural Affairs	1	15	20	25	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
All Ministries	1	40031.3	50414.5	45194.8	19.2%	22.9%	19.9%
Ministry of Agriculture	6	2615.8	5453.09	5910.3	1.3%	2.5%	2.6%
PKSF	1	1165.2	1885.7	1754.1	0.6%	0.9%	0.8%
Social Development Foundation	1	2140	1500	2115.4	1.0%	0.7%	0.9%

	No. of Programmes	Budgetary Allocation (BDT in millions)			As % of Total SSNP Budget		
		2011	2012	2013	2011	2012	2013
NGO Foundation	1	65	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Swarnivar	1	13.5	11.6	11.6	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Ministry of Environment and Forestry	2	7060.6	7080	4152.7	3.4%	3.2%	1.8%
Ministry of Water Resources	2	1650	2036.8	3419.7	0.8%	0.9%	1.5%
Small Farmers Development Foundation	1	100	100	100	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock	5	875.9	1374.2	1055.1	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%
Others	14	14177.7	10680.21	11874.6	6.8%	4.9%	5.2%

Source: Budget Documents, MOF, GOB and author's own compilations

4. Governance and Administrative Issues of the Social Protection Sector:

As mentioned previously and as it can be seen above from Table 3, a large number of ministries and government agencies are involved with the social protection schemes. However, there is no clear indication of how such ministries coordinate on programmes with similar objectives and instruments. In fact, Table-4 and Table-5 brings to attention two key issues. First, a large number of programmes operate with a similar objective. To be precise, it can be seen from Table-4 that at least 29 programmes are in place to attain livelihood assistance. In addition, 15 programmes are in place to improve education outcomes. Second, Table-5 highlights that a large number of programmes are targeted towards people within the same age threshold. Collectively, these issues can mean that such programmes might suffer from severe duplication of assistance towards the same group, which in turn can lead to leakage and wastage of development resources. Furthermore, given social protection programmes are administered through a wide variety of line ministries with little or no coordination, the norms of patronage politics can mean that each such mechanism can effectively become instruments for creating political patronage under different political agents. Thus well intentioned reform proposal that advocates the consolidation of all programmes by reducing the number of ministries responsible for safety net programmes might find very little political support.

The existing administrative capacity overlooking the social protection sector also experiences a substantial weakness in undertaking rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Two issues find most prominence underlying this phenomenon. First, line ministries often lack capacities to undertake such monitoring and evaluation exercise as they do not have the relevant human capital to perform such tasks. Second, programmes are often implemented in such manner that a rigorous impact assessment is no longer possible due to inappropriate programme design. However, without the effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, the social protection sector within Bangladesh will lack an evidence based framework. This will result in weak knowledge on the true effectiveness of public resources under various social protection schemes. Additionally, evidence, on the extent of leakage also provides a mixed picture as estimates vary substantially. This, in essence, undermines the legitimacy of reform prescriptions based on estimates of leakages.

The present targeting criteria may not also produce the desired results. To be specific, land criteria, are regularly used to distinguish between the poor and the non-poor but evidence from the HIES is indicative that the present targeting framework can lead to significant misallocation of resources (that is, to selecting those who are not in need). For example, one criterion used to pinpoint very poor is to include a portion of the population with at most 5 decimals of land. However, in Bangladesh, 59 percent of the

poor have less than 5 decimals of land, as do 36 percent of the non-poor. Thus, if rural households with less than 5 decimals of land are randomly selected, one average over a third of them would be non-poor. Additionally, the issue of asymmetric information concerning the knowledge of who is eligible and who is not under the mentioned framework enhances the risk of adverse selection. This is because, economic agents – for whom the benefit is not intended – but have met the criteria through which the selection occurs has an incentive to participate for being selected. As a result, land ownership by itself, then, cannot be considered as a useful criterion.²¹

Table 4: SSNPs sorted in terms of Programme Objective

Objective of SSNP	Number of programmes
Livelihood Assistance (LA)	29
Education (E)	15
Life Skills Training (LST)	14
Health (H)	10
Regional Development (RD)	5
Food Security (FS)	8
Nutrition (N)	4
Housing Support (HS)	2
Agriculture/Fisheries Support (AFS)	8
Climate Change (CC)	3
Income Generation Assistance (IGA)	15

Source: Safety Net Budget documents, author's own compilation

Table 5: SSNP Sorted by Lifecycle

	Age Bracket	No. of programmes	% of total Programmes in 2013
Total No. of Programmes		95	100.0%
Prenatal	-1-0	8	8.4%
Early-Childhood	1-4	12	12.6%
School-Age			
Primary	5-12	19	20.0%
Adolescence	13-19	20	21.1%
Adulthood	20-onwards	49	51.6%
Old Age	60+	1	1.1%

