

Perception Study

Situation Analysis of Person with Disabilities in Bangladesh and role of Social Protection

Background

Based on WHO's global estimates of 15%, Bangladesh with a population of about 160 million people could conceivably have around 16 million people with disabilities that is about 10% percent of the population. The most important targets for this disadvantaged group is SDG 8 which is to ensure Decent Work and Economic Growth for all and SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities. The adoption of the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) in recent times has been a major policy advancement that Bangladesh government has been committed to. It has incorporated and added disability themes in various policies that is appropriate to a middle-income country. More than 1.7% Bangladeshi nationals are identified as disabled according to the disability detection survey conducted by the Ministry of Social Welfare (MOSW) in 2018. Against this background, the Government of Bangladesh has come up with policies and action plans that will incorporate and include this group to have a strong platform where they can voice their opinions and not be left behind.

Research Objectives

- Identification of factors and challenges that affect the participation of the Person with Disabilities.
- Providing way forward to address the access barriers
- Role of Social Protection for differently abled persons

Methodological approaches

- Primary research has been conducted by Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) by handing standard questionnaire to 80 (PWDS) with equal representation of men and women, from all income levels aged 18 and above.
- Secondary data has been collected from different sources such as reports of various organization, various books, journals, newspapers and articles.

Definition of Disability

According to Ministry of Social Welfare, the Government of Bangladesh uses the definition of disability provided in the 'Rights and protection of persons with disabilities act 2013'. The definition, which is similar to the one used in the "Disability Welfare Act 2001", prepared by the MoSW in close collaboration with the National Forum of Organizations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD) (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2015). All throughout the centuries, disability has been regarded as a charity and then a welfare issue. Only in the recent decade, it has begun to be incorporated as a development issue. There isn't any standard definition yet. The Government of Bangladesh reports 0.91-9.17% of the Bangladesh's population have a disability.

Table 1: Percentage of People who suffered from any Type of Disability by Sex and Residence 2016

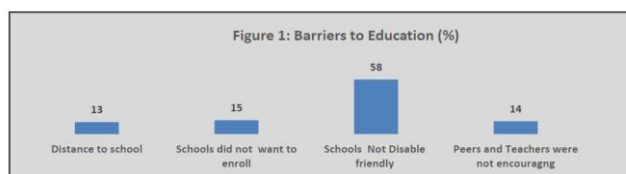
Residence	Both Sex	Male	Female
National	6.94	6.27	7.59
Rural	7.27	6.53	8
Urban	6.04	5.57	6.5

Source: HIES 2016

According to HIES 2010 and 2016, it is observed from that "some", "severe" and "fully unable" nature of disability is higher in rural areas compared to that in urban areas in 2016 as well as in 2010

Disability and Vulnerability Issues

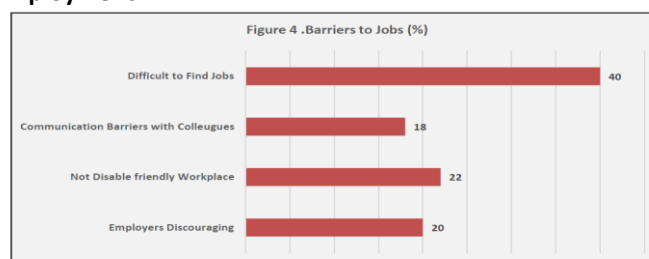
Education:



Source: Primary Survey, SSPS

Research findings indicate that family, peers, community people and school teachers largely do not favour the education of PWDs with the misconception PWDs will not contribute anything in the future, will act as a burden and be costlier for the schools.

Employment:



Source: Primary Survey, SSPS

As data suggests, Current low representation of persons with physical disabilities in the workforce is a stark reminder of our failure to include, empower and provide equal opportunity for all. The informal sector absorbs 85 percent of our workforce. There is a serious lack of accessibility for Person with Disabilities in this sector. According to the respondent's survey, 68% percent of males and only 34% females are enrolled into jobs which shows that the employment environment for females with disabilities is not favourable.

Role of Social Protection: NSSS

In the National Social Security Bangladesh (NSSS) and NSSS action plan the government has put emphasis in this particular sector. Over the next years, the Ministry of Social Welfare will consolidate the current support to people with disabilities aligning it to the life course. It will involve three core schemes.

- **A Child Disability Benefit for all children with a disability, up to 18 years of age**-Given the priority attached to children with disabilities, the government may vary the amount based on the severity of the disabled and associated cost care. Mechanisms will be established which will remove children with disabilities from the street to prevent exploitation and the MOSW will be responsible for monitoring.
- **A Disability Benefit for all adults with severe disabilities, aged 19-59 years**; This particular scheme will mark a significant change in the lives of the disabled citizens, it will give them a moral boost since they will be better able to enter the labour market and access credit which they can invest in small business.
- **At 60 years, people with severe disabilities will transition to the Old Age Allowance.** -MoSW will define the disability and income criterion for inclusion in the program. The level of transfer will be reviewed to assess whether a higher transfer is viable considering the medical requirements.

Social Security Examples -Learning from International Experience

Reviewing a number of well-acclaimed SPPs from few countries, several key lessons can be utilized in the context of Bangladesh

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for children may help with the extra costs of looking after a child who is under 16 and has difficulties walking or needs more support than a child of the same age who does not have a disability.

