



## Bridging data gaps for a better social protection system in Bangladesh

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- Data deficits undermine social protection efficiency: Local administrators in Bangladesh lack accessible and comparative data on the social protection system. They also lack access to regularly updated eligibility lists for various programmes, making it difficult to verify enrollment rates for these programmes.
- The new [IGC-BIGD Datahub dashboard](#) can improve social protection allocation decisions: Through user-friendly visualisations, cross-district analytics, and social protection programme eligibility lists, the IGC-BIGD Datahub dashboard can enable local administrators to benchmark social protection funds against other localities, verify beneficiary eligibility lists, and identify inefficiencies in the disbursement process.
- Policy integration and government buy-in remain key: To maximise impact and usage, the dashboard needs formal endorsements from policymakers and ministries, especially from the Ministry of Social Welfare of the Government of Bangladesh. Through formal recognition, the dashboard can be integrated into the government portal for maximum usage by the local administrators, primarily at the sub-district level.

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## IGC-BIGD Datahub dashboard

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The Government of Bangladesh allocated around BDT 1,262 billion (2.5% of GDP) as Social Protection Budget in the fiscal year of 2023-24 (Ministry of Finance, GoB, 2024). The country has numerous programs under its social protection schemes, where some of the biggest ones include cash transfers to the vulnerable population, disabled people, the elderly population, and freedom fighters of the 1971 war. Sub-district level administrators like Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs) and Social Welfare Officers (SWOs) carry out these transfers at the grassroots level, but their allocation decisions are blighted by misallocation and inefficiency as found in previous qualitative research with the local administration of Bangladesh (Arif et al., 2024). At the core of this issue is the lack of a robust, data-driven tool to guide allocation decisions to ensure equitable distribution of welfare funds.

To address these gaps, the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), in collaboration with the International Growth Centre (IGC), has developed a set of data dashboards under its IGC-BIGD Datahub project. The dashboard focuses specifically on meeting policymakers' needs at the local level with the social protection funds.

**The Datahub dashboard is a web-based tool that leverages publicly available government data to make social protection information accessible and actionable for UNOs and SWOs**

By aggregating and visualising data in one place, the Datahub dashboard bridges the gap between raw data and decision-making by benchmarking funds, cross-checking eligibility lists, and more.

## How the Datahub dashboard supports social protection fund allocation

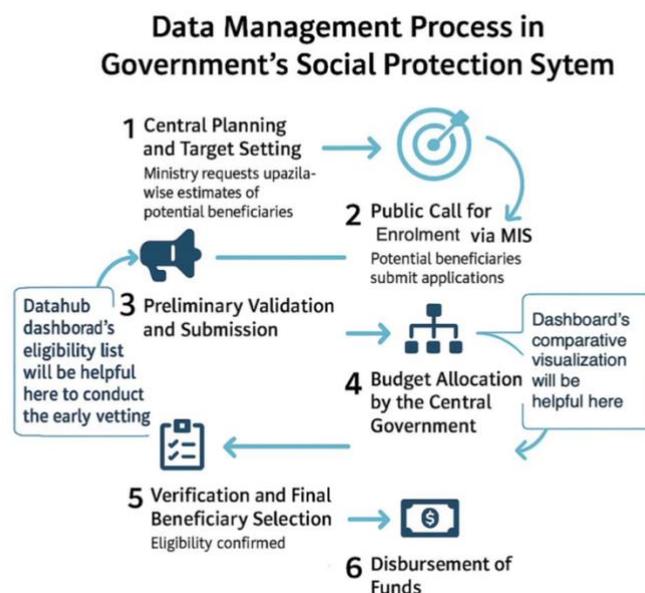
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The Datahub's dashboard can enhance the government's social protection fund allocation in two key stages, as detailed in Figure 1:

1. **Early validation of beneficiaries:** By leveraging census-based eligibility lists, the Datahub helps validate enrolment estimates and detect overall mismatch of beneficiaries' gross numbers early, reducing errors and strengthening reporting from the sub-district level.
2. **Improved allocation decisions:** The dashboard supports data-driven budget decisions by comparing past disbursements with current needs across regions, disaggregated up to the sub-district level. It highlights inequities across districts and sub-districts and helps justify adjustments based on trends.

3. **Trend detection in disbursement:** Policymakers can use the dashboard to track disbursement trends across locations and programs, which will help them plan better across various policymaking levels.

**FIGURE 1: Potential use case of Datahub dashboard in existing government system of social protection**



**TABLE 1: Challenges in the social protection system and how the Datahub dashboard can help**

Challenge in current system	Dashboard solution
Fragmented data with no cross-comparison between sub-districts and districts	Cross-Upazila and cross-district views reveal disparities between districts and sub-districts, helping policymakers to benchmark allocations
Outdated or inaccurate beneficiary lists	Eligibility dashboards help validate the beneficiary total numbers for certain programmes
No easy tracking of fund utilisation or spending gap	Trend analysis of social protection allocations
Limited data visualisation and analysis capability with the existing MIS system of government	Interactive visuals and a simple interface make data easy to interpret

## Recommendations: Enhancing Datahub's impact

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To maximise the policy impact of the Datahub dashboard, we recommend the following actions:

1. **Institutional integration:** Embedding the Datahub into official government platforms through formal recognition from the Ministry of Social Welfare or the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics will help boost visibility and signal formal adoption, which creates wider usage among local social protection administrators.
2. **Near real-time data sharing:** Through government collaboration, quarterly updates on fund allocations and expenditures will be made available on the dashboard for policymakers to help with timely adjustments in response to budget surpluses or shortfalls.
3. **Ensure engagement:** Adding features like programme performance tracking and beneficiary feedback can encourage regular use beyond the seasonal usage during fund distribution time. There will also be timely engagements and reminders about using the dashboards during social protection budget disbursement periods to maximise the seasonal usage.

## References

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