

# অন্তর্ভুক্তিমূলক উন্নয়ন ও ন্যায্যতার লক্ষ্যে নাগরিক এজেন্ডা

## *Promoting Universal Social Protection System and the Need for Targeting Disadvantaged Groups*

Presentation by

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Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh

এসডিজি বাস্তবায়নে নাগরিক প্ল্যাটফর্ম, বাংলাদেশ



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worldwide



The initiative is led by *Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya*, Convenor, Citizen's Platform and Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). The Technical Stream and Policy Brief preparation is led by *Professor Mustafizur Rahman*, Core Group Member, Citizen's Platform and Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

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## Policy Briefs: Origin of the Initiative & Process of Preparation

The initiative of the *Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh* to prepare a set of Policy Briefs has its origin in the diverse range of activities undertaken by the Citizen's Platform over the past two years. These were geared to capture the perspectives of the country's left behind communities as regards Bangladesh's dominant development narrative. Citizen's Platform activities in this connection included stakeholder dialogues, townhall meetings, focus group discussions, perception surveys and consultations with media. These also included organisation of public hearing at national level aimed at creating opportunities for people to voice their concerns and aspirations in the presence of high-level policymakers. What emerged from this exercise is that a significantly large number of the country's citizens have continued to remain vulnerable to various risks which are manifested in their being left behind in the process of economic development. On the other hand, to recall, the leave no one behind spirit of the SDGs requires that all citizens have the right to equitable share in the development of the country and appropriate actions are needed to address the concerns and advance the interests of the country's vulnerable groups and communities.

In view of the above, Citizen's Platform has identified 11 issues (see later), from the perspective of the left behind groups, which require urgent attention and call for immediate actions. The objective of the Policy Brief exercise is to come up with a set of recommendations in each of the identified areas, by articulating the context, highlighting the issues of interest to vulnerable groups and by proposing a set of concrete actions to address their concerns.



## Policy Briefs: Origin of the Initiative & Process of Preparation

Each of the Policy Briefs was prepared by a dedicated team of experts. The scholars, numbering 12-15 members, included leading experts and academics, development practitioners and activists in the concerned area . Each Policy Brief Team had an eminent personality as Chair, and a Penholder who was entrusted with the responsibility of preparing the drafts of respective Briefs. The Team sat for several meetings, consulted background notes based on Citizen's Platform's country-wide discussions and consulted relevant resource materials. The expert groups identified a set of prioritised actions for policy uptake and consequent implementation.

A 19-member Advisory Committee which included eminent citizens, academics and leading civil society personalities provided guidance to the Policy Brief initiative.

The CPD, as the Secretariate of the Citizen's Platform provided all necessary support to the work of the Policy Brief Initiative.



## Policy Briefs: Origin of the Initiative & Process of Preparation

Citizen's Platform plans to take up a number of follow-up activities to take the Policy Brief initiative forward with a view to raising awareness as regards the recommended actions and mobilising support around those actions. These include:

- (a) Holding of media briefings to present the recommendations to the wider audience with the Policy Briefs to be clustered into three groups- Economic, Social and Governance Issues;
- (b) Presentation of the recommendations at meetings with major political parties, to inform electoral discourse and as inputs to election manifestos;
- (c) Organisation of public hearing in Dhaka on recommended actions, with participation of the disadvantaged groups, civil society activists, opinion builders and media, in the presence of high-level policymakers;
- (d) Organisation of discussion meetings in various parts of the country to mobilise civic activism in support of the action agendas put forward in the Policy Briefs.



# Policy Briefs: Origin of the Initiative & Process of Preparation

## Issues for 11 Policy Briefs

### Economic

- Transforming agriculture for an inclusive and diversified economy
- Providing decent employment for youth in view of domestic and overseas market
- Providing public utilities and services in the backdrop of unplanned urbanisation
- Affordable and clean energy for all

### Social

- Reducing out-of-pocket expenditure to improve universal access to quality health care
- Triggers to ensuring quality primary education
- Dealing with the manifestation of localised vulnerabilities of climate change
- Promoting universal social protection system and the need for targeting disadvantaged groups

### Governance

- Effective implementation of laws and judicial process for eradicating gender-based violence and discrimination
- Access and justice for ethnic and religious minorities
- Giving voice to the 'silent' and establishing democratic accountability



