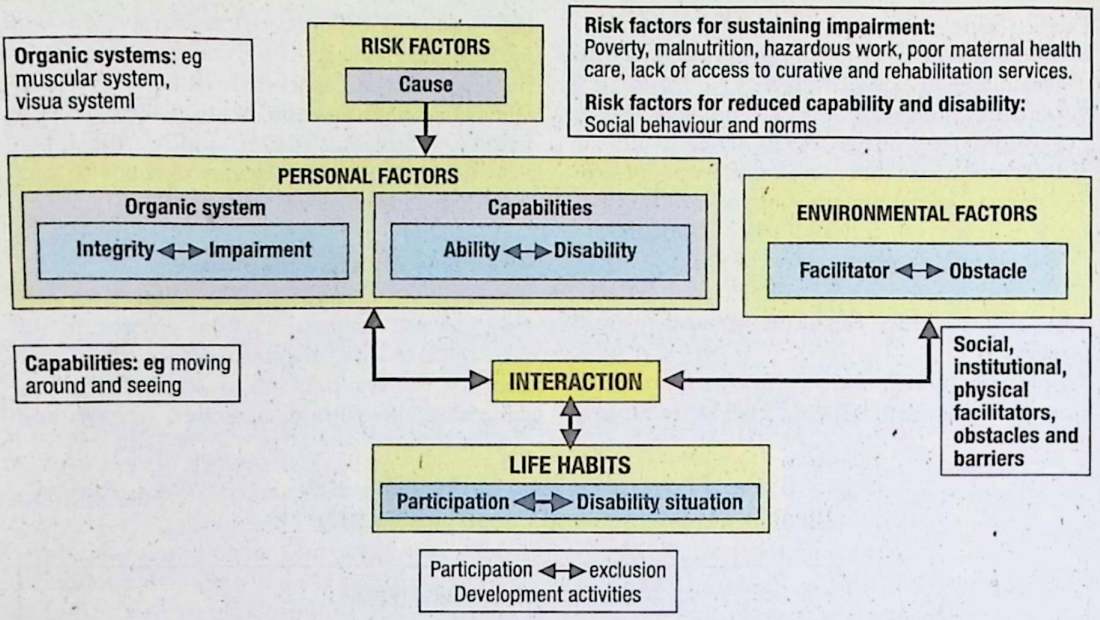


The poverty-disability-poverty cycle and the disability creation process illustrate poverty as a factor that causes a disabling life situation. People who are poor have a higher possibility of facing malnutrition and other risk factors.

People with disabilities in situations of disasters

Living in poverty further increases the vulnerability of people with disabilities, and capacity to deal with disasters. Fundamental human rights of persons with disabilities are commonly neglected and unseen in emergencies as well as in development context.

In situations of disasters, the needs of persons with disabilities tend to be overlooked, which can lead to their exclusion from participating in any community response. This makes them highly vulnerable to disasters.

- HI Bangladesh experience in the flood of 2004 showed that 60 percent of people with disability were overlooked during disaster.
- Another survey on coastal areas in Bangladesh shows that many people with disabilities were widely excluded on the grounds of inaccessible shelters and food distribution mechanisms.
- The 2008 cyclone Nargis in Burma disrupted physical, social, economic and environmental networks and support systems and disproportionately affected people with disabilities.[14]
- In the 2004 Sri Lankan Tsunami only 41 out of 102 people with disability in one community survived, those who died were unable to leave their homes or failed to comprehend in time the need to escape.

People with disabilities are most affected in disaster. Disasters also lead to disability:

After the Asian Tsunami, it was estimated that there was a 20 percent increase in the number of people with disabilities in the affected areas (CBM International 2005). The 2010 earthquake in Haiti has led to 300,000 people with injuries including an estimated 2-4000 amputees.

When a disaster occurs, the immediate emotional effects: shock, numbness, anger, distress are also evident along with physical effects. As the days and weeks go by, the physical effects of the disaster may fade, but the emotional wounds: the wounds to the heart, the wounds to the soul may last. The long term effects of coping and adapting with disaster and/or living in a disaster prone area on mental health are little studied but believed to be significant.

The policy and legislative framework in Bangladesh

In accordance with all national and international commitments/obligations, and under the purview of the National Constitutional provisions, the Government of Bangladesh developed a National Policy on Disability in 1995. This was the first official recognition by the government to the issue of disability as a development agenda. In 14 sections, the policy document described in details what the GOB would like to take up for the development of people with disabilities in this country. The sections are:

The Policy was given a legislative back up by enacting the Disability Welfare Act, which was adopted in the National Parliament in 2001. This was the first time that a national definition and classification of disability was provided. The law outlined the constitution of (a) the National Coordination Committee, chaired by the