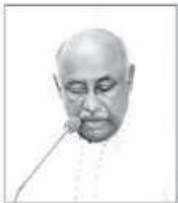


YOUTH FUTURES RESEARCH IN BANGLADESH

Chief Guest: Mr. Md. Asraf Ali Khan Khasru, MP
Honourable State Minister, Ministry of Social Welfare
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh



Youth with Disabilities Denied Learning and Employment Opportunities: Sightsavers & BRAC University Research Finds



Md. Ashraf Ali Khan Khasru MP
State Minister
Ministry of Social Welfare
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

"Research is an important component for societal development and there is no alternative to research for development. This research has generated strong evidence about the challenges and opportunities for youth with disabilities which will help us address through our programming. The Government of Bangladesh and our Prime Minister are highly committed to upholding the rights of the people with disabilities. Though the amount of the disability allowance might look less, it is still very handy for many and playing an important role in empowering them within the family. Our target is to bring as many people with disabilities as possible under the social safety-net coverage."



Prof. Dr. Md. Golam Rabbani
Chairperson
Neuro-Developmental Disability Protection Trustee Board

"As per the Persons with Disabilities Rights and Protection Act 2013, the Neuro-Developmental Disability Protection Trustee Board was established under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Welfare through an act. We are continuously striving to improve the standard of living of the persons with neuro-developmental disorder (NDD) such as autism or autism spectrum disorder, down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and intellectual disability. Our Trustee Board has formulated a 'disability related special education policy-2019' to provide skill development training to people with NDD and ensure their education. And, we have plans to establish schools for students with NDD. Moreover, we have initiatives such as caregiving skill training, insurance, special educational curriculum development, autism detection tools and mechanism etc. World Autism Awareness Day is observed on 2nd April every year with due dignity all over the country."



Amrita Rejina Rozario
Country Director
Sightsavers Bangladesh Country Office

"Sightsavers has been active in Bangladesh since 1973. As an international development organisation, we are fighting for the rights of persons with disabilities. Economic empowerment is one of the focus areas of our work, and some of our programmes in Bangladesh are supporting youth with disabilities to improve employability and find jobs in the formal sector. And this study is very relevant in this context as it provides evidence and at the same time gives us knowledge about the areas in which we need to work to create an environment where youth with disabilities can find jobs. Integrating young people with disabilities into the labour market not only makes a significant contribution to Bangladesh's economy, but also ensures that no one is left behind."



Dr. Malabika Sarker
Professor and Associate Dean
BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health
BRAC University

"This research enables us to understand the experiences, challenges, and aspirations of young people with disabilities concerning their livelihood in their local context from their peers. Through this research, we hoped to empower the peer researchers to articulate their personal experiences and share their voices. We hope these research findings can contribute to the broader spectrum of society, especially in global and national policies and programmes to fulfil their actual needs."



Zahir Bin Siddique
Country Director
Leonard Cheshire Bangladesh

"Access to quality inclusive education for persons with disabilities, including higher education, vocational training, and life-long learning opportunities needs to improve. We should ensure the availability of and access to quality affordable assistive devices and support services such as but not limited to sign language interpreters, guide interpreters, captioning services, peer support mechanisms especially in the education sector. Vocational training, in addition to education, is important for many youth with disabilities. When barriers to skill development training and employment are removed, they can become contributing members of communities versus being seen as a burden to families and society."



Findings Presentation by
Dr. Mrittika Barua
Assistant Professor

BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University

&
Sayema Akter

Research Fellow, BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University

Twenty peer researchers were taken through several trainings on research methodology, research ethics, participatory mapping, and documentary photography. They also engaged in several advocacy capacity building activities throughout the research. Fifty in-depth interviews were conducted from males and females (aged 18-35) with all types of disabilities and analysed with narrative descriptions of their lived experiences supplemented by geographic maps and documentary photography. Participatory GIS mapping and documentary photography enabled local youth with disabilities to identify locations of barriers and enablers to education and employment. We also engaged with peer researchers, research participants and stakeholders in finding validation and advocacy action planning.