# Background and Context

- Citizens' right to social security is enshrined in the Constitution's **Article 15**.
- Social protection has been duly recognized as part of the country's **development vision**
- National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) adopted in 2015 with a view to establish **lifecycle approach**
- **Social protection is a critical component of ensuring Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle is fulfilled and achieving the SDGs**

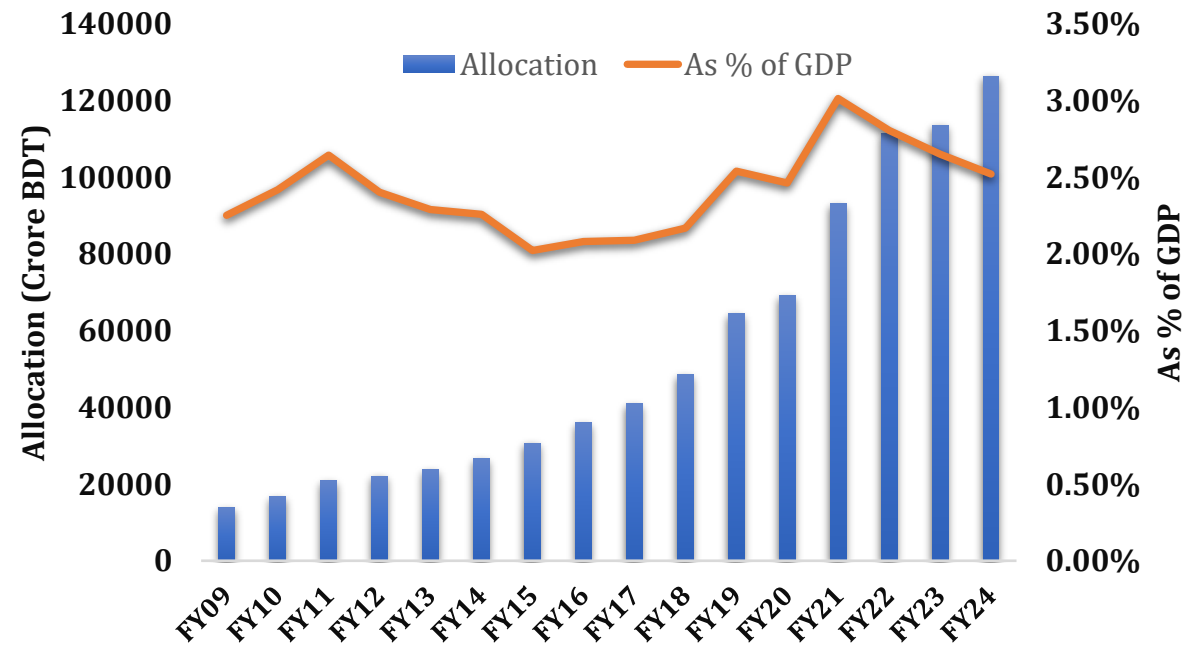
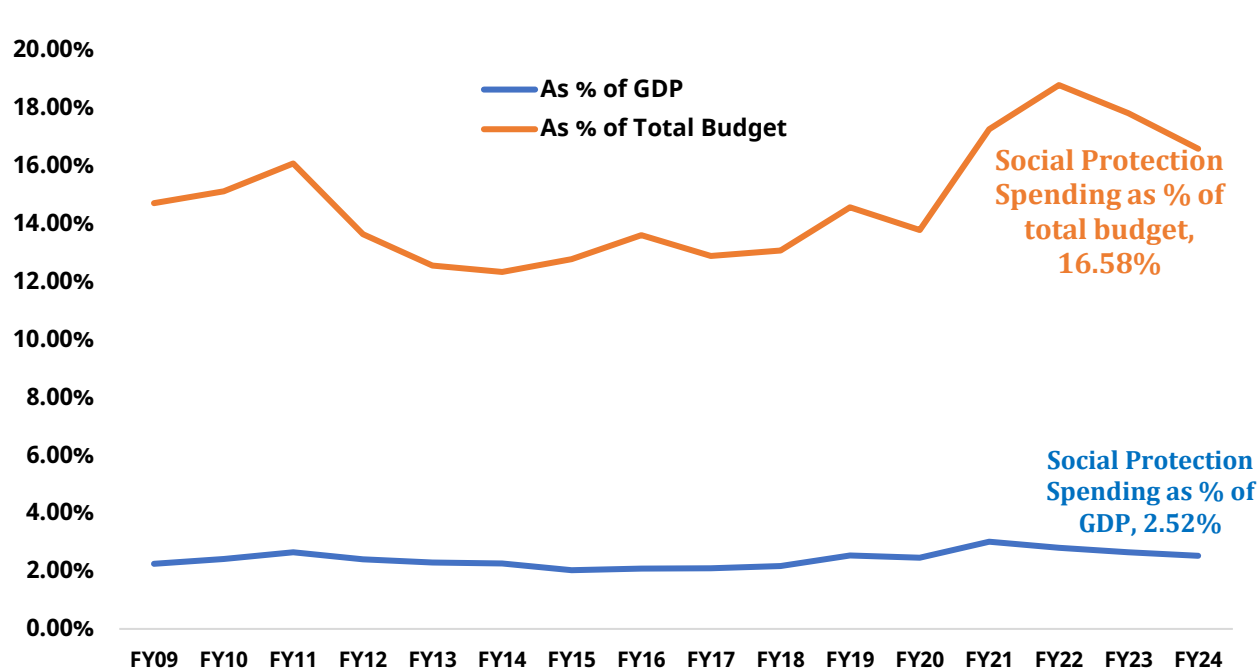
## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS





