

SOCIAL PROTECTION MEASURES IN BANGLADESH:
As Means to Improve Child Well-being

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A PATHAK SHAMABESH BOOK

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In Bangladesh, among the total 30.9 million households, 12.4 and 7.8 million households live below the upper and lower poverty lines respectively. If the Constitutional aspiration of 'right to social security' for the 'underserved' is taken into consideration, at least 7.8 million households require social protection. Thirty-three million children in Bangladesh - about half of all Bangladeshi children - are living in poverty while about one in four children is deprived of at least four basic needs among the following: food, education, health, information, shelter, water and sanitation.

In recent years around 12 per cent of the total budget outlay (2 per cent of GDP) was allocated through 66 different programmes under social sector and social empowerment. However, the major social protection programmes cover only 25 per cent of the eligible beneficiaries that total only 2 million households.

What is the implication of various social protection programmes for the poor households and their children? Analyzing the budget, targeting, eligibility, coverage, utilization, delivery mechanism and impact of the major social protection programmes, it was found that the major social protection programmes in Bangladesh do not contribute much in poverty alleviation. They only act as an instrument to keep poor people within the orbit of poverty with ups and downs.

This book forwards suggestions towards increasing the national budget for social protection, expanding the coverage of eligible beneficiaries, better targeting the marginalized population, provisioning multiple benefits to eligible households, and instituting pro-poor children social protection programme for the consideration of relevant authorities.