

# **BANGLADESH**

## **COUNTRY REPORT**

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#### **Background:**

Access to education is, one of the most fundamental rights of any person, living in any country in the world. The Constitution of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh (in Article 17) suggests that Bangladesh needs to initiate a need based compulsory and free education with necessary legal basement. The Constitution offers a uniform, mass oriented and universal system of education, extending free and compulsory education to all children. Education is a fundamental human right for all children. It has been more than a decade since the United Nations declared the “Education for All” in 1990; Bangladesh government also made a declaration on “Education For All” and introduced Compulsory Primary Education through constitutional means.

*International commitments:* The Government of Bangladesh ratified CRC (Child Rights Convention) and a signatory country of the following international and regional declaration on education and disability: (i) Education For All (EFA): Jomtien (1990) declaration; (ii) Salamanca Declaration (1994) World Conference on Special Needs Education; (iii) Dakar Framework for Action (2000); (iii) E-9 Declaration (2000); (iv) UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993); (v) Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (Asia-Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 2003-2012) etc.

*National commitments and programmes:* Nationally Bangladesh has it’s National Policy on Disability – 1995; National Disability Welfare Act-2001; National Action Plan on Disability-2006; Institutional Programmes by Department of Social Services for Persons with Disabilities relating to education and training; Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP); National Education Policy -2000; Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) -II; Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project- under Department of Secondary and Higher Education- Ministry of Education; National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children (2004 – 2009). Education issue of individuals of special needs is some how included in all the above policy, legislation, plan/projects etc.

The Education System in Bangladesh:

The school system in Bangladesh has 3 levels. i) Primary, ii) Lower Secondary, and iii) Secondary. The primary level is compulsory and its 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 are not compulsory. In higher education there are 3 stages such as; Higher Secondary (2 years), and University level is 4 years. In all the levels there are Government School, Colleges and Universities as well as Private sector. Government education institutions are less costly than the private ones.

There are specialized technical/engineering schools, colleges and universities in Government and private sector also with different courses with different lengths.

In the primary level there are 2 systems. One is formal and another is Non-formal. All the non-formal schools are operated by Non- Government Organisations (NGOs). The non-formal schools are established for the marginalized, dropped out and children with special needs.

In the non-formal non government organizations are operating about 50,000 (fifty thousands) schools all over the country. Recently few NOGs has changed its policy and started to enroll children with disabilities in to their non-formal schools along with other marginalized children without disabilities.

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 in non-formal approach.

### **Measures undertaken:**

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.

The Ministry Social Welfare established a National Centre for Special Education (NCSE at Section-14, Mirpur, Dhaka in the year 1992. The following programmes are running under the centre:

#### *(1) Special Schools:*

There are 3 primary level special schools in the centre with residential facilities. One for Blind children, one for Hearing & Speech Impaired Children and one for Intellectual Disabled Children. Process is going on to upgrading the schools up to secondary level.

#### *(2) Teachers Training College:*

This College is affiliates with the National University. The College offering I year course on "Bachelor in Special Education" (B.S.Ed.) Degree. There are 45 seats with residential facilities.

Besides the Government initiatives NGOs are operating teachers training college to train the

special need children.

### **Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) -II**

On the basis of findings and recommendations of a study carried out by Centre for Services and Information on Disability (CSID) in association with Cambridge Education Consultants Limited, UK, (commissioned by the Department of Primary Education, Government of Bangladesh) in the year 2002; The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education in its Primary Education Development Project (PEDP)-II included a component of inclusive education for children with disabilities from 2004. At the end of the year 2005 Ministry of Primary and Mass Education circulated an order to all Primary Schools for enrolling *Children with Mild Degrees of Disabilities*.

**The Department of Secondary and Higher Education** has been undertaken a project titled

*“Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education”*.