# Background and Context

- Yearly allocation is increasing, **but how do we ensure no one gets left behind?**
- Resources are thinly spread across too many programmes
- Adequacy of benefits and coverage raises questions







# Background and Context

The need for targeting disadvantaged groups is now more important than ever to ensure inclusive growth and leave no one behind.

Diverse population groups with various vulnerabilities and multidimensional challenges.

- A rise in the elderly population will lead to increased demand for old-age pensions, healthcare services, and other forms of elderly/long term care.
- Virtually non-existent unemployment protection measures for the working-age population.
- Persistent informality in labour market
- Climate-induced challenges
- Social protection programs need to be adaptable to cater to the changing needs of urban populations, including housing, healthcare, and social safety nets.



**LEAVE  
NO ONE  
BEHIND**

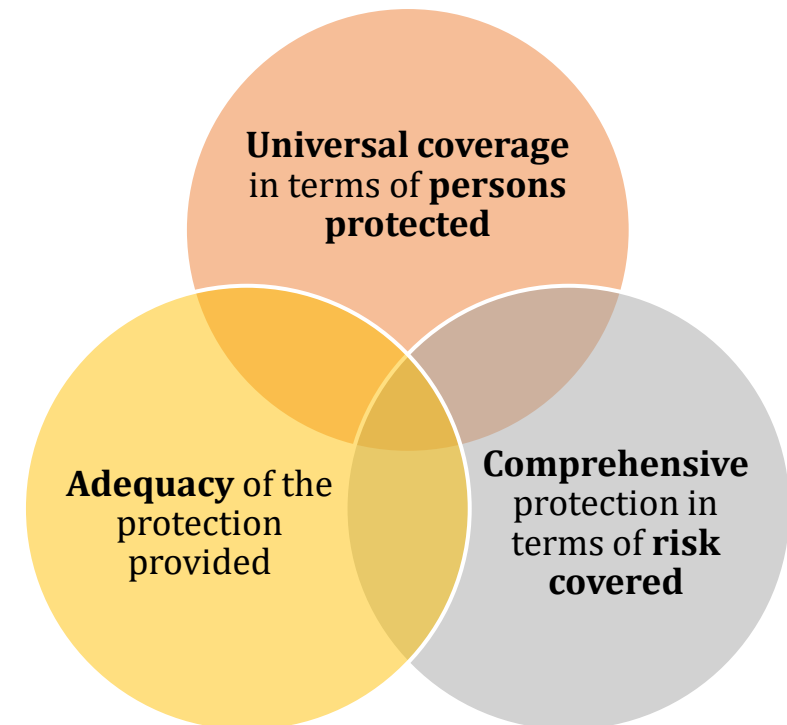


# Understanding Universal Social Protection (USP)

USP refers to a system of policies and programmes which provide equitable access to social protection to all citizens, and provide them with support throughout their lifespan to deal with deprivations and risks to their livelihood and well being.

