



Executive Summary

The BSPAN 2024 newsletter highlights significant progress in advancing Social Protection, Adaptive Social Protection (ASP), and Just Transition (JT) in Bangladesh. Moreover, this Newsletter provides a concise summary of BSPAN 2024’s key activities, including the National high-level tripartite dialogue, Strategy workshops, and a Letter campaign - all aimed at addressing policy gaps and advocating for the ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 102. Despite challenges, BSPAN’s efforts this year have been impactful and effectively addressed critical policy concerns.



The state of social protection in Bangladesh critically impacts socio-economic development, equity, and resilience. However, the reality is stark: only 5% of the labor force, mainly government employees, benefit from pensions, leaving 95%—mostly informal workers—without financial security in old age. This exclusion perpetuates inequality and becomes more alarming as the aging population grows. Social security allocations remain inadequate, with vulnerable groups like the elderly, widows, and people with disabilities struggling to meet basic needs. This undermines poverty alleviation efforts and exacerbates hardships during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Alarming, 31% of the social protection budget is allocated to pensions and savings certificate interests, primarily benefiting individuals above the poverty line. This misallocation reduces support for the truly underprivileged. The absence of a comprehensive pension or social security system for informal workers discourages their participation in formal economic activities, weakens morale, and hinders long-term planning and savings behavior. Consequently, economic productivity and resilience suffer. Without inclusive reforms, systemic inequities will persist, undermining progress toward a more equitable and sustainable future. Addressing these challenges requires immediate action to ensure a just and effective social protection framework for all citizens.

**Dr. Manzur Kadir Ahmed
Chairperson, BSPAN**

Agenda

- National Level Program**
- Workshop and International Day Observation**
- Training and Workshop**
- Universal Pension Scheme and Basic Income**
- Coordination Meeting and Letter Campaign**
- Support to Workers**
- IEC Materials and Details on BSPAN**



Since its establishment in 2017, BSPAN has long advocated for the extension of social protection as a right and a fundamental component of decent work, to be ensured across Bangladesh. BSPAN calls on policymakers to ratify ILO Convention 102, reform the Universal Pension Scheme, and ensure basic healthcare and family income for all. It also advocates for increased funding through resource reprioritization, progressive taxation, and addressing tax evasion. In 2024/25, the country committed to undertaking extensive reforms to secure citizens welfare and rights, including social protection, which is enshrined in the Constitution. There is an urgent need to address the weaknesses and gaps in the current National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) and the National Social Protection Programme to close these gaps and ensure universal access to social protection. BSPAN expects the Labour Reform Commission and the Reform Commission on Women Affairs, established by the current caretaker government, to recommend reforms that benefit vulnerable populations, including informal workers and victims of accidents, diseases, and environmental crises. Collective action is needed to achieve universal social protection in Bangladesh. It is time to act collectively for a just transition and make universal social protection a reality for all. The state must ensure that no one is left behind and that everyone is socially protected in Bangladesh.

**Repon Chowdhury
Member Secretary, BSPAN**



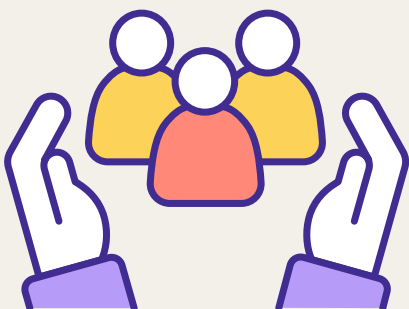
National Level Dialogue on Adaptive Social Protection and Just Transition



The National Level Dialogue on Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) and Just Transition (JT), held on December 28, 2024, brought together 20 participants from diverse sectors, including government officials, labor representatives, climate experts, development practitioners, and civil society organizations. The event aimed to address challenges and opportunities in fostering inclusive economic growth and enhancing climate resilience in Bangladesh. Participants highlighted critical issues such as limited social protection coverage, which leaves informal sector workers, including home-based workers and waste pickers, vulnerable to economic shocks. Concerns were raised about the inadequacy of cash transfer amounts under social safety nets, which are often insufficient to meet rising living costs, further exacerbating poverty and inequality. Additionally, fragmented delivery systems were criticized for inefficiency, poor coordination among agencies, and delays, disproportionately affecting marginalized groups.



