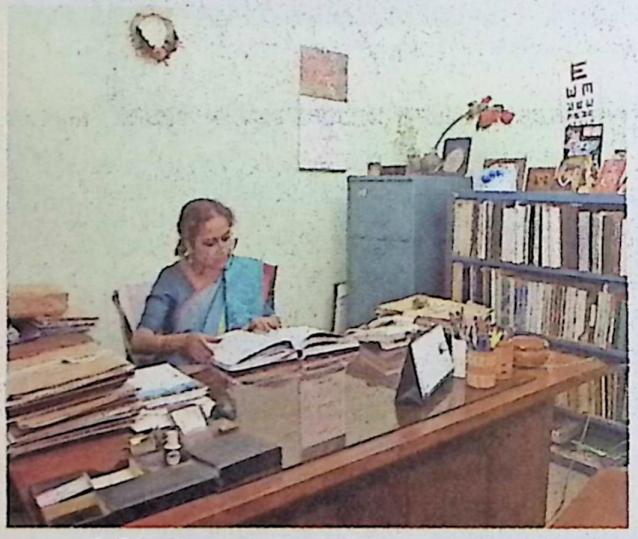


Resource centre for the visually impaired students in Dhaka University. PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS



Dr Diba Hossain in her studies.

Besides the technical knowledge, the relationship building with the blind students and the practical knowledge gained by sharing experience were vital for her study, as Dr Diba says, "The key to understand the educational need of the visually impaired students is to observe them effectively. In the Perkins, while making friends with the students I got the opportunity to observe them through their minds."

Upon her return from the Perkins, Dr Diba has authored the first ever book on Blind Children's education in Bengali with her disciple and colleague Shahrier Haider. Titled "*Drishti Protibondhita o Shiksha*" (Visual Impairment and Education). It is the first reference book on the education and life skills of the visually impaired students in Bengali. As recognition of this effort, the authors were given the UGC Award on 2009.

Dr Diba is still working to make higher education accessible for the visually impaired students. She has pointed out some fundamental but key instruments in teaching visually impaired students. They are varied in nature: allowing students with audio recording equipment (in many classes teachers don't allow it), using screen readers in the computer laboratories, publishing alternative questions for the blind students if necessary and above all a bit of extra care in the classroom: these small act of kindness and care can inspire the blind student a lot into continuing his/her education. But without this care, Dr Diba says, the students might suffer from an inferiority complex, and it is a vital cause for the huge dropout rate among the visually impaired students all over the country.

Dr Diba is also working to establish an equal-opportunity employment sector for the visually impaired. Many of her students are now employed and are self reliant. Being involved with many non-profit organisations, she travels from one school to another to inspire the visually impaired learners and their families to continue their education. She shares her expertise and knowledge on various organisations like Sightsavers International, BVIPS, Child Sight Foundation etc, which are working to ensure quality education for the visually impaired children.

Dr Diba and her work is a source of inspiration for those who want to work and are working for the under privileged. Her pioneering contributions have improved the accessibility of education to the visually impaired students. However, she always reminds us that, more, a lot more needs to be done for this large number of meritorious but unsighted population. It is our responsibility to make the improvements that Dr Diba has made sustain to make our society an inclusive and developed one.

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