USP allows to focus on LNOB perspective

- USP is in line with the International Human Rights Framework, and can play a central role in achieving several SDG targets, including goals on
  - **no poverty** (SDG 1.3)
  - **healthcare** (SDG 3.8)
  - **gender equality** (SDG 5.4)
  - **economic growth** (SDG 8.5)
  - **reducing inequalities** (10.4).





# Good Practices of USP for LNOB

## Universal Coverage

- **A human right and a State responsibility**
- **Ensures that anyone who needs social protection can access it at any time**
- Does not mean everyone will **GET** benefit but it means everyone will be **ENTITLED** to benefits but only those will Get Benefit who needs it.

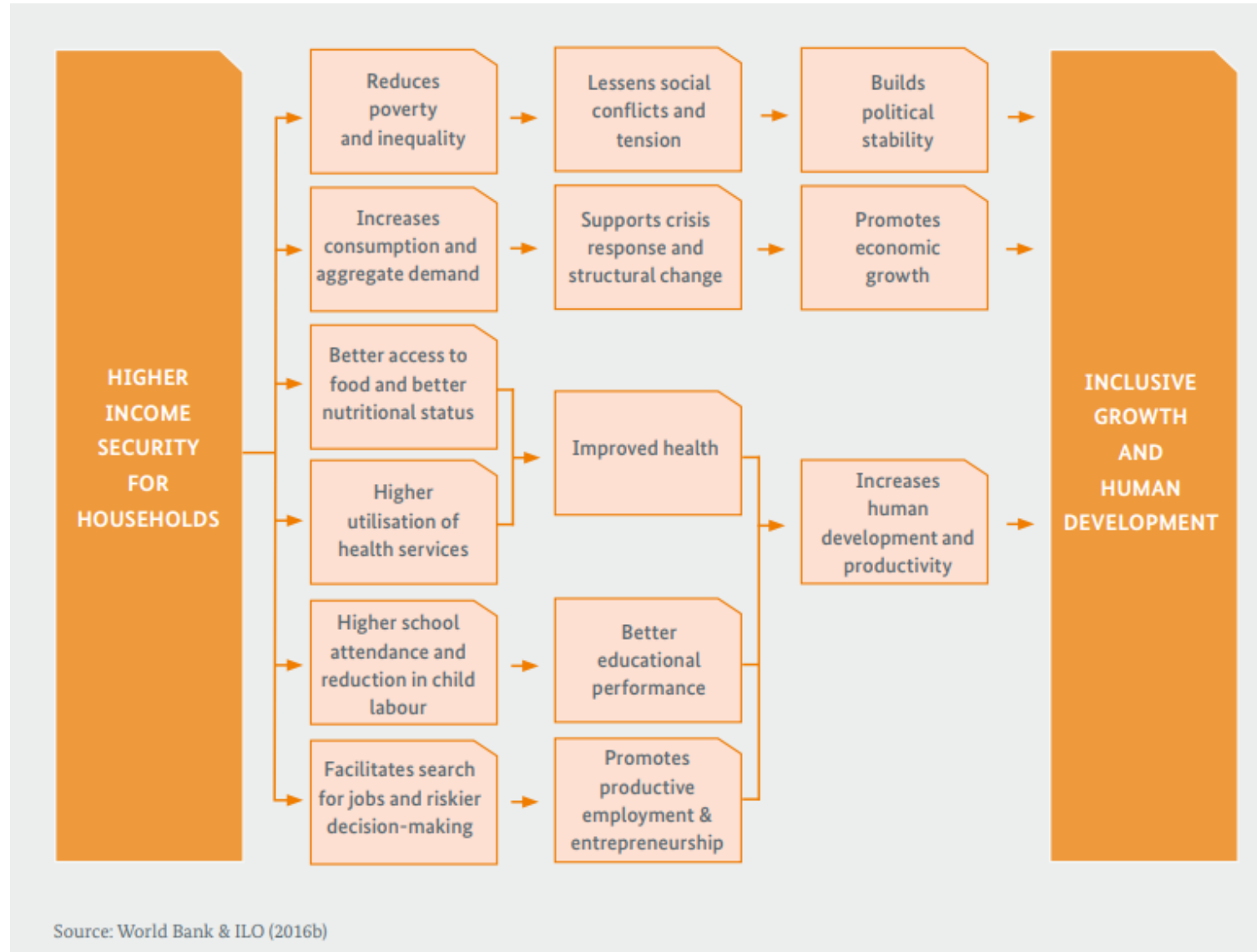
- No “One Size Fits All” model for USP
- **Composition and specific needs of disadvantaged communities means that different approaches can be taken**

