

## Old Age Allowance – Dignity and Protection to Senior Citizens



### Background

The Constitution of Bangladesh in clause 15(d) declares to introduce the Social Security Programme. The Constitution clearly spells '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 introduced Old Age Allowance in 1997 -98 fiscal year making the provision of monthly allowance BDT 100 to 0.40 million old aged people of the country. Later in 2009-2010 fiscal year the monthly payment increased to BDT 300 and again in 2016-2017 the monthly allowances increased to BDT 500. In 2022-23 fiscal year, GoB allocated BDT 3444.54 crore with the target of covering 5.7 million beneficiaries who gets BDT 500 monthly per head which is payable in every 3 months. The allowance is being transferred to the bank account of the beneficiaries under G2P (Government to Persons) modalities. Minimum age for this allowance is 65

years for male and 62 for female. (Source – Department of Social Services).

The National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) -2015 highlights the need to strengthen the Old Age Allowances in urban areas as almost 94% beneficiaries are from rural areas.

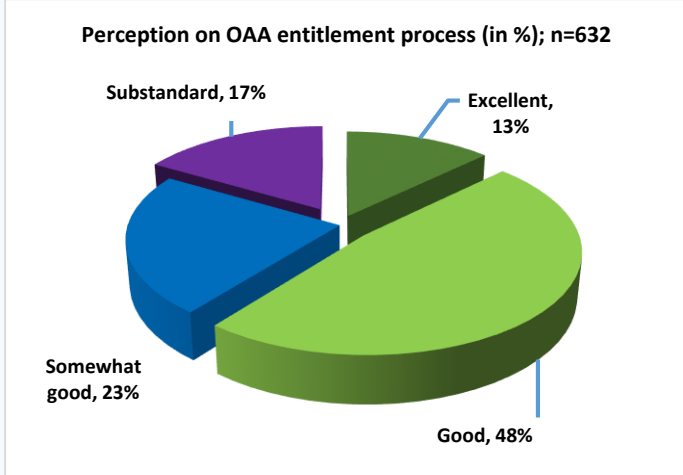
### Impact of Old Age Allowances

Old Age Allowances is one of the largest anti-poverty safety net programs in the country. This scheme is supportive to achieve SDG 1 & 2.

Multiple evaluations on the Old Age Allowances provide suggestive evidence of several positive outcomes of the program, despite the relatively low amount allocation of allowance. Some of those outcomes shows that most of the allowance amount is reportedly spent on food consumption, and many beneficiaries reported an increase in their household food consumption, with a greater protein intake in comparison with non-beneficiary

households. Increase in body mass was also cited as an outcome by many beneficiaries.

However, a survey conducted by MJF (2022) shows that among the 632 Old Age Allowance (OAA) beneficiaries, 48% and 23% opined the entitlement procedure is 'good' and 'somewhat good' respectively. Besides, 13% respondents said that the entitlement procedure was excellent. On the other hand, 17% beneficiaries claimed that the entitlement



### MJF efforts for accountable public service delivery of social protection schemes

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) under its Excluded People's Rights Project funded by FCDO, UK contributed to strengthen public institutes for better service delivery targeting the underprivileged and excluded persons to ensure their rights to social protection.

In the project areas, MJF under its EPR project contributed in beneficiary selection process through social dialogue and community meeting where beneficiary selection process was shared with the community, locally elected representatives, and other stakeholders. The project strengthened information services on social protection schemes and other public service delivery using some social accountability tools such as Wardshava, Citizen Report Card, Citizen Charter, Information Display Board, Public Hearing etc.

Government procedures for grievance redress on mis-targeting, inclusion and exclusion errors were also shared with the community. Locally elected representatives got better idea on social inclusion which rightly reflects the theme- *leaving no one behind*. They convinced on social accountability for efficient service to the community.

As result of project interventions, the excluded persons availed the opportunity for enlistment as beneficiaries and risk of exclusion was minimized significantly.

Based on the learning from old age allowance, the project recommends following issues to be integrated in national

level policy, plan and guidelines to address the inclusion issues in a better way.

### Policy Gaps

- Inadequate citizen engagement in beneficiary selection
- Restriction in new inclusion depriving target groups who turned upto the age limit provision
- Inadequate amount of monthly allowances considering inflation and post Covid hardship
- Waiting 3 months for monthly allowances is not supportive to address emerging need
- Inadequate provision for understanding digital literacy to operate G2P system

### Challenges

- Inclusion and exclusion errors in beneficiary selection process
- Inadequate knowledge on Grievance Redress System (GRS) introduced by the Cabinet Division

### Issues to be considered by policy makers

Taking into account the challenges and MJF learning from Excluded People's Rights Project, following issues are recommended to consider by the policy makers;

- Minimize inclusion and exclusion errors in beneficiary selection and ensure engagement of NGOs/CSOs in the selection process
- Increase number of old age allowance recipients and enrolment to be continued
- Transfer of allowance should be done on monthly basis to meet the needs of the beneficiaries regularly
- Enhance digital literacy for better operation of G2P system
- Multiple cash transfer options can be applied considering beneficiaries' convenience
- Enhance knowledge sharing on Grievance Redress System
- Formation of Union implementation Committee should be done in an open meeting participated by the UP members and local civil society representatives instead of the members are chosen by the MP, UZ-Chair, UNO. Guideline may include criteria and members' category, like- minimum number of female, civil society, etc.
- Similarly, the Paurashava implementation committee members should be made involving the local civil society and elected representatives.
- Policy should be adopted by checking how other organizations are engaged in monitoring and evaluation
- Introduce community monitoring using social accountability tools.