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## Launching of National Forum for Social Protection



With the support from the UK and Australian government, Bangladesh has undertaken a programme titled Strengthening Government Social Protection for the Poor (SGSP) for reforming the country's social protection system by enhancing its transparency and accountability. The programme will run from 2013 to 2017. Ministry of Finance and six other line ministries, and UNDP, WFP, WB and MJF are partners in the project.

National Forum for Social Protection (NFSP), has been formed to gather views of the beneficiaries about the effectiveness and impact of social safety and make policy recommendations to the government in order to improve its social protection programs. It is comprised of 44 individuals and organizations working on social protection issues.

National Forum for Social Protection was formally launched yesterday, Tuesday, at Hotel Lakeshore in Dhaka. State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Ms. Meher Afroze Chumki, MP was present as Chief Guest. Social Welfare Joint Secretary Nurul Kabir Siddique, Director General of Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief Mohammad Abdul Wazed and Country Representative of DFID- Bangladesh Sarah Cooke were present as special guests. Co-Convener, NFSP and Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation Shaheen Anam chaired the programme.

In her address Chief Guest State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Ms. Meher Afroze Chumki MP said, frequent incidence of natural disaster, effects of climate change, political unrest and extensive unemployment rate continue to push people to severe vulnerabilities. In facing these challenges, social protection has been adopted as one of the major strategies for poverty reduction in Bangladesh. I hope that the extreme poor and the vulnerable can

potentially lift themselves out of poverty with appropriately designed short to medium-term supports. The extreme dependent poor, who are old, disabled or chronically sick, will depend on long-term social protection to survive.

Special Guest Sarah Cooke said, “By gathering the views of the people it is intended to benefit and presenting those views to policy makers, the **National Forum for Social Protection** will play an important role in making Bangladesh’s social protection system work better for the poor.”

Shaheen Anam said Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) is implementing the Civil Society component of SGSP, which to gather opinions of the poor people and feed it to policy level. **NFSP** is a national level citizens’ platform comprised of both individuals and organizations involved in social protection programs in indifferent capacities. Representatives of the local social protection forums are also the members of the national forum.

The civil society component of the program will be implemented by Manusher Jonno Foundation, a non-governmental organization which will get feedback from the poor on the reach, effectiveness and impact of different social protection schemes and use the evidence to improve governance in the sector. The project intends to initiate local level grievance mechanism on social protection services and bring grass root evidences, voice and opinions to the relevant authorities and national policy formulators as well.

Bangladesh spends around 2% of its GDP for social protection purpose; in FY 2013-14, Government spent Tk. 267 billion that reached to around 77 million people<sup>i</sup> through 100 (approx.) different projects. Improvements in terms of more accountability, transparency and proper targeting in the social protection schemes will increase proper utilization of the huge revenue funds that government is spending on it.