Bangladesh’s socio-economic context and specific vulnerabilities will need to be considered while rolling out the USP system.

The spirit of the SDGs, “Leave No One Behind (LNOB)”, should serve as one of the key guiding principles that inform the USP framework.



# Good Practices of USP for LNOB



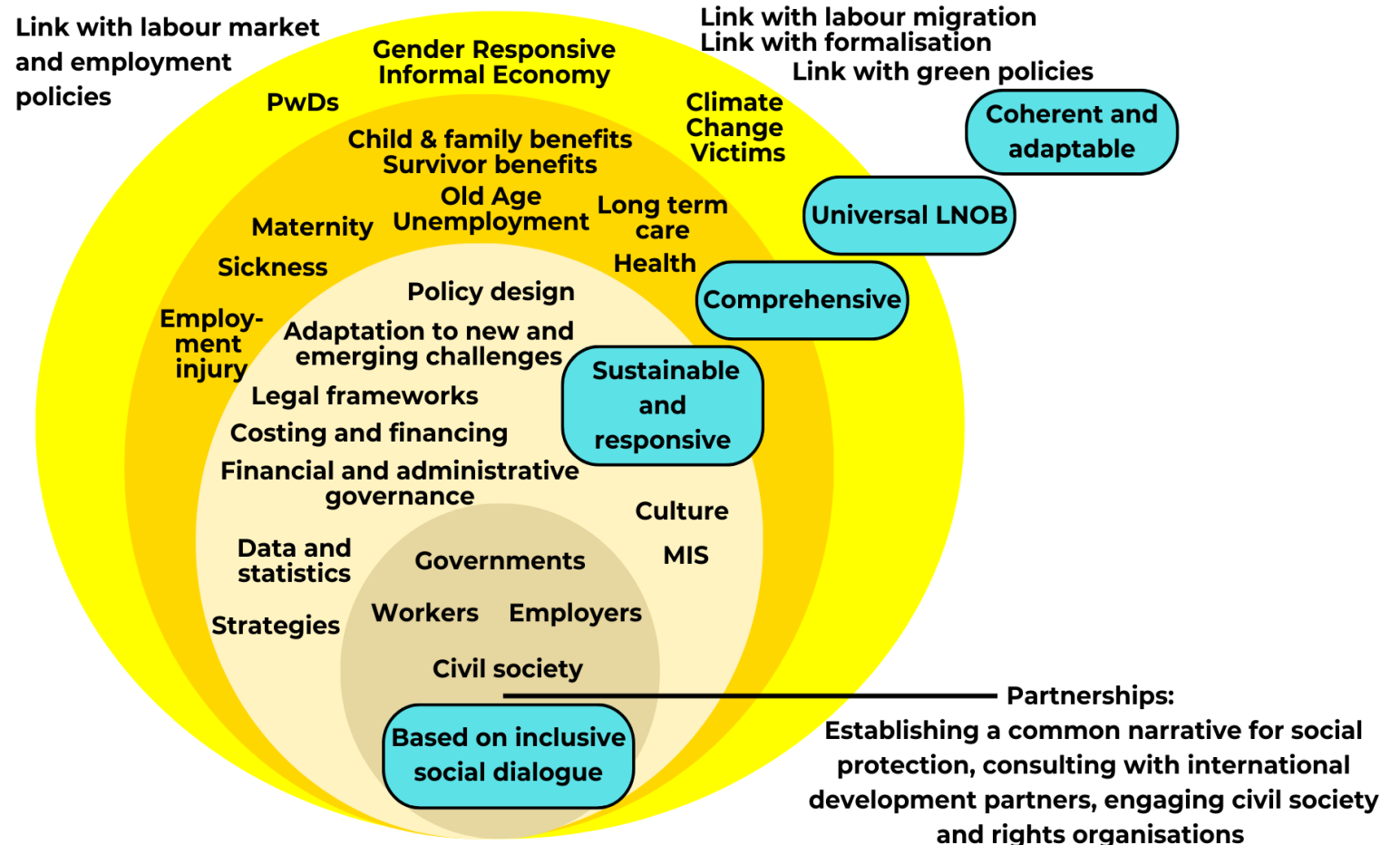


# Policy Recommendations



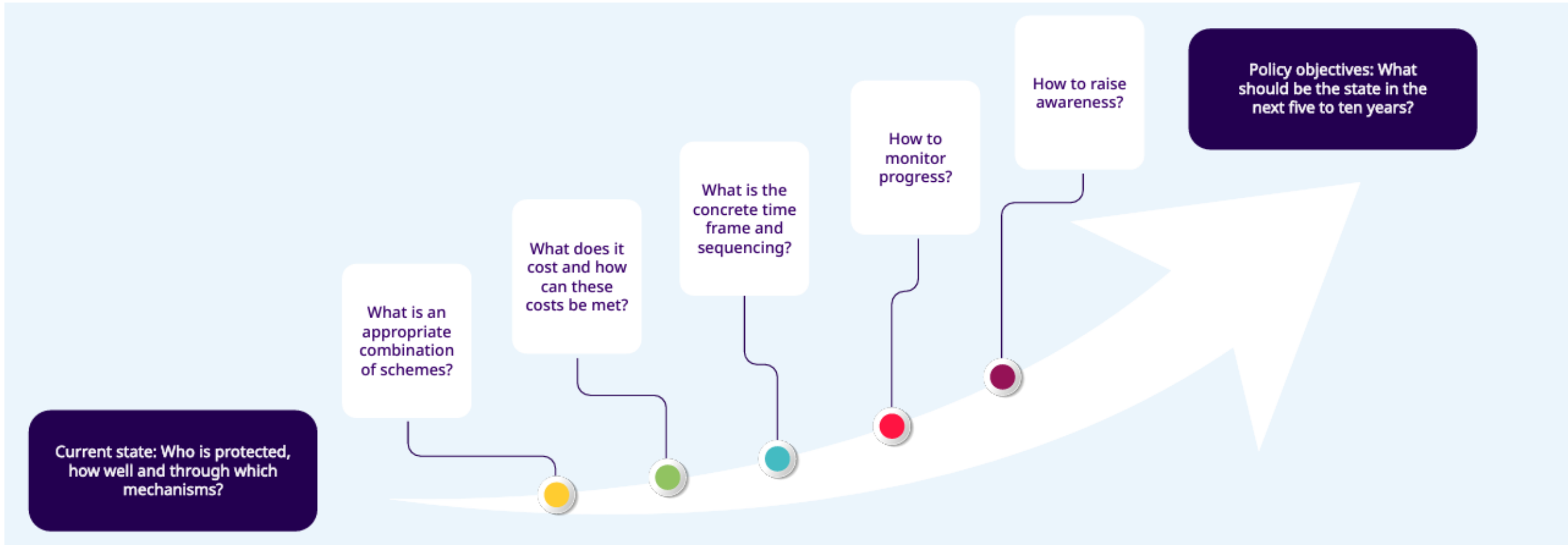
# 1. Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment by keeping vulnerable groups in the focus, with help of community-based and participatory approach

- Effectively establishing a USP would entail engaging a **range of stakeholders through social dialogues** and making critical policy decisions across multiple years
- Implemented properly, effective social dialogues can form a **fundamental building block** for LNOB-based Universal Social Protection





# The results of needs assessment should inform the policy decision to scale up and expand existing social protection programmes and innovate new ones.