Recommendations from the dialogue emphasized the need to align ASP and JT strategies with National Development Plans and Climate Adaptation frameworks to ensure policy coherence and resource efficiency. Enhancing inter-ministerial collaboration and establishing a centralized platform for decision-making were proposed to address administrative overlaps and gaps. Empowering workers through upskilling and reskilling initiatives was identified as a priority, enabling them to transition to green jobs while ensuring job security and decent work conditions. The promotion of renewable energy was also highlighted as a vital component of the just transition framework, essential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating sustainable employment opportunities. The dialogue underscored the importance of centralized decision-making, robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and strong stakeholder collaboration, including government, private sector, labor unions, and civil society, to achieve sustainable and inclusive development.



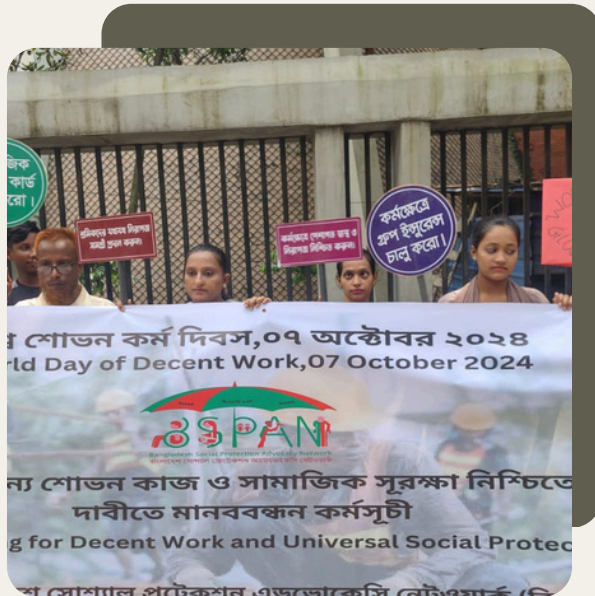
BSPAN Strategy Development Workshop for National Advocacy Roadmap on the Ratification of ILO Convention No. 102 (Social Security Minimum Standards Convention)



The Bangladesh Social Protection Advocacy Network (BSPAN) held a Strategy development workshop on September 19 2024 in Dhaka to craft a National Advocacy Roadmap for Ratifying ILO Convention No. 102, which sets global social security standards. The workshop gathered 19 participants from NGOs, trade unions, and international organizations, including the ILO, to address gaps in Bangladesh's social security system, especially in the RMG sector.

Analyzing international experiences, resolving ratification issues, and examining previous campaigns were among the main goals. The event resulted in a 2024-2026 roadmap with activities such as policy dialogues, public mobilization, and stakeholder engagement. Despite challenges like funding and political will, opportunities for international collaboration were highlighted. Ratifying the convention could enhance worker welfare, economic stability, and progress toward SDGs. The workshop strengthened collaboration and equipped stakeholders to advocate for social security reforms effectively.

International Decent Work Day Observance and Social Media Campaign



The Bangladesh Social Protection Advocacy Network (BSPAN) celebrated International Decent Work Day on October 7, 2024, at the National Press Club in Dhaka under the theme "Workers Deserve Peace and Democracy." The event emphasized the critical links between social protection, decent work, and democratic governance in Bangladesh, showcasing how these elements contribute to fostering a fair and equitable society. A total of 42 participants attended the event, representing diverse sectors, including trade unions, civil society organizations, and workers from the ready-made garment industry. Discussions highlighted the challenges faced by workers and underscored the importance of collective action and policy reforms to ensure workers' rights, social justice, and economic security.

Training on Advocacy and Bargaining Skills for BSPAN Members

The Advocacy and “Bargaining Skills Training for BSPAN Members” held on August 25, 2024 in Dhaka, enhanced the leadership, advocacy, and negotiation skills of 26 trade union leaders, among them 13 women leaders. Organized by BSPAN with WSM support and facilitated by the OSHE Foundation, the training focused on advocacy strategies, collective bargaining techniques, legal frameworks, and communication skills.

Experts from the Consultant of IOM, the Director of OSHE Foundation, and the Coordinator of BSPAN led sessions covering SMART advocacy goals, negotiation tactics, and effective communication, with practical activities like a group drama highlighting real-world applications.

The program successfully equipped participants to advocate for workers' rights, negotiate effectively, and engage policymakers, contributing to the broader goal of universal social protection in Bangladesh.



