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Social protection and security in Bangladesh

1. National Framework

Social security is a basic human right recognized by the UDHR (1948) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted by the UN in 1966. Bangladesh constitution has strong mandates for all citizens, so it includes senior citizens, in Part II, Article 15 (d) mentions the rights of the elderly people and entitled "Provision of Basic Necessities" and articulates the notion of social security for elderly people by emphasizing the rights of citizens.

Apart from the constitution, the Government introduced a "Parental Law Act -2013" which is a part of older people's social protection legal framework in Bangladesh. Key things of this law are that it is mandatory for the children that they are bound to take all responsibilities of their old parents. If they could not meet their basic needs, they will be punishable offence. This law has strong criticism on both social protection and human rights points of view. If children are poor indeed not possible to maintain their parents, in this perspective punishment will not produce any results.

The National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) proposed the introduction of a "Citizen's Pension" for older people. The NSSS proposes the introduction of a National Social Insurance Scheme to provide contributory pension coverage to the private formal sector.

National Human Rights Commission is aware of the rights of people but they could not influence on older people's human rights.

2. Availability, accessibilities and adaptability of older people for social protection supports and services

The Government introduced Old Age program in April 1998 is implemented by the Ministry of Social Welfare. The amount of allowance is inadequate to meeting the basic needs. Recipients' older women express their views that, "Whatever the amount we are receiving some money at end of the month, it gives us some financial support and solvency, we feel our power. But we are not comfortable through this small amount, we could not afford our health treatment. We have no access to in government special facility of treatment; therefore, we need free and quality treatment."

Status of old age pension in Bangladesh is that 7.6% government retirement pension, 39.9% Old Age Allowance and 10% private sector employees who receive some kind of provident fund, more than 40% Old-age over 65 years population do not receive any kind of pension. (Source is based on data of Bangladesh Bureau Statistics (BBS) and Ministry of Finance)

3. Universal Social Pension (USP) could achieve the security of older people

Universal Social Pension (USP) is an important component of social protection, Bangladesh government is committed to introduce a universal pension system for all the elderly citizens of the country. This has been raised in various policy documents of the government. Through this social protection elderly people will be benefitted and can improve their status of livelihood and feel dignity in their later life.

4. Equality and non-discrimination

Due to old age elderly people are being discriminated regularly in informal labor market, requires legal for senior workers.

5. Accountability

Accountability framework of older people's social protection is not defined, specific and functional. Generally central government and its cabinets are accountable for safety and social security of every citizen. But specific law, policies, guidelines, declarations in government gazette define issue-based accountability framework and make them functional.

Elderly people social protection issues came up in national policy on ageing but it has not comprehensively defined who is responsible for what? Nevertheless, I would like to say fire burning on older people's human rights from every corner.