Source: Budget Documents, MOF, GOB and Author's own compilations

²¹ A key insight here is that we need to view the targeted population and the non-targeted population as active rational agents who will evaluate the prospects of a given safety net programme in improving their livelihood (Sen, 1995)

Incentives are also not appropriately aligned within the institutions of social sector service delivery. This facilitates the prevalence of leakage within the social protection sector. At present, very few incentives are in place to ensure service providers achieve the objective of the social protection scheme.²² Such arrangements are not likely to enhance performance as remunerations of economic agents working within the social protection sector have no relationship with whether programme objectives are satisfied or not.

5. Addressing the governance challenge: Possible Reforms

This section discusses the key governance reforms required for successful implementation of the social safety net programmes. It identifies governance reforms from both the demand and supply side perspective for effective social safety net programme delivery. It also advocates a specific institutional arrangement that can help attain this objective. The South African²³ experience has been shared in a box below as well since they have a developed institutional arrangement for social protection activities with spending about 3.5% to 4.00% of their GDP and covering 33% of the population²⁴.

Improving supply-side governance:

- A lead agency needs to be identified for overall social protection policy design and co-ordination, implementing the national social protection strategy, monitoring and evaluation and donor harmonization. The main aim is to be less dependent on a large number of actors so that one can minimize coordination ineffectiveness. This agency can be the Ministry of Social Welfare.²⁵ **[Box 2**

²² Disincentives are also scarce against service provider who fail to do so. Furthermore, incentives such as giving full payment and bonuses to distributors in food transfer programmes if full delivery occurs on time and penalizing them if it does not.

²³ UNDP recently arranged study tours for the some Bangladesh Government officials on Social Protection in South Africa and Nepal to get acquainted with the best practices.

²⁴ Outcome Document: Report of the Study Tours on Social Protection, GED Planning Commission (September 2013)

²⁵ The Ministry of Social Welfare already has responsibility for a number of core social protection schemes (about 13).

below highlights the institutions responsible for managing Social Protection in South Africa]

The lead agency/ministry needs to be clear about its institutional responsibilities and accountabilities. Some of their responsibilities will be:

- ✓ *Coordinating Agency:* The lead agency will coordinate/consult with all the line ministries/departments and NGOs involved with different social protection schemes for successful implementation of the national social protection strategy and budgeting of the programmes. At present, a large number of line ministries overlook the operation of 95 social protection programme.
- ✓ *Creation of Meta-Programmes:* The lead agency in coordination with relevant line ministries, Planning Commission and (development partners in some cases) can consolidate programmes with similar objectives and instruments under a *meta-programme* under fewer line ministries. This will help the agency to design the programmes in such a way so that social-protection schemes with similar objectives refrain from duplicating instruments for attaining programme objective. However, the exact process that must be followed to consolidate possible overlapping programmes into meta-programmes need further scrutiny. A possible way forward is to consolidate programmes into two themes: {i} family support; and {ii} income/employment generation. The programs under Family Welfare cover all forms of assistance which are provided to the households or marginalized individuals and also include sub-classifications like Old Age Assistance, Child Development, Health, Education and Assistance. These programs can be part of a central database which deals with all Family Welfare programs which can be undertaken by an existing ministry or can require the formation of a new agency. The Income Support/Employment Generation programs are programs which aim to assist individuals who are of working age belonging to impoverished households who need employment/income support. The programs classified under this could be undertaken singularly by the ministry of local government drawing information from the master database on family under the agency managing family welfare programs
- ✓ *Monitor Regional Bias and Administrative loopholes:* By being the coordination agency, the lead agency should also make sure that programmes do not suffer from regional bias due to political

consideration.²⁶ In consultation with all the relevant stake holders the agency should tighten all administrative/operating procedures to ensure better usage of resources (World Bank 2006).²⁷

- ✓ *Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the programmes:* Thorough impact assessment has not been undertaken for all the programmes mentioned in the current safety net portfolio. In selective cases whenever an impact assessment has taken place the methodologies were questionable as they did not address the issue of causality through rigorous techniques.²⁸ In most studies the authors did not employ a randomised control trial (RCT) for evaluating the effectiveness of the programme²⁹, which can essentially mean that the impact assessment can suffer from a wide variety of endogeneity issues. Therefore, to mitigate this concern, the lead agency must ensure future programmes consider the need for thorough impact evaluation and design the programmes accordingly. The department will frequently monitor the programmes and supply information about how well a programme is working so that policy makers can take actions to improve the programmes implementation. It will be a continuous process that will take place throughout the programmes life and should be an integral component of all the programmes. The lead department should carry out independent evaluation of the programmes – or outsource such work to independent think tanks or consultants.

