



## Youth with Disabilities and Gender Discrimination



যুব সম্মেলন ২০১৮

বাংলাদেশ ও এজেন্ডা ২০৩০  
তারুণ্যের প্রত্যাশা

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This Brief has been published on the occasion of the "Youth Conference 2018 - Bangladesh and Agenda 2030: Aspirations of the Youth", organised by the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh.

### Introduction

Bangladesh, a developing country with more than 160 million people, has a per capita income of United States dollar (USD) 1,754 (2018). The country spans 1,47,570 square kilometres and the literacy rate of the country is around 73 per cent (75.6 per cent for male and 70 per cent for female). Bangladesh has proven its commitment towards people with disabilities from the very beginning. The basic human rights of a citizen of Bangladesh has duly been protected by its constitution,

regardless of gender, class, religion and race. It does not discriminate against the people with disabilities.

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB), as a member state of the United Nations Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), expressed its commitment towards the goal 'equality of people with disabilities'. The first Disability Welfare Act, 2001 addresses many pertinent issues. There are specific indications in the Act to promote the employment of people with disabilities in the public sector as well as beyond. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013 mandates their enrolment in regular schools, reservation of seats on all forms of public transportation, accessibility provisions in all public places, equal opportunities in employment and the protection of inherited property rights. There are so many Acts formulated by the GoB for the betterment of people with disabilities, which include the Disaster Management Act, 2012; the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013; Neurodevelopmental Disabled Persons Protection Trust Act, 2013 and Rehabilitation Council Act, 2018. In addition, lots of initiatives have been taken for people with disabilities, in areas such as universal access, rehabilitation and residential care; promotion of inclusive societies; special and inclusive education, and vocational training; and support for disabled crime victims.



They are our kith and kin. (Ora Amader Shawjan). Sandipawn inclusive school at the remote village Belaboo, Amdia Union, Narsingdi (since 1990).

Gram Bikash Shohayak Shangstha (GBSS) has been working with people with disabilities for the last three decades, in order to establish their rights in all spheres of life and supporting them in their fight against poverty, discrimination and all other barriers in the



Head Teacher of kindergarten at Panchdona in Narsingdi.

society. In the 90s, GBSS began working with children with disabilities and today, it has become an organisation that works with youth with disabilities, whether male or female. When GBSS consults with the disabled youths and their families, they express their frustration at the lack of employment opportunities and facilities. Women with disabilities are the hardest hit, in both urban and rural areas. Even the women rights groups neglect the hardships faced by women with disabilities, which include unequal access to justice. The GoB has taken many steps towards this.

There is no data bank for the proper identification of people with disabilities, so the exact number of youths with disabilities is unknown. According to the website of a project run by GoB and the International Labour Organization (ILO), approximately 3.2 million youths have disabilities and they need help in accessing demand-driven education and training, thereby opening up pathways to decent employment. In 2008, Bangladesh was amongst the first countries to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including the right to decent employment. Since then, the GoB and ILO (through a project funded by international development partners), employers' and workers' organisations have taken major strides to achieve a shared vision of disability and inclusion of unemployed youths with disabilities.



Hira's father does not take care of the family because his wife gave birth to a disabled child. Now Hira is an employee of Sandipawn Inclusive School.

The employment situation of people with disabilities in this country is not very satisfactory. We did not get the exact figure of the youths with disabilities who are currently employed (self or in the public sector). The employment situation of skilled/educated people with disabilities in this country is not encouraging because of the stigma associated with being disabled. We are hopeful that things will change, and a brighter future awaits for the disabled youths in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has enacted disability legislation and has also adopted the National Disability Policy, but the challenges related to employment have not been properly addressed. One of the major barriers in the employment sector of people with disabilities is the negative attitude and lack of knowledge that employers possess about their capacity and potential. Employers assume that people with disabilities will not be able to be as productive as others. Many people with disabilities face severe discrimination at their existing workplaces.

GBSS supported almost 50 youths with disabilities with self-employment, government jobs and jobs in mills, among others. Discrimination occurs at the



Completion of training on computers, refrigerators and air conditioners supported by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF).

level of the family, neighbourhood and also at the level of the society. Children with disabilities grow up without any kind of proper care and support. Women leaders who are always trying to work for women empowerment also give less priority to their disabled counterparts. GBSS urges women leaders to address this issue.

Though Bangladesh is not a welfare state, the government provides support for people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in the society. GBSS always thinks of having an inclusive society.

One of the major activities of GBSS is to raise awareness on various social issues including disability among the people in the communities. Through this activity it is possible to create a society which is friendly for youths with disabilities, without any gender discrimination, especially in the employment sector. It only requires the transformation of mindsets of the people.

### Recommendations

- Political commitments are required from all parties;
- Policymakers need to keep in mind the disabled populations while formulating policies;
- Acts that cater to people with disabilities must be implemented and monitored regularly.



This Brief has been prepared by the Gram Bikash Shohayak Shangstha (GBSS) ([www.grambikashbd.org](http://www.grambikashbd.org)), a Partner organisation of the *Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh*.

*The views expressed in this Brief are of the GBSS, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Platform or any of its other Partner organisations.*

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