

Fourth review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging

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Committee on Social Development**

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Honourable Chair of the Session

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning /Afternoon

I express my sincere gratitude and thanks to the Economic and Social Council for Asia and Pacific for hosting this prestigious event .

Excellencies

2. Population ageing and its social and economic consequences are drawing increased attention of policy makers worldwide. For Bangladesh too, ageing is one of the emerging issues that has been gradually accumulating with its far-reaching consequences. As a result, National Older Persons Policy has been enacted in Bangladesh 2013 and an implementation work plan of the policy also introduced on 2015. These policies and work plan is now introducing an appropriate pension system, assisted-living facilities, adult day care support and health insurance scheme to cover the need of the increasing magnitude of elderly people.
3. Bangladesh is the seventh most populous country (165 million) of the world and is also in the phase of a rapid demographic transition. Elderly population, in Bangladesh, is defined as those who have reached 60 years of age. Like the global pattern, the number and rate of elderly population of Bangladesh is increasing and expected to increase more in the future years. According to the Population and Housing census of Bangladesh 2022, the Population size is 165 million and out of this, 9.3% is the age of over 60 years. Bangladesh's 65-and-older population is projected to rise to 5 percent in 2025 and 11 percent in 2050 (United Nation 2007). Life expectancy is increasing while birth rates are on decline. Number of the aged people of Bangladesh according to different census:

Age limit	According to census of 1981	According to census of 1991	According to census of 2001	According to census of 2011	According to census of 2022
60-64	1948649	2270142	2828640	3934014	5598877
65-69	901571	1092919	1443140	2113490	3930775
70+	2053133	2339704	3318560	4459385	5830099
Total	6523727	7652486	9946780	14007886	15359751

4. To ensure the welfare and betterment of elderly people for future the Government of Bangladesh has enacted **National Older Persons Policy -2013'**. In this policy the elderly persons are honored declaring as 'Senior Citizen'. The policy has already been approved at the Cabinet and gazette. NPA has been formulated in the line of MIPAA's policy. 'The Maintenance of Parents Act-2013' was passed in the National Parliament of Bangladesh. Recognition of the contribution of older persons is ensured in the policy.
5. In Bangladesh, adult off spring, particularly sons, are considered to be the main source of security and economic support to their parents, particularly in the time of disaster, sickness and in old age. As an Asian country, Bangladesh has a long cultural and religious tradition of looking after the elderly and it is expected that families and communities will care for their own elderly members. But rapid socio-economic and demographic transitions, mass poverty, changing social and religious values, influence of western culture, and other factors have broken down the traditional extended family and community care system. Most of the elderly people in Bangladesh suffer from some basic human problems, such as

poor financial support, senile diseases & absence of proper health & medicine facilities, exclusion & negligence, deprivation and socio-economic insecurity.

6. The constitution of Bangladesh guarantees of social protection for the backward section of population in its many clauses. Article 10-15, 17-20, 27, 28 are the safe guard of rights and privileges for all citizen, specially by-passed segments of population. Specially in the article 15(d) of the constitution clearly spells that;

'the right to social security, that is to say, to public assistance in cases of undeserved want arising from unemployment, illness or disablement, or suffered by widows or orphans or in old age, or in other such cases'.

The Government of Bangladesh has embarked upon the formulation of a comprehensive National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) that seeks to streamline and strengthen the existing safety net programs with a view to achieving better results from money spent, and to broaden the scope of social protection from the narrower safety net concept to include employment policies and social Pensions to address the emerging needs of a middle-income Bangladesh in 2021 and ahead. The long-term vision for social protection is to: Build an inclusive SPS for all Bangladeshis that effectively tackle and prevent poverty and rising inequality and contributes to broader human development, employment and economic growth.

7. Housing and healthcare is the emerging problems in Bangladesh. Very limited number of old homes are available for taking care of the older persons in Bangladesh. Some Olde home is established und NGO and some are under Government. Bangladesh Association for the Aged and Institute of Geriatric Medicine (BAAIGM) popularly known as "Probin Hitoishi Sangha", *Suberta* Boyoshko Punorbashon Kendro is very pronounced in the country. There are 6 government old homes in the country which accommodation capacity is 50 each home. There is also an option of 10 older person accommodations in 85 Government Children homes each. Poverty-stricken older people (aged 60 years and above) from any religious faith can live in this more or less full-grown old home. This centre currently supplies housing facilities for about 2000 old people. Besides free residence, food, and clothing, they provide free medical care for the elderly people and involve them in the activity of tending and cultivating a garden, growing crops and raising livestock, controlled breeding and rearing of fish and other recreational activities. **Recently, the Government has taken a project to establish 8 Old home in 8 Divisions in the country, under DSS.**

