

# Social Protection

## KEY FINDINGS

- The 28 Social Protection stimulus packages put in place by the Government to deal with the impacts of the COVID19 pandemic did not include children as direct targets. The children were only to benefit indirectly from the support targeted for the families.
- For the conventional programming in 2021-22, 19 out of 120 social safety net programmes (8.2% of the total social protection allocation) were directly targeting children.
- Adding SSNP allocations that were indirectly benefitting children, the share rises to 15.9%.
- Beneficiary coverage of important child-focused social protection programmes remained almost same between 2019-20 and 2021-22.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Prioritise children in social protection programmes in the event of shocks.
- Make social protection programmes shock-responsive by keeping provisions for rapid horizontal and vertical expansion (increased coverage/benefits) in the event of shocks.
- Establish a separate Child Directorate/Department within the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) with adequate institutional capacities to deal with children related issues in a comprehensive manner.
- Design a targeted programme for Covid Orphans or integrate them in the existing support programmes to address their specific needs.

## BACKGROUND

The share of social safety net budget (excluding pension for government officials) in GDP in Bangladesh has seen a tangible rise from 1.65% in the fiscal year 2018-19 (FY18-19) to 2.34% in FY21-22. The share of Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) in government expenditure also rose from 9.48% to 13.41% over the corresponding period. This trend ought to be juxtaposed to the significant adverse impact of the COVID19 pandemic on the vulnerable households and the children.

## CHILDREN IN THE SOCIAL PROTECTION BUDGET OF BANGLADESH

A number of SSNPs in Bangladesh are geared specifically to addressing the needs of the children. At the same time, children also benefit indirectly from some other SSNPs being part of the families and communities who are directly targeted.

Of the 120 SSNPs which were being implemented with an allocation of Tk. 107.6 thousand crore in the FY21-22 budget, 19 SSNPs with the allocation of Tk. 8.83 thousand crore (8.2% of total SSNP budget) were targeted directly to child-centric areas. There are two other types of SSNPs (in terms of target groups) which benefit children – 1) SSNPs that are not exclusively for children, but children partially constitute the target group, and 2) SSNPs that do not include children as target groups, but children benefit from the programmes indirectly. If such programmes are added, the total number of SSNPs benefiting children rises to 70 with an allocation of Tk. 17.11 thousand crore in FY21-22, which was 15.9% of the total social protection budget. Excluding pensions for government employees and interest on savings certificate from the total SSNP budget, the share of children would rise to 23.1%. It is, however, interesting to note that this is about 4.1 percentage points lower than the pre-pandemic share (27.2% for FY19-20).

<sup>1</sup> Partially child-targeting programmes - Allocations for children in these programmes were taken to be a certain percentage (in the range between 5-80 per cent) of relevant budgetary allocations. For example, percentage of children in the cohort of physically challenged is 15 per cent; so in this case allocation was apportioned to be 15 per cent. Where no such criteria could be used, the share was taken based on perception and intelligent guess. Indirect Programmes – Children's share in population is used to derive the share in the project budget.

**Table 1: Child-centric SSNPs (Pre-Covid Period Budget Vs. Covid Period Budget) Excluding Pension and Interest on Savings Certificate**

Scenario	No. of Prog.		% of total no. prog		Amount (in crore Tk.)		Growth: B-FY22 over B-FY20	% of total SSNP Budget <sup>2</sup>	
	B-FY20 <sup>3</sup>	B-FY22	B-FY20	B-FY22	B-FY20	B-FY22		B-FY20	B-FY22
<b>Direct</b>	27	19	20.5	15.8	7,138	8,827	23.7	13.9	11.9
<b>Indirect:</b>	53	51	40.2	42.5	6,850	8,286	21.0	13.3	11.2
<b>Total (Direct + Indirect)</b>	80	70	60.6	58.3	13,988	17,113	22.3	27.2	23.1

**Source:** Authors' estimation based on SSNP Budgets for various years (Finance Division, Ministry of Finance)

## Children in the COVID response through SSNPs

Total number of SSNPs in FY19-20 and FY21-22 (pre- and post-Covid years) were 132 and 120, with respective total allocations of Tk. 74,367 crore and Tk. 107,614 crore. None of the Covid-specific SSNPs were directly targeted for children. Four Covid-specific SSNPs can be identified that benefit children indirectly. If these four SSNPs are excluded from FY21-22 budget, the total (direct and indirect)

allocations between FY19-20 and FY21-22 that benefit children do not change significantly (only 1.5% growth over the two years). The direct SSNP allocations for children, however, increased significantly by 23.7% between this period.

Between FY19-20 and FY21-22, the number of beneficiaries in the major programmes (non-Covid) benefiting children remained almost same, although Covid has added many new faces to the list of potential beneficiaries.

**Table 2: Number of Beneficiaries of Selected SSNPs for Children**

(In Lac)

Serial No.	Programme Name	FY19-20	FY20-21	FY21-22
1	Maternity Allowance Program for the Poor Lactating Mothers	7.70	7.70	7.70
2	Assistance for Working Lactating Mothers	2.75	2.75	2.75
3	Stipends for Physically Challenged Students	1.00	1.00	1.00
4	Capitation Grants for Orphan Students to non-gov. institutions	1.16	1.00	1.02
5	Street Children Rehabilitation Program and CDC	0.02	0.02	0.02
6	Sarkari Shishu Paribar and Baby Home	-	0.02	0.03
7	Child protection and child welfare	1.50	1.50	1.45

The absence of a dedicated agency/department for children, like the Department of Women Affairs within the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, apparently leaves a gap in the planning process in prioritizing children, during crisis or not. The number of beneficiaries for orphan-related programmes and

those for child protection and child welfare in general has actually declined between FY19-20 and FY21-22, although many children became Covid-orphans during the pandemic, although a couple of new programmes were introduced in FY2021-22.

<sup>2</sup> Excluding government pensions and interest subsidies on savings certificate

<sup>3</sup> B-FY – Budget amount of particular fiscal year;

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