

BANGLADESH

**Educational Support for Children with
Multiple Disability with Sensory Impairment,
including Deafblindness**

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PART A. BANGLADESH: AN OVERVIEW

Bangladesh, a unitary and sovereign republic, lies in the north-eastern part of South East Asia between 20^o34 and 26^o38 north latitude and between 88^o01 and 92^o41 east longitude. The country is bounded by India on the west, the north and the north-east, Burma on the south-east and the Bay of Bengal on the south. It emerged as an independent nation on 26th March 1971. The capital of the republic is Dhaka. The total population is estimated at 130 million. The citizen of Bangladesh is known as Bangladeshi.



Language

Bangla is the official language but English is widely spoken. Bangla has been given the status of one of the official languages UNESCO

Climate

Bangladesh has a sub-tropical monsoon climate. While there are six distinct but overlapping seasons in a year, the three dominant seasons are summer (April-June), monsoon (July-October) and winter (November-February).

Part: B The Education System of Bangladesh

Structure of Education

Education in Bangladesh has three major stages-, *primary*, *secondary* and *higher education*. Primary education is a 5-year cycle while secondary education is a 7 year one with three sub-stages: 3 years of junior secondary, 2 years of secondary and 2 years of higher secondary. The entry age for primary is 6 years. The junior secondary, secondary and higher secondary stages are designed for age groups 1-13, 14-15 and 16-17 years. Higher secondary is followed by baccalaureate level education in general, technical, technology and medical streams requiring 5-6 years to obtain a Master's degree.

The education system of Bangladesh functions under two separate ministries: Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) responsible for Primary and Mass Education, and the Ministry of Education (MoE) responsible for post primary and post secondary levels of education.

Part: C

Children with Multiple Disability

The children unable to fulfil their daily needs because of physical and mental problems need special education, competent remedial measures, special care and nursing. The deaf, blind, physically handicapped, mentally handicapped and the epileptics fall within the purview of special children. They are also termed as children with multiple disability. In accordance with the degree of disability, they are identified as lightly, moderately and seriously handicapped.

The Legal Framework and focus of Government on Education

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh mandates the state to adopt effective measures for the purpose of establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law (article 17).

National Education Policy on Special Education

Aims and Objectives

The principal aim of special education is to help the children with multiple disability establish themselves in the society through special programmes depending on their degree of disability. In order to achieve this target the National Education Policy 2000 recommends the following strategies.

Strategy :

- Survey is to be made to ascertain the exact number and identify the type and degree of disability of the handicapped in Bangladesh.
- Coordinated education system has to be introduced for the handicapped in selected schools. The handicapped children develop fast if they are allowed to receive education with normal children.
- It is necessary to develop the 64 schools under the Social Welfare Directorate where coordinated education programme for the blind is in operation. This system can be introduced for the deaf and the dumb as well as for the mentally and physically handicapped.
- Coordinated education programme has to be introduced in primary schools at district and *thana(sub-district)* levels for the deaf and the blind and mentally and physically handicapped people.
- It is necessary to develop the existing Government and non-government primary schools for the handicapped immediately.

- At least one teacher of special education has to be appointed in the schools under the purview of-coordinated education programme.

Objective of National Plan of Action(NPA)

Pursuant to National Education Policy and in re-affirming with the vision of EFA the Government of Bangladesh formulated National Plan of Action (NPA) and revised it in line with Dakar Framework of Action

--NPAII(2003-20015) .The main objective of NPA II is to:

Bring all primary school-age children, particularly girls, the disabled, those in difficult circumstances and belonging to ethnic minorities, and enable them to complete primary education (already free and compulsory) of good quality;

Inclusive education

No comprehensive data base is currently available in the country indicating the number, type, or degree of disability amongst the youth population. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates there are about 1.6 million children with some form of disability. A large majority of them have no access to education. The reasons are several. First, the 64 residential schools established by the Ministry for Social Welfare for visually impaired children can accommodate no more than 1,200 children. Though some 113 NGOs are engaged in activities for the disabled organized under the National Forum of Organizations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD), most of the NGOs have limited programs for hearing-impaired children. Second, virtually all special-needs schools are located in or near urban centers and inaccessible to children from rural areas. Third, there remains a stigma attached to disabilities, particularly in the case of intellectual impairment, especially in the case of girls. Level of family income appears not to influence enrolment significantly as disablement is feared as a cause for social disgrace - often ignored, hidden or denied. Finally, there is a severe shortage of teachers trained in the skills to effectively communicate with disabled children. One recent study under the ESTEEM project of Primary Education Development Project (PEDP-I) has found that about 75 % of disabled children are not enrolled in any form of educational program.

Training Manual

It has been noticed that a good number of handicapped children are dropping out at the very early stage of their education since they cannot keep pace with the existing system of education. The teachers can play a great role if he/she would know the technique to teach these kinds. Tasking into consideration this reality the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) with the assistance of German government has developed training module and manual for the school management for the specially disabled children at the primary level. The manual is expected to contribute a lot with regard to the development of primary education for the specially disabled children.

Part: D

A Case Study of Dhaka Bodhir High School (Dhaka High School for the Deaf)

Established in 1976 by the Bangladesh National *BodhirSangstha* with only 7 students and 2 teachers for grades 1-2, the school gradually added new grades up to 5 by 1980, when it received recognition from the Directorate of Social Welfare. Later it turned into a junior high school under DSHE in 1984, and became a full-fledged high school (up to grade 10) in 1992. Presently, this is the only high school for the deaf in the country.

Students from the school started appearing at the SSC exam since 1993 achieving reasonably satisfactory results.

About 50% of the students are females. Usually, the admission age is 6-9, although in special cases this is relaxed up to age 15. Grade I is staggered over a number of years to prepare the students for being receptive to lessons. Side by side with general education, the school also imparts technical training in such subjects as sewing, fine art and commercial art, and knitting to make the deaf economically self-reliant. The total student strength is around 200, 50% of whom are at the secondary level.

The medium of instruction is Bengali and the school follows the NCTB curriculum. Special technique used is the sign language. Total teaching staff is 18, with one female. Besides, there are 6 support staff. The head teacher has M.A., M.Ed. degrees and he also underwent special training in India and U.K. in the area. All other teachers have at least B.Ed degree, and they also have some specialized training to be able to teach the deaf. Currently, 2 teachers have Bachelor of Special Education (B.S.Ed) degree offered by the only B.S.Ed college in the country, which was set up in Dhaka with Norwegian assistance in 1991 and is now under government revenue budget. At present, another such program, however, is run by IER(Institute of Educational Research of Dhaka University)

The school receives 90% salary subvention from the government and also some assistance from the *Bodhir Sangstha*, which has constructed a corrugated tin shed building for the school with 7 class rooms on its own land. The *Sangstha* also runs a few other lower level schools and clubs (for social rehabilitation) for the deaf. The school is managed by the SMC, where there are 4 representatives from the *Bodhir Sangstha*, besides others.

Students usually have to spend up to Tk.2,500 annually to meet admission, examination, and other charges. There is provision for some tuition waiver. There is a proposal for stipend for the disabled. At present, however, there is no stipend program for the students, not even for the females, as the school is located within the metropolitan area.

The school compound is not considered adequate, although the *Bodhir Society* has arranged a few more rooms from its own building. There is no library and no playground. The main problem appears to be the fact that the land on which the school is located is owned by the Society, so that the school has little option to carry out any development work. Moreover, due to severe financial constraint, the school cannot afford to have any special equipment and other necessary learning materials. There is also no audiology department, where hearing aids could be used, even if they were made available.