## **2. Adopt and implement a pragmatic action plan by taking advantage of the needs assessment findings and engaging stakeholders through social dialogues**

- Effective action plan needs to be designed by engaging a range of stakeholders
- Key stakeholder groups need to be identified and onboarded
- Inclusive and participatory approach required to identify and prioritise tools, frameworks, and modalities
- Stakeholders could include beneficiaries, policymakers, local government representatives, implementation facilitators, civil society organisations, and rights groups





### 3. Formulate appropriate and sustainable financing mechanisms for the USP scheme

- Bangladesh's macroeconomic journey so far has been marked by **constrained fiscal space**
- Establishing USP will require a **well-thought out financing plan**
- Various countries have helped finance their SP programmes through contributory schemes, domestic resource mobilisation, fiscal reprioritisation, eliminating leakages, accommodative macroeconomic policies, and taking aid (*see next slide*)
- Striking the **right mix of options** will be critical in ensuring a sustainable USP system



## Countries have used a range of financing mechanisms for social spending

	Bolivia	Botswana	Brazil	Costa Rica	Indonesia	Lesotho	Namibia	South Africa	Thailand
Expanding social security contributions			√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Increasing tax revenues	√	√	√			√	√		
Curtailing illicit financial flows									
Expenditure reallocation				√	√	√		√	√
Tapping into fiscal reserves	√	√	√				√		
Reducing debt/debt service	√	√	√	√				√	√
Accommodative macroeconomic policies	√		√		√	√			√
Increasing aid						√	√		

Source: Ortiz et al., 2017; Duran-Valverde and Pacheco, 2012.



## 4. Establish and mobilise district job centres to connect left behind groups to productive jobs

- Marginalised populations need to be connected to employment opportunities to lift groups out of poverty and deprivation
- Structural issues, including youth unemployment and informal employment need to be addressed
- District job centres can help address these issues, providing three different types of support; labour-market responsive training, job placement counselling, and entrepreneurship support
- This is in line with SDG localization approach



## 5. Put the needed legal frameworks in place for introducing USP scheme

- In order to **facilitate an enabling environment**, the legal frameworks should be pointed towards accommodating a USP system
- A broad **social security act** might be established, or **distinct acts** could be crafted for social security and social insurance, mirroring the approach of numerous countries.
- Legislation would delineate the **roles of various stakeholders** and offer a legal foundation for **different facets** of the social protection systems.
- Legal structures also safeguard **beneficiaries' rights**, facilitate **coordination** among program entities, and enable necessary adaptations to **evolving societal needs**.



## 6. Address data limitations towards better USP implementation

- The NSSS correctly identified the need for a **strong database and management system** to implement social protection programmes
- Currently, there is **no integrated Management Information Service (MIS)** in place for the 113 social protection programs.
- BBS initiative for **National Household Database** still unrealized
- The lack of an integrated MIS means that programs have to rely on **traditional means of targeting**, leading to selection errors and leakages
- MIS would allow USP to be **shock-responsive**



## 7. To achieve USP, strengthen and scale social protection programmes in alignment with the lifecycle framework proposed in the NSSS

- The NSSS advocated for **programme consolidation** to increase efficiency of programme implementation, reduce leakages, and minimise targeting errors
- The total number of programmes has decreased since the NSSS was published, and some have been phased out due to short lifespans or insufficient funding. However, **fragmentation remains a pressing issue.**
- The implementation of consolidation has, so far, been **ad-hoc**, with **limited progress** on other proposed consolidations
- These efforts should be **sped up** in order to help build USP



## 8. Introduce an Effective Grievance Redressal System

- Dedicated toll-free helpline would enable citizens to report irregularities
- Past (COVID) experience shows success through this modality
- Grievance redressal should ensure that any concerns are dealt with effectively and promptly
- Periodic audits should be undertaken to establish accountability and ensure responsibility



## 9. Establish Monitoring and Evaluation for USP

- It is quite rare in Bangladesh to undertake **rigorous post-rollout impact assessments** of projects
- Due to the absence of this activity, it is difficult to know if the programs implemented by GoB are effective in achieving their objectives
- Impact assessment would allow the government to know **how effectively public money** is being used, and how to **improve programmes in the future**
- Concurrently, **systems for accountability** should be strengthened in order to mitigate leakages and targeting errors





## 10. Deploy technology to improve efficacy of USP implementation

- Smart technologies are being used in an increasing manner across the globe to enhance efficiency and reduce leakages
- Appropriate lessons from global experiences should be drawn
- GIS systems can be used to adapt and modify social protection
- Technology can also be used to predict shocks and their severity
- Monitoring and Evaluation can also be improved through effective use of technology



# Thank You



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