Workshop on Social Justice and Social Protection for Marginalized Working People



On August 18, 2024, the Bangladesh Social Protection Advocacy Network (BSPAN), funded by WSM, organized a workshop on "Social Justice and Social Protection for Marginalized Working People" at the U-Multipurpose Hall in Mirpur, Dhaka. The event gathered 30 participants to discuss challenges and opportunities in strengthening Bangladesh's social safety net, focusing on raising awareness, improving access to benefits, and informing policy recommendations.

A summary of social protection programs, including pensions and food security initiatives; an examination of issues facing the RMG industry, specifically workplace safety and pay disparities; and a review of labor welfare programs, including the Employment Insurance Scheme and Labor Welfare Fund, were the three main topics of the workshop. The need for stricter safety regulations, reforms to increase inclusivity, and addressing coverage gaps for informal workers were emphasized by the participants. The workshop fostered deep discussion and provided practical advice to improve social protection for Bangladesh's underprivileged workers.

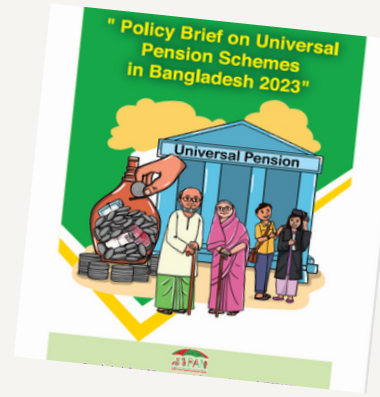


Universal Pension Scheme

The Bangladesh Social Protection Advocacy Network (BSPAN) has commended the government's launch of the Universal Pension Scheme (UPS) 2023, recognizing it as a significant step toward enhancing social welfare. However, BSPAN has identified critical gaps and proposed a comprehensive 9-point recommendation to improve the scheme's inclusivity and effectiveness.

Key recommendations include redefining low-income thresholds, easing premium payment conditions, and ensuring equitable pension benefits for workers in both public and private sectors. BSPAN also suggests extending age eligibility to 64 years, introducing subsidies or flexible payment options for low-income individuals, and addressing delays in nominee payouts. Furthermore, the network advocates for increased government contributions, tailored contributions for informal workers with irregular incomes, and the inclusion of civil society and labor organization representatives in the governing board.

By addressing these issues, BSPAN aims to help the UPS fulfill its universal objective of providing economic security and dignity for all workers, especially marginalized populations. Appreciating this transformative initiative, BSPAN expresses its commitment to collaborating with the government to make the UPS more inclusive and impactful.



Basic Income

BSPAN is leading efforts to explore the implementation of Universal Basic Income (UBI) in Bangladesh as a bold step toward addressing poverty, empowering individuals, and strengthening social protection systems. UBI is defined as a periodic, unconditional, and universal cash transfer to individuals, ensuring basic income security for all.

Recognizing the limitations of existing social safety net programs—such as exclusion and inclusion errors, insufficient benefits, and inefficiencies in delivery—BSPAN highlights UBI's potential to provide a more inclusive and effective solution. It's advocates for UBI as a practical means to fulfill the promise of Article 15 of Bangladesh's Constitution, which guarantees basic necessities and social security for every citizen.

BSPAN prioritizes the development of an operational UBI model tailored to the country's needs. its efforts focus on designing a delivery mechanism that ensures transparency and efficiency while addressing the unique challenges of Bangladesh's socio-economic landscape. By championing UBI, BSPAN aims to pave the way for a more equitable and inclusive future.



Coordination Meeting

The Bangladesh Social Protection Advocacy Network (BSPAN) held its inaugural meeting on July 14, 2024 chaired by Repon Chowdhury, to evaluate progress and set 2024 priorities. Key goals included integrating social protection into the national agenda, reforming labor laws, and empowering workers in policymaking. At the 2nd meeting on November 24, 2024, chaired by the OSHE Foundation Chairperson, 15 members focused on advancing social protection through collective action. Accomplishments included workshops for marginalized workers, advocacy for ILO Convention No. 102, and promoting fair labor policies via events like “International Decent Work Day.



Letter Campaign with National Authority (Concerned Ministry, Governmental Bodies etc.) Submission of Charter of Demands on Pursuing C-102



The ratification of ILO Convention 102 (C102) is essential for improving labor rights and social security in Bangladesh, where many workers remain unprotected. BSPAN submitted a charter of demands urging the government to:

- Ratify ILO Convention 102 to demonstrate Bangladesh’s commitment to international labor standards and workers’ rights.
- Expand social protection coverage to include all workers, particularly those in the informal economy, domestic workers, and women.
- Reform of UPS with the inclusion of workers' representation at the Board.