- ✓ *Reforming targeting criteria:* The lead agency can use household criteria that carries better information concerning the occupation and income of individuals rather than assets such as land. It is noted in earlier work that potential misallocation could be reduced if criteria such as occupation

²⁶A recent study by Institute of Governance Studies is indicative that regions entertaining relatively more ministerial allocation receive more per capita development expenditure. For more discussion on this, please see Rahman and Zakaria (2012).

²⁷An earlier work has pinpointed the importance of minimizing the number of intermediaries in programme delivery and making the decisions of intermediaries transparent. That is, programmes constituting large number of intermediaries making decisions about variable entitlements can facilitate leakage if decisions are not transparent (World, Bank 2006). Thus the lead agency can evaluate each such programmes involving a large number of intermediaries so that programme-centric reforms are pinpointed which will minimize the role of intermediaries in the overall programme.

²⁸Studies, such as Khuda, Barkat –E (2011), PPRC study on Social Safety Nets (2011) and Rahman and Chowdhury (2012) did undertake impact assessment for some of the schemes.

²⁹RCT technique ensures rigor and scientific validity by addressing issues such as selection bias.

and dwelling characteristics (e.g., access to electricity, toilets) of the household are used (World Bank, 2013). The lead agency can thus undertake work to enhance the efficiency of targeting. Targeting criteria also needs to be consistent across programmes, which again makes a case for consolidation of programmes.

- ✓ *Good management information systems (MISs)* needs to be developed rather than the traditional paper based management system which is the current way of administering the programmes by the local government (Khondker and Kidd, 2013). Once a lead ministry is identified a central beneficiary database for all the schemes should be placed for the lead agency to get access to data to monitor and evaluate all the programmes. Much of the information required for monitoring individual programmes can come from the respective management information and reporting systems of each programme. Formal and informal sector coverage can also be expanded through improved administration and compliance. A unique identification number for the beneficiaries and strong IT support are essential.
- Passing responsibilities at the local government level: Quality of staffs at the local level needs to be improved and their incentives must be aligned to the objective of the programme. Once this is done monitoring of social safety net programmes can be more effectively done through the local government system. Local authorities are also more aware of local context which can facilitate experimentation through implementing heterogeneous implementation arrangements.
- This paper notes that programmes under Ministry of Food & Disaster Management should not be categorized as social protection schemes as earlier argued by Khondker and Mansur 2013³⁰. International experience is in line with this view. This is because the schemes under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Food & Disaster Management constitute a different nature and it deserves separate attention so that an effective disaster management strategy is developed. This is, nonetheless, not the mandate of this paper.

³⁰ Khondker and Mansur 2013 suggested that Disaster Management programs be separated from the social safety net programs since the latter should include programs which provide consistent assistance and support. Disaster Management programs are ones that come into effect and provide support and aid in the aftermath of natural disasters and should be segregated and administered solely by the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management

At present the social safety net programs in Bangladesh are administered by various line ministries (Khondker and Mansur 2013 notes there are more than 30 ministries) with the programs having overlapping objectives and beneficiaries. For these reasons the paper suggests that the programs be bought under the jurisdiction of two major ministries and the remaining programs be either separated from the safety net programs or eliminated all together. To better illustrate the prescribed supply side reforms, figure-6 details out the institutional arrangement that is likely to attain better effectiveness in operating the social protection sector. As noted below, the core functions of the key agents are described below:³¹