In this project proposal it has been mentioned that: This project would contribute achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) and PRSP in the following manner:

(1) Improving quality of education through quality teachers training. (2) Creating equal education opportunities for people living in distance/remote areas and under development areas. (3) *Creating education opportunities for all through providing training to the teachers those are involved with teaching-Disabled, Minority and Refugee children.* (4) Encouraging recruitment of increased number of female teachers in Secondary education. (5) Promoting participation of people in order to bring qualitative change in education through raising social awareness.

### **Dhaka University:**

Dhaka University is offering a Masters Course with honors on Special Education through Department of Special Education under the Institute of Education and Research (IER). The courses have 3 disciplines: i) Education of Persons with Visual Impairment; ii) Education of Persons with Hearing & Speech Impairment; and iii) Education of Persons with Intellectual Impairment.

### **Major Shortfalls in existing education system for Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh:**

i) *In Special Education system:*

- Inadequate numbers of Government Special/Integrated Education Institutions operated by the Ministry of Social welfare.
- Non-Government Special Education system is very costly.
- Insufficient government resource allocation for special and integrated education system.
- Low salary and benefits for resource teachers, causing lack of interest in this kind of job.

- Inadequate Early Detection and Intervention programme. Each school has 60- 70 seats but there is no system for the identification of disabled children and mobilizing them to enroll. So, many seats are falling vacant.
- Inadequate teacher training facilities and trained teachers.
- Teachers have an interest in advancing training to enhance capacity and develop skills but the authorities (Government & NGOs) are not interested.
- The Infrastructure of most of the Schools are not Physically Accessible.
- There is no uniformed curriculum in the special education system among NGOs, to accommodate different types of disabled children. Different organisations use different curricula developed by them selves.
- Sign language used in special schools for hearing and speech impaired children is in English so they can not communicate with others (in family & community). Bengali signing has been developed recently but not yet practiced widely.
- Lack of relevant support systems (Extra session & IEP- Individual Education Plan), support system such as; Therapeutical and assistive technology.
- Special education system emphasis on vocational training is not sufficiently aimed at transferring the children into higher education.
- It is also observed that children do not have the option to proceed/apply for inclusive education.
- There is hardly use of computer for the visually impaired students in class room.

*ii) In Integrated Education system:*

Integrated education system is only being operated by the Government, for blind boys only.

- Supply of Braille books and equipment is inadequate in integrated schools.
- Low remuneration and benefits of resource teachers.
- Resource teachers have no opportunities to develop further skills.
- Insufficient resource allocation to Integrated schools for proper support of the blind children.

*iii) Inclusive Education system:*

The Inclusive education system has been introduced in very recent years and is being operated by NGOs in non-formal education settings and primarily in rural areas.

- Most of the schools are pre-primary level.
- Teachers are not adequately qualified and trained.
- Only marginalized children with mild degrees of disabilities are enrolled in the inclusive schools.
- Classrooms and premises are not accessible and seating arrangement is not comfortable for disabled children.
- Classroom environment is not suitable for accommodating different types of disabled children.

- Supply of teaching/learning materials/equipment is insufficient.

**Conclusion:**

It has been found that the Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and Secondary and Higher Education; Ministry of Women and Children Affairs separately prepared their policy and plan and which is not at all harmonized with the International Concept of Inclusive Education and Education for All. So, a close coordination and joint effort among all the concern Government Ministries and Departments is needed to prepare an effective and uniformed action plan to ensure the education rights and opportunity for children with disabilities and individuals with special needs.

The concept of Inclusive Education (IE) system is a shift from the traditional welfare and service oriented practice of special/integrated education that was not appropriate to be a much effective and rights-based system. IE is a new concept and globally recognized but implementing this system is depending upon the values, attitude, and resources. A vast task is needed to be done to introduce effective inclusive education system to ensure education equity among all children. There is no example of successful implementation of IE in front of us as yet. The inclusive education for children with disabilities is no doubt a new dimension and it has valid logic for implementation in different society suited to its local socio-economic and cultural condition.