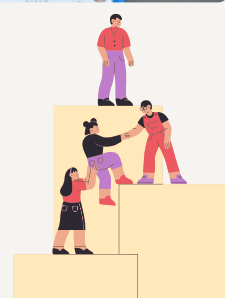
A meeting by the Department of Labour (DoL) and DIFE brought together 14 stakeholders to address fragmented systems and advocate for C102. Discussions emphasized inclusive policies, a 50-year Comprehensive Action Plan (CAP), contributory systems, public awareness, and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs).

This marked significant progress in aligning social protection with international labor standards and ensuring stronger, inclusive worker protections.



Support to Workers for Easy Access in Social Protection and Workplace Justice

On December 22nd, the Bangladesh Social Protection Advocacy Network (BSPAN) organized an event in Dhaka to address critical challenges faced by workers, including social protection, and workplace justice. The event featured inspiring speeches, powerful testimonies from workers facing workplace injuries, illnesses, and provided financial and emotional support to those affected. Participants expressed gratitude and offered valuable recommendations for future initiatives. The event underscored the urgent need for improved workplace safety, health, and justice for all workers. BSPAN remains committed to advocating for worker rights and driving systemic change.



My name is Sabrina, and I have been an export oriented readymade garment worker for seven years. One tragic day at work changed my life forever—I suffered a serious injury that left me in pain, unable to provide for my family, and uncertain about my future. The physical and emotional scars were overwhelming, but the struggle to seek compensation was even harder. For months, I felt lost and alone, fighting through endless hurdles with no clear direction. Just when I was about to give up, BSPAN came into my life. They didn't just guide me—they gave me hope. Their support helped me navigate the process and apply to the Central Fund for compensation. It was a long and painful journey, but with their help, I finally found some relief. I will forever be grateful to BSPAN for standing by me when I had no one else. I hope my story encourages others to keep fighting for their rights and reminds authorities how critical it is to make this process easier for workers like us.



Establishing and Promoting IEC Materials

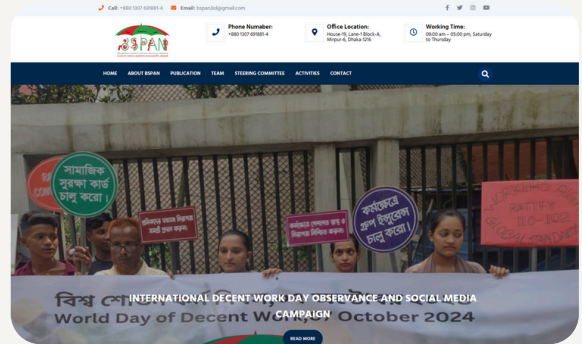
BSPAN Brochure

BSPAN's new brochure highlights the importance of ILO Convention 102, which sets global standards for social security. It emphasizes benefits like family support, unemployment aid, workplace injury compensation, medical care, pensions, and more. Adopting this convention in Bangladesh could enhance social security for formal and informal workers, improving well-being, reducing poverty, and fostering sustainable economic growth.



BSPAN Website

BSPAN proudly launches its website to promote universal social protection for workers and marginalized groups. Explore sections like About, Publications, Activities, and Contact for resources and updates. Since 2017, BSPAN has advanced advocacy, training, and capacity building. Visit the site to connect, learn, and join efforts for a fair and inclusive society.



About BSPAN

Bangladesh Social Protection Advocacy Network (BSPAN) is working to promote social protection and welfare to all, especially for working-class people since 2017. One of the core interventions of BSPAN is to advocate with the government and relevant stakeholders to formulate and review the existing policies. Adaptive social Protection is one of our key interventions for policy advocacy. The objective of the network is to promote social protection for all especially for workers and marginalized people. Non-government organizations and workers' organizations those who are working on decent work and social protection are the members of this network.

VISION

Ensuring social protection for all, especially working people, requires strong labor laws, universal social security, and inclusive policies for marginalized groups. This includes healthcare, pensions, and unemployment benefits, alongside job creation, skill development, and gender-sensitive initiatives.

Empowering trade unions, ensuring transparent funding, and fostering global solidarity are key to building sustainable systems that provide dignity and security for all workers.

MISSION

To Promote social protection for all with Special Focus to Workers social protection.

Extend our effort towards universal social protection, social advancement, adaptive social protection of workers by contributing to strengthen capacity, advocacy, training and campaign to achieve Sustainable Development goals.

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