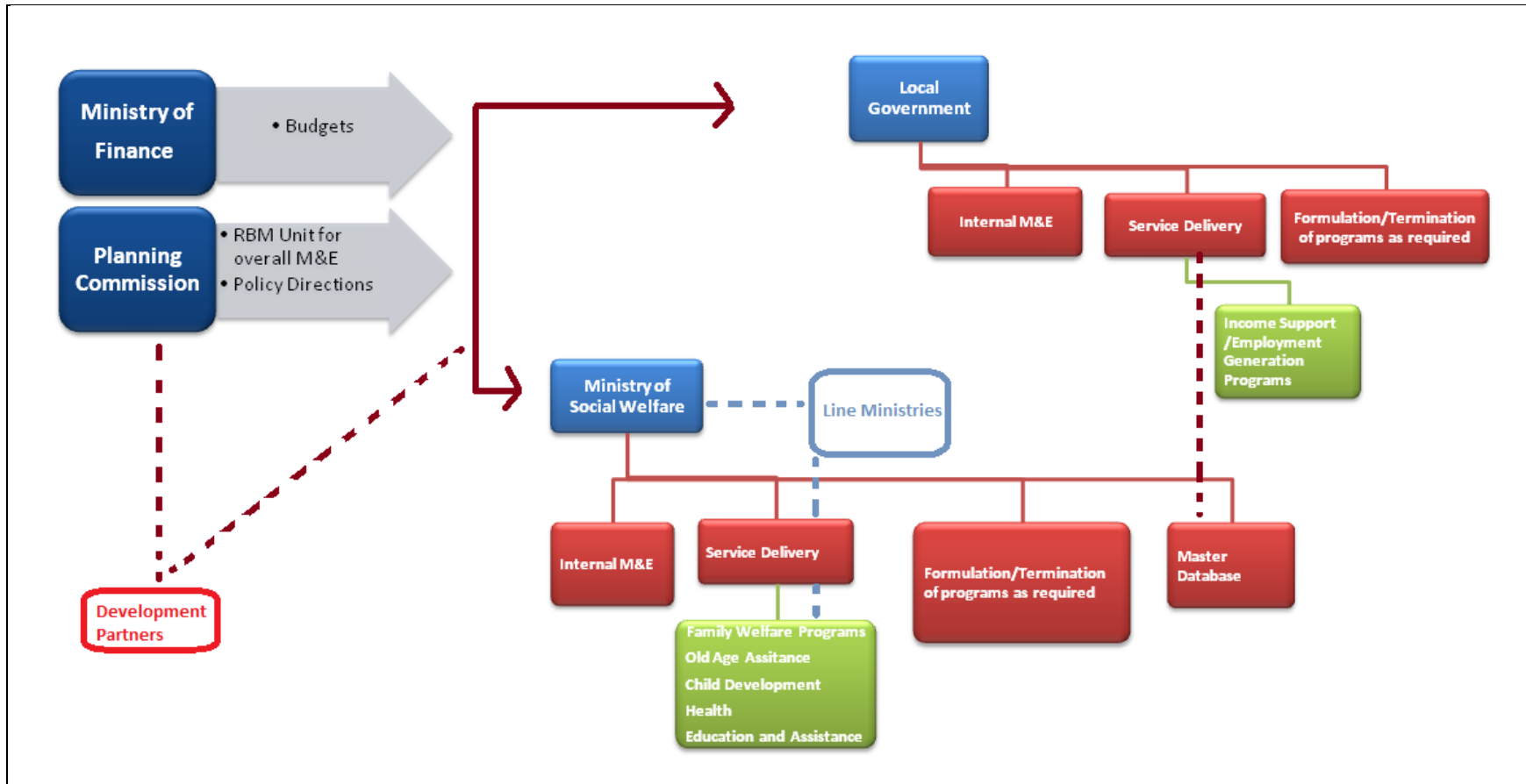
- **Ministry of Finance:** The overall budget for the social protection sector will be formulated by Ministry of Finance after undertaking a joint consultation with Ministry of Social Welfare, Planning Commission and respective line ministries to determine the overall budget for the sector.
- **Planning Commission:** The policies concerning the social protection sector will be formulated by the Planning Commission. To implement these policies Ministry of Social Welfare will formulate and undertake necessary social protection programmes. The Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBM&E) Unit within the GED should undertake independent monitoring and evaluation of each programme under the social protection sector. If it is considered to be necessary, then monitoring and evaluation of some specific programmes can be outsourced to independent agencies.
- **Development partners:** Funding necessary for operating certain social protection schemes can be provided by development partners. They can advise to introduce new programmes in consultation with Ministry of Social Welfare, Planning Commission and the relevant line ministries – provided such programmes do not overlap with existing ones in objectives and instruments.
- **Ministry of Social Welfare:** The noted ministry can emerge as the lead agency for the social protection sector. All family-centric programmes will be overlooked by Ministry of Social Welfare. In particular, it will have five core functions: {i} maintain the master data base on the target population and share information with relevant line ministries so that better targeting effectiveness is achieved through reducing duplication; {ii} operate programmes which falls under its jurisdiction like old age allowance; {iii} undertake necessary monitoring and evaluation on all social sector programmes to understand the effectiveness of the programmes in meeting the desired objectives; {iv} undertake

³¹ The motivation for the prescribed institutional reform is derived from the evaluation of the South Africa Social Protection sector briefly described in Box-1.

decisions on formulation of new programmes and termination of existing programmes; {v} coordinate with Ministry of Finance, Planning Commission, development partners and relevant line ministries to develop an efficient targeting criteria, update the data base and formulate an effective strategy for the overall sector.

