

FOR DISABILITY INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT AND A SOCIETY FOR ALL: BREAK BARRIERS, OPEN DOORS



The Daily Star and Action on Disability and Development - ADD International jointly organized a roundtable discussion on "For disability inclusive development and a society for all: Break barriers, open doors" on December 14, 2013 in association with German Embassy and European Union. We publish a summary of the discussion -- Editor

Barrister Rafique-Ul Haque, Senior Advocate, Bangladesh Supreme Court and Chief Guest of the roundtable

Representation of persons with disability in national parliament is a must. Voter may be anybody but candidate must be a person with disability. In our constitution, in Articles 14, 15, 17, 18, 19 and 23 (A) it is clearly said that you cannot show any discrimination to them. The recent Act provides all kinds of protection to them. This Act is being prepared according to the UN Convention on Rights of People with Disability. Under this law, persons with disability can seek remedy for their problems. They can even file writ in court for their rights. If anyone discriminates a person with disability the victim can take action against the perpetrator according to this law. In our constitution every citizen has equal rights.

Brig Gen (retd.) M Sakhawat Hussain, Former Election Commissioner

We talked to Ministry of Education about arrangement of ram facilities in schools because often voter centers are located in schools. He assured us to implement the idea. Representation of people with disability should be ensured. For that we do not need to change our constitution. It can be done easily. In India there are reserved seats for Christians under president's authority. We can also implement the same policy for persons with disability.

Dr. Sayed Anwar Hossain, Professor, Dept. of History, University of Dhaka

We have to create a friendly environment for persons with disability. People who are not sensitive to rights of persons with disability are disabled in their attitude. Organization is a big strength. We have to organise ourselves. We have to fight for our rights. We have to change our outlook. In national assembly there must be 5 reserve seats for disabled people. And the representatives should be elected from persons with disability.

M Nurun Nabi, Project Manager, ADD International and Chair & Moderator of the roundtable

The theme of our discussion is 'For disability inclusive development and a society for all: Break barriers, open doors'. Since Independence, we have cherished an inclusive society where no one will face discrimination. This is the spirit of our liberation movement. We all should work together for realizing that goal. We need concerted efforts to uphold the rights of the people with disability. We know mainstreaming of the potential of the people with disability would help to contribute in the process of overall development of the country. At present about 16 million people of Bangladesh are disabled.

ADD International, an UK-based International NGO, has been working for the last 25 years to support disabled people's organizations in Africa and Asia. It helps them to become strong and effective. It listens to disabled people and build a shared understanding of their particular needs so that disabled people can identify their own priorities. ADD International responds to these needs through training, mentoring, leadership development, conflict resolution. It supports disabled people to access their most basic rights. In Bangladesh ADD supports and works with groups of disabled people and Disabled Peoples Organizations (DPOs) in 28 districts to make them organized and self-reliant.

The issue of disability is a social problem. It is a matter of the full integration of individuals into the society. Disability is not an attribute of an individual, but rather a complex collection of conditions, many of which are created by the social environment. Hence, the management of the problem requires social action and it is a collective responsibility of society to make the environmental modifications necessary for the full participation of people with disabilities in all areas of social life.

Md. Mahbubur Rahman Bhuiyan, Capacity Building Manager, ADD International and Key note presenter of the roundtable

Every year we observe December 3 as the

PARTICIPANTS



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Sumon Hossain



Nargis Islam

International Disability Day to ensure the rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). The theme of 2013 was 'For disability inclusive development and a society for all : Break barriers, open doors.' The significance of the theme is to build up a prosperous society where PWDs citizen will enjoy equal rights, a society that will ensure their economic, social, political and electoral rights.

An inclusive society for PWDs is only possible when they will enjoy equal rights in every sphere of family, society and nation. For achieving that goal our first priority should be ensuring education and employment facilities. Second priority is to ensure participation and representation of PWDs from local government to national assembly. Because without effective representation no one will pay heed to their demand. Finally we should change our attitudes towards them. There is no alternative to these three pillars. Besides, we have to ensure disabled child friendly education system, 10% quota in government job and 5% quota in BCS. Employment in private sector should be facilitated. Already ADD has been providing training on Garment skills. Extra budget should be allocated in local government budget for improvement of the condition of person with disabilities. 20% quota should be kept for disabled persons in social safety net programmes like VGF, VGD card, widow allowance, food for work and so on. In election manifesto, political parties should pledge to uphold rights of persons with disabilities.

A H M Noman, Founder & CEO, DORP We have to start working with basic rights. If persons with disabilities get basic rights then they will be able to ask for other rights. We should focus on mothers. There is system of providing allowance to pregnant mothers. In this programme, pregnant mothers with disability should be given priority. It will help reduce burden on mothers. It will provide food

and nutrition for mothers. Only then no disabled children will be born. We are working with 942 pregnant mothers. We provide them proper care and nutrition, none of them have given birth to a child with disability.

