

BANGLADESH

COUNTRY REPORT BANGLADESH

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Background:

Access to education is, by far, one of the most fundamental rights of any person, living in any country in the world. In Bangladesh, vide Article 28(3) in the National Constitution; the government had also given the required stress to declare its mandate in the same tune. In pursuance of the Jomtien declaration (1990), the Salamanca Statement (1994) and the Dakar Framework (2000), the Government of Bangladesh is pledge bound to ensure enrollment of all children into education by 2015. Also as a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), all children, including children with disabilities, should be in education by 2015.

There is a growing consensus among professionals and disability rights promoting organizations- that inclusion in the mainstream schooling system is the only way to provide a means for education and learning for all children. Promoting inclusive education means that support services will be brought to the child, rather than moving the child to the support services; teachers and classrooms will adapt rather than focusing on the child to change to keep up with the other students.

While an inclusive environment in the mainstream schools is being suggested as the best possible option, it is recognized that, many children with disabilities, especially

those with profound degree, will need to be enrolled in integrated and special education setups. But, such integrated and special education setups should be designed such way that, they will prepare the learners gradually towards inclusion in the mainstream education system.

The Bangladesh Disability Act 2001 provides legislative support to ensure protection of rights and to ensure equal opportunity of people with disabilities. The Bangladesh National Policy on Disability 1995, approved by the Cabinet in 9th Nov. 1994 indicated creation of options for proper facilities and support to strengthen the integration of people with disabilities in development initiatives with specific mention on education of people with disabilities.

Bangladesh is a signatory and active follower of different international declarations, conventions and charters namely the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN convention on the Rights of the Child, UN Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, Salamanca Declaration, Jomtien Declaration, E-9 Declaration, UNESCAP decade declaration for equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities.

All these have highlighted enrollment of disabled children into education. Over the last three decades, the government of Bangladesh had formed three Education Commissions, which also have recommended education for children with disabilities. However, the National Policy on Education, though has touched the issue, but has not addressed it adequately.

All children, with or without disability, have right to education. Children with disability, no matter how serious their disability, have a right to education that promote their fullest potential and their inclusion into the society.

The School System in Bangladesh:

The school system in Bangladesh has 3 levels. i) Primary, ii) Lower Secondary, iii) Secondary. The primary level is compulsory and it's length is 5 years. The length of Lower Secondary level is 3 years and Secondary level is 2 years and these two levels of education is not compulsory.

Due to the Rules of Business of the Government the Education issue of Children with disabilities is under the Ministry of Social Welfare (MOSW) as the MOSW is looking after the disability issues. This is the major barrier of mainstreaming the children with disabilities in to the education system. Recently Ministry of Primary and Mass Education has decided to admit the children with disabilities in the 78000 Primary School.

A Research titled "Situation Analysis and assessment of education for Children with Disabilities in South Asia; East Asia and South Africa" conducted by Centre for Services and Information on Disability (CSID)- Bangladesh, commissioned by the University of East Anglia, UK found that - In Bangladesh for education of children with disabilities Special, Integrated, and Inclusive all 3 systems are being practiced. The Government of Bangladesh established Special and Integrated education system and NGOs are implementing Special and Inclusive education system. Department of Social Services (DSS), Government of Bangladesh operating 5 Special Schools for Blind Children, 7 for Deaf Children, 1 for Intellectual disabled children. The DSS also operating a total of 64 Integrated schools (Special Classes in the mainstream schools) for blind children in 64 districts. NGOs are operating many Special and Inclusive Education Centres but there is no reliable data available on the number of schools and enrollment of children. It can be assumed from the secondary data that; for Intellectual Disabled (ID) Children in Bangladesh NGOs are operating a total of 454 Special Schools apart from the 2 schools of Government and a total of approximate 7000 ID children are having opportunity to learn from those schools. In the Special Schools there are no levels and separate classes in accordance with the degree of disability. Some NGOs have home-based education programme for ID for those can not participate in school programme due to severe handicapness, and or problem of transportation and where there is no one to help carrying children in to school. Emphasis is being given to self-care, behaviour training and vocational skill training rather than academic lessons in the special schools.

State of Employment in relation to children with ID:

Employment is very difficult for ID persons in Bangladesh. There are no legislative/legal bindings for employment of ID. The Government declared an executive order of 10% Quota in Public Services for Orphans and Disabled Persons but not segregated the

percentages among 2 groups and nothing mentioned about the types and degrees of disabilities. The Private sectors are not implementing this order and there is no obligation, even the Government departments are not always following this order. The management/staff of special schools trying to employ them after training by motivating different employers and facilitating self-employment's. The types of employment they have been able to seek for ID persons at a very limited scale are: Wood work (Jig saw puzzle, educational toys), Cooking, Gardening, Candle making, Packaging, Poultry and Dairy, Shop keeping etc. Some of them have been employed in Garments Factories and some in the Pharmaceutical Companies as packager.

The employers are very much reluctant to employ persons with ID. It is due to absence of legal bindings and social negative attitude towards persons with ID.

Educational activities carried out to prepare Children with ID for Employment:

One of the major focuses of the Special Schools is to prepare the ID persons for employment. So, the special schools curriculum includes Training on Self-care, Developing mobility and functional ability including Behaviour therapy so that they can socialize them-selves. At the same time providing academic education and different vocational skill training in accordance with the capacity of individual ID child. The education is being provided on the following trades for wage and self-employment:

Weaving (net, jute bag, rug), Sewing (children's dress, bed spread, napkins, tea cozy), Printing (block print, string print, screen print, press print), Dress making, Pasting, Card making, Painting (fabric painting), Wood work (Jig saw puzzle, educational toys), Cooking, Gardening, Candle making, Packaging, Shop keeping etc.

Conclusion:

Among the all types of children/persons with disabilities children/persons ID are in the most vulnerable situation. They are often being treated and regarded as Mad. People can not differentiate between ID and Mental illness and or mad due to unawareness and ingrained prejudice. Children with mild and moderate degrees of disabilities of other types except ID can enroll in to mainstream schools but the children with ID are not. The special schools for ID children do not have separate classes or levels in accordance

with the degrees of ID. There are no legal bindings to enroll the ID children in to education system and or employ persons with ID. This group of children are totally ignored by the society and Government and deprived from all the basic rights. Even they are often ignored by the families. So, there should be a national policy guideline and legislative support for protecting the rights of education and employment of persons with ID. An extensive awareness and advocacy programme should undertake to bring these deprived groups of children in to development process.