- 8.1 The Government of Bangladesh took an initiative for paying a subsidy to the poor and vulnerable older persons by establishing Old-age Allowance Program from the revenue budget in 1998. Beneficiary, must have the age of 65 and above for male and 62 or above for female. The number of recipients of the old age allowances was 0.403 million in the fiscal year 1997-98; In the financial year 2022-2023 the **Bangladesh Government assigned 34,445.42 million Taka. At present the total beneficiary of this is 5.701 million are getting Tk. 500 monthly** per head which is receivable in every 3 months through Digital payment(G2P Payment System).

- 8.2 Hon'ble Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina considering great contribution of the freedom fighters, introduced Allowances for Freedom Fighter in the financial year 1999-2000. Government has given utmost importance for wellbeing of the Freedom Fighters. She has increased privileges to Freedom Fighters like extended retirement age, allowances increased from Taka 300 to 20000, introduced two Eid Festival allowances, Bangla New Year allowance and Independence & Victory Day's Allowance.

- 8.3 The widow & distressed women get constitutional guarantee of social security at the time of their poverty. But no head of the government before Sheikh Hasina Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh in her 1st tenure(1996-2001) came forward to introduce social security program for the widows and husband deserted destitute women. Starting of this program, the number of beneficiaries was 0.403 million and the FY 2022-23 the coverage is 2.475 million, rate of allowance per month is BDT. 500 and yearly allocation is 14954 million which is payable in every 3 months through Mobile Financial Service and Agent banking (G2P) system. Among recipients, about 35% are the age of 60 years and above.
- 8.4 Government is also emphasizing to provide Social cash under Social Protection Program as Constitutional obligation for marginalized people like- Hijra (Transgender), Bede (Gypsy) & Underprivileged Communities. There is also an opportunity of retirement incentives for the Government employees in Bangladesh, constitutes only a negligible fraction of the total population. In the FY 2022-23, about 0.753 million retired government employees and their families will receive the pension benefit of BDT.280370 million. In other hand, majority of the labour force in Bangladesh is still in rural areas and most of the workers employees of the non-government industries/organizations still not eligible for pensions.
9. Some important positive initiatives have been taken in case of Old-age Allowance Program in the current financial year 2022-2023, which are as follows:
- Continuation of Increasing the coverage and amount of per head allowance
 - Implementation manual has been reformed including the public representatives.
 - A web-based Management Information System (MIS) has been established and about 10.08 million beneficiary's data entered to the MIS.
 - Payment Digitization has been taken for reducing time, cost and arrangement of beneficiary's side. Now the Older persons able to receive money from their door-steps through Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) system by Mobile Financial Services (MFS).
 - Establishment of 8 Old home in 08 Old Homes in 8 division has been taken under GoB budget
 - A draft to ratify Older Persons Development Foundation has been formulated and near to finalize.
 - A Draft for 'National Pension Authority Act, 2022' has been formulated.
 - The Government has spread coverage of social safety net by covering 100 per cent eligible senior citizens and widows and husband deserted women considering Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020-21 poverty-prone 112 upazilas and 2021-22 in 150 upazilas of the country among 492 upazilas of Bangladesh;
 - All the PWDs who are registered and included in Database (www.dis.gov.bd) as well as social safety net cash transfer process.
 - During COVID-19 pandemic medical assistance has been provided to 2,65,461 distressed patients Across the country and 2,60,343 people have been provided with coronary relief 79.8 million has been spent for the welfare of the destitute patients through the Ministry of Social Welfare;
 - During COVID-19 pandemic to build public awareness distribution of relief materials posters and leaflets is also being carried out with the personal donations of the officers and employees of the Department of Social Services and the grants of the local voluntary organizations registered with the Department of Social Services;
- 8.0** The Government of Bangladesh is facing these emerging social issues with firm determination and courage. In line with the Government policy the Ministry of Social Welfare has an enthusiastic vision & mission to address the social issues relating to the elderly. Providing Old-age Allowance is a bold step of the Government in spite of resource constraints in the country. It is proved that

successful implementation of any program is possible through people's participation and proper monitoring and supervision

Thank you all.