Dr. Kulsoom Abul Bashar, Supernumerary Professor, Department of Persian, University of Dhaka

I can feel the grief of disabled people because I am also a mother of person with disability. I think, the first support should come from parents. If they take care of their children with disability, it will help improve their mental status. When my son got admitted in Dhaka University there was no lift facility. It was really difficult for my son to climb up floors after floors. He lost inspiration and left university. Now the situation has improved. There are lifts in Dhaka University and more students with disability now continue study in that university. I never see any teacher with disability in universities. If there were some example like that it would boost confidence of other students with disability.

Dr. Zinat Huda, Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Dhaka

We have come a long way in improving life of persons with disability. Families used to hide their children with disability. Those children were deprived of family care, social respect and support from government. Now they get recognition from family and society. Many of them are working like a normal person. They are raising their voices. They ask for their rights. Adoption of this law is a great achievement. I want to praise government and other stakeholders for their continuous efforts. I want to suggest some points: We have to start from family. A child with disability should be taken as a God gifted child. He should be treated like an angel. So our parents should change their mindset and take courage to include their children with disability in normal life. We have

to implement inclusive education system. Children with disability should be registered in mainstream schools where they will get special care. Media can play a good role. They can help change the mindset of our general people.

Sohrab Hasan, Joint Editor, Prothom Alo

We should not use the word disabled. They are able in their own way. First we have to change our selves. We are talking about leadership in national assembly. First we have to give priority on their representation in their family. We have to start from family: access to family, then society and at last at the national level. We have to fight for our own rights. Nothing can be attained without all out effort.

Abul Hasnat, Representative, SUJON

What are the reasons of disability? Number one is poverty. Second is how a child is born. A pregnant mother does not get proper nutrition. So her child also does not get enough calories. It is one of the reasons of disability. Often they get hurt in head during birth. It creates crippling effect on an infant and cause disability. We have to ensure proper care of pregnant mothers and safe delivery system.

Ferdousi Begum, Deputy Program Coordinator, ADD International

I am also a disabled person. I am working with ADD from 1998. I think everyone can do everything if they get scope. I never think and feel myself disabled. There was a girl with disability named Husne Ara who was gang raped. When we went to court, magistrate dissolved the case saying the girl could not testify about the case. Then we shifted the case to Khulna. And some days ago the perpetrators were given 80 year imprisonment. Our judges should be trained about the rights of persons with disability. According to law, there should be 10% quota for persons with disability in government jobs. But they do not get the chance. One of our girls qualified in an exam. But she did not get the

job. We do not know why..

Nasima Akhter, President, National Council for Disabled Women (NCDW)

Disabled women often become victims of repression and sexual harassment. Court does not allow persons who cannot speak as witness. Thus perpetrators manage to get escape. There are many educated PWDs who do not get scope of applying their skills. We should create employment opportunities for them. We want our representative in parliament. Only then we will be able to place our demand properly to the highest authority.

M S Siddiquee, Columnist

We should make people aware about rights of persons with disability. Media can play a big role here. We should discuss more on the provisions of the new act. We have disseminated the information about this Act to remote areas of Bangladesh.

Sam Beerwith, APM, Shiree

Among the extreme poor, people with disability suffer from worst form of deprivation and poverty. So when we talk about eradication of poverty we have to focus on disabled people. The new Act is a huge achievement as it guarantees right of people with disability in Bangladesh. However, as with any policy the real challenge comes from implementation. Now we have a policy and a framework. We need to implement these policies. How can we do that? One way of doing that is providing support to civil society organization that work for persons with disability. ADD works through a huge network of DPOs. They are working at the root level. They can give us feedback on whether the policy is being implemented by the concerned organizations. This is very important because that means we can hold the government and the implementing institutions accountable. We need to know whether this policy is delivering in the real life or not. The media also can play a big role here. They can monitor whether the policy is being properly implemented or not.

Advocate Rezaul Karim Siddique, BLAST

In the ongoing volatile political situation persons with disabilities are forced to remain idle in house. We have recently found that a person with disability got 20% burnt when a picker hurled a bomb at a bus. He failed to come out of the bus and become victim. We want to get rid of this situation.

Sumon Hossain, President, Dhaka District Federation (DPO)

We do not get stipend on time. It should be given in every six or nine months. In our education institutions there is quota only for blind students. For example, in the admission form of National University it is clearly mentioned that only blind students will get quota. There are five to six types of disability in our country. So what about people with other types of disability? Only the phrase 'person with disability' should be written in quota forms. Many government schools even do not give scope of appearing in admission test. These types of discrimination should be ended.

Nargis Islam, DPO leader, Dhaka

I want to say about loan and allowance for the disabled. I went to a bank to collect allowance for one of my peers who had recently died. The bank officer took the book but did not provide the allowance or any satisfactory reply. It is alleged that they keep the money in their pocket. Second point is about loan. People with disability get a one time loan of 10,000 taka. It is not adequate to start a business. I think the frequency and amount of loan should be increased.

As an Acid survivor I did not get any help from the government. I did not know about. When I got informed I went to social welfare office but they refused my application as the case happened before 1999. They misbehaved with me. I felt very upset. It is common feature of our government office. I want a friendly environment in government offices. I want to suggest that family of a dead person with disability should be given the whole amount of allowance at a time. It will be really helpful for the family.