- **Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development:** All employment and income generation programmes will be overlooked by Ministry of Local Government. In particular, it will have five core functions: {i} operate programmes which falls under its jurisdiction – example, food for work; {ii} undertake necessary monitoring and evaluation of all programmes to understand the effectiveness of the programmes in meeting the desired objectives; {iv} undertake decisions on formulation of new programmes and termination of existing programmes; {v} coordinate with Ministry of Finance, Planning Commission, development partners and relevant line ministries to develop an effective income and employment generation strategy.
- **Relevant Line Ministries:** Social sector programmes which do not strictly fall under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Social Welfare will be operated by relevant line ministries. For example, education stipend programme can be overlooked by Ministry of Education. However, relevant line ministries will not have any jurisdiction to introduce any new programme without consultation with Ministry of Social Welfare and Planning Commission to ensure programmes do not suffer from duplication. The relevant line ministries will also feed information to Ministry of Social Welfare.

Figure-6: Possible Organizational Structure of Social Protection Sector in Bangladesh



Improving demand side governance:

- All information needs to be readily available to stakeholders (Stolk 2010) in this case the beneficiaries, ministries and NGOs involved. The beneficiaries should be aware of the programme outcomes and the eligibility criteria for each programme. The beneficiaries should be encouraged to use instruments such as the Rights to Information Act (RTI) when facing difficulties to get information on the different social protection schemes. Schemes such as the employment generation program for the hard core poor could integrate the RTI Act in its regular delivery process. Similarly, other safety net programmes could incorporate the RTI Act to bring a qualitative change in delivery system. Since the prime objective of the Act is to ensure transparency and accountability in governance, so integrating RTI Act will help in promoting good governance. On the other hand, targeted beneficiaries will be able to receive services offered by the government and non-government organisations.
- As noted in Stolk (2010) stakeholder (beneficiaries, civil societies and development partners) participation should be encouraged in programme decision-making, implementation and monitoring. Mechanism and procedure should be in place to allow beneficiaries and citizens to lodge complaints regarding programme administration, quality of programme delivery and even payment of benefits. The idea here is to accommodate voice of a wider number of actors within the social protection sector.
- Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry of Local Government must frequently hold responsible entities within the ministry accountable by evaluating the performance of the overall social protection sector. In fact, Member of Parliaments must scrutinize whether social protection sector is suffering from any inefficiencies by bringing to attention difficulties faced by targeted population in getting support.

Box-2: Responsible Institutions for Social Protection in South Africa³²

The Department of Social Development is the only ministry in South Africa that provides development, social protection and social welfare services to all South Africans. The responsibility of the Department of Social Development (formerly responsible for the implementation of the grants) is now only responsible for the development of policies for the implementation of the administrative system and the monitoring of the implementation of these policies. The Department has the following core functions:

- To provide comprehensive social security systems: This comprises the development of comprehensive social security policies that focus on income support to vulnerable groups and seamless social assistance service delivery through the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and Appeals Tribunal.
- To provide developmental social welfare services: This comprises the creation of an enabling environment for the delivery of equitable developmental welfare services through the formulation of policies, standards, best practice, and support to social service professional bodies and delivery partners.
- To provide community development services: This comprises the development of an enabling environment for empowering the poor and vulnerable through the promotion and support of community development work, the strengthening of institutional arrangements, and dialogue with civil society.

The management of the South African Social Security System is the responsibility of SASSA. The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) is a national agency of the South African Government and started functioning autonomously from 1st April 2006. SASSA administers the application, approval and payment of social grants in South Africa. SASSA is responsible for administering funds received for the payment of social assistance grants, and the Department remains accountable for the funding in the consolidated set of financial statements produced at the end of each financial year. It was also designed to reallocate the function of social security from South Africa's provinces to the national sphere of government and reports to the Ministry of Social Development.

The National development agency is another public body that reports to the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa through the Minister for Social Development and is mandated to carry out the following:

- To contribute towards the eradication of poverty and its causes by granting funds to civil society organisations for the purposes of: implementing development projects of poor communities; and

³² Source: <http://www.dsd.gov.za>; Strategic Plan 2010-2015 Department: Social Development Republic of South Africa; Report on Incentive Structures of Social Assistance Grants in South Africa, Department: Social Development Republic of South Africa.

strengthening the institutional capacity of other civil society organisations that provide services to poor communities.

- To promote consultation, dialogue and sharing of development experience between civil society organisations and relevant organs of state, debate development policy;
- and to undertake research and publications aimed at providing the basis for development policy.

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