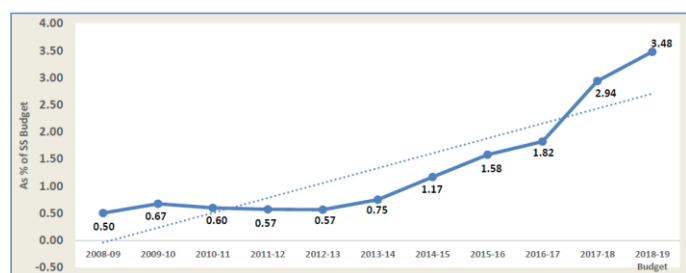
Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) offers financial support if one is unable to work or need a personalized help (assistance) in order to continue work.

Disability Transport Card- Many countries like China, UK, USA provide bus, rail cards to PWDS which provides free transport/discount to this disadvantaged group. In Bangladesh, the government has been distributing the Golden Citizen Card (Shuborno card) to avail the same facilities but due to lack of awareness, it has not been fully implemented.

VAT relief for certain products related to disability- Some countries like USA, UK, Sweden are providing VAT relief on certain products and equipment like wheelchair, spare parts or accessories, braille paper low vision aids, and adjustable beds, etc which aids a disabled person. Bangladesh can follow this and implement this in the upcoming budgets to make the budget more inclusive.

Disability Cards- Nepal, our neighbouring country provides disability identity card, which categorizes individuals according to the severity of their disability. Only those holding a red or a blue disability identity card (denoting 'complete' and 'severe' disabilities, per the government categorization) are eligible to receive the allowance. The disability allowance was one of five social security allowance schemes used to deliver an emergency cash top-up in earthquake-affected areas. Bangladesh is vulnerable to natural disasters and this can act as a good example.

Percentage of Disability Budget as % of Social Safety Budget Allocation over a Decade



At present, more than 10 lac people with disabilities are covered under the disability social security schemes. The National government has currently 12 disability related projects under the Social Protection schemes. In 2018, the total number of financially insolvent disabled people stood at 10 lakh receiving Tk 700 a month, and from 2019-20 it will be increased to 15.45 lakh. The amount of monthly allowance will also be increased by Tk 50 to Tk 750 per person for primary students. The primary stipend for disabled student beneficiary coverage will also be increased to 1 lac from 90 thousand. The amount will be increased from Tk 800 to Tk850 for secondary disabled students and to Tk900 from Tk 800 for higher secondary students. Countries like Bangladesh, Brazil, India, and South Africa have unconditional cash transfer programmes targeted at poor people and households with a disabled member. The programmes aim at increasing the disposable income of poor households, which they spend according to their priorities – for example by buying food, enrolling children in education, or paying for health care.

Gaps and Challenges

- ❖ First and foremost, a single national definition of disability needs to be defined. Based on that a national census needs to be established to identify the correct number of PWDS. There is a clear discrimination of data between rural and urban areas because of higher availability of resources in urban centres and lack of capacity in rural areas.
- ❖ Medical professionals at primary & secondary level, and other Primary health care workforces are yet not adequately sensitized and/or trained. This tends to exclude many of the potential beneficiaries, as it can both be expensive and/or require travelling long distances to the nearest clinic.
- ❖ A very low percentage of the disabled people in need can be reached by most of the programmes. This is usually due to limited funds and resources, and national governments often depend on assistance and funding from donors and development partners.
- ❖ Information on how eligibility for disability is assessed was not found for all the programmes listed. Additionally, an evaluation for the Bangladesh social protection programme found that even if criteria was detailed in the guidance handbook at the national level, it wasn't always practical. Decisions about whether to include beneficiaries was often at the discretion of the local authorities and facilitators on the ground. Lack of specific identification criteria may result in the disabilities that are included mainly being visible disabilities rather than invisible disabilities.
- ❖ The Labor Force Survey of the Government does not contain any data on employment of Person with Disability. Due to lack of trained personal and no definitive tools to measure Disability, its often neglected.
- ❖ Many poor people with disabilities, living in remote areas, are unaware of social protection schemes or cannot access them due to lack of motivation of officials to go to remote sites and creating awareness.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- ❖ As the government has not set any clear definition of disability due to lack of expertise. Experts in disability measurement from developed and developing countries needs to be brought together to review and assess the current status of methods used in population-based data collection activities to measure disability in national statistical systems,
- ❖ As per the study, most of the respondents noted that inaccessible schools were the key barriers to their inclusion in education. Efforts should be made to establish separate or special classes considering the form of disability for students. Emphasis is made on more inclusive schools but special consideration can be made with extreme cases considering the forms of disabilities, such as problems with eyesight, hearing, recollecting and concentrating, intellectual disability.
- ❖ Another concerning issue is that a student who receives disability stipend cannot take regular disability benefit. This predicament should be addressed so that s/he can also avail other benefits of PWDS.
- ❖ Ministries should stress on appointing at least one person with disability at each branch and wings. The Labor force Survey should also start including data on employment status of PWDS which is not present in the survey to get data on national employment figure of PWDS to facilitate further studies on employment.
- ❖ The government has increased its allowance for financially people with disabilities (PWD) from 700tk to 750Tk in the current fiscal year's budget. However, we often tend to forget the caregivers (mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents as per the survey in this study) who are the integral part of a differently abled person's life. The government must design a policy where the caregivers should also be given some kind allowance to value their time and effort for enabling the PWDS to live a normal life.