Qualitative research titled 'Youth Futures Research in Bangladesh', jointly conducted by Sightsavers and BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health of BRAC University, finds youth with disabilities are denied learning and employment opportunities in Bangladesh. The research was funded by the British Academy's Youth Futures Programme and supported by UK Government's Global Challenges Research Fund. The general objective of the study was to understand the experiences, aspirations, and challenges of youths with disability in their livelihood in Bangladesh and, to explore the inclusion of young people with disabilities into policy dialogues around the implementation of SDG8: decent work and economic growth. The research followed a community-based participatory (CBPR) methodology and was led by twenty youth with different types of disabilities recruited as peer researchers from the study locations (Tarash, Gazipur and Narsingdi) covering both rural and urban settings of Bangladesh. A dissemination of the research was held on 16 June 2022 in Dhaka with Md. Ashraf Ali Khan Khasru MP, State Minister of the Ministry of Social Welfare attending the event as the chief guest. The key findings of the research and the remarks of the guests of the dissemination event are briefly illustrated in this supplementary.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

Education Barriers

Youths with disabilities were denied opportunities to take technical courses such as engineering and medicine which they had aspired to take.

Inappropriate assessment methods and inadequate time allocations for persons with different types of disability leading to stigma and discrimination from both learners and teachers that resulted in failure in class and dropouts.

Serious lack of awareness, learning resources and capacity of the teachers for learners with disabilities attending Madrasahs. Due to lack of financial resources, many learners with Disability go to Madrasahs for free education.

Employment Barriers

Underemployment and those in formal employment are compelled to do jobs not commensurate to their skills. Selection and interview process for employment are not accessible and are often discriminatory.

Selection and interview process for employment are not accessible and are often discriminatory. And serious lack of awareness about disabilities, accessibility, and reasonable accommodation amongst employers.

Limited Access to Government & Non-government Social Support Programmes
Limited awareness of existing social protection programmes and employment opportunities for youth with disabilities.

Lack of start-up capital dedicated for youth with disabilities aspiring to start own businesses.

Lack of clarity around eligibility to access stipends and disability allowance and absence of caregivers' allowance was additional financial burden.

Recommendations and Key Messages

Bangladesh has recorded notable milestones in creating an enabling environment to support the livelihoods of people with disabilities. The policy and regulatory framework remain largely strong and one of the more progressive ones in the South Asia region. While the policy and regulatory environment provides a robust operating framework, findings from this research revealed a disconnect between policy provisions, their enforcement and reach to those targeted.

Recommendations

1. Government enforcement mechanisms for policy instruments that promote right to work on equitable basis should be enhanced through expanding the role of organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs) to create accountability across ministries and the hiring practice within the public sector.
2. Disability mainstreaming should be integrated across Government agenda and incorporated as across cutting theme in existing learning curriculum at all educational institutional including madrasahs.
3. Government should roll out information management systems that cater to the diverse information access needs of Youths with disabilities to enhance increased awareness of employment and business opportunities.
4. Government should ensure availability of modern learning materials for learners with disabilities in the retail platforms and encourage innovation through research to facilitate adoption of technology in development of learning materials to aid delivery of curriculum to learners with disabilities.
5. Government enforcement mechanisms for disability inclusive construction standards should be strengthened to promote physical accessibility including undertaking routine audits to enforce compliance.
6. The public and private sector should make deliberate efforts to employ and retain youth with disabilities in compliance with the relevant Bangladesh employment policies.
7. Gender responsive intervention and budget allocation at national and local level should be enforced to promote access to education, employment, and livelihood for female youth with disability.
8. Social protection programme needs strengthening to match the actual needs of youth with disabilities from rural and urban settings.

Names of the Peer Researchers

Nasrin Akter, Nazmus Sakib Khan, Nazma, Md Rubel Hossain, Ruhul Amin, Makmuda Akter, Rashida, Boso Sutradhar, Shihab Uddin Bhuyan, Brishati Khanom, Munni Khatun, Kumari Lokkhi Rani, Salma Khatun, Lima Khatun, Ambia Khatun, Md Selim Jahangir, Md Abbas Uddin, Modon Kumar Mahanto, Md Jahidul Islam, and Aminul Islam



Dr. Sapana Bista
Senior Research Associate
Sightsavers, UK

"Sightsavers is an international organisation that works in more than 33 low-and-middle income countries to end avoidable blindness and promote equality of opportunity for people with disabilities. Sightsavers holds Independent Research Organisation (IRO) status, making us one of the only international non-governmental organisations to hold this status in the UK. Sightsavers conducts high quality research to address global gaps in knowledge and put research findings into practice by feeding them back into the design of programmes. Through this research, we aimed to ensure that the research conducted was inclusive, created good trust between peer researchers and communities. It is important that the organisation that is doing the research is collaborative, and the findings are shared in an inclusive manner to help deliver a positive change towards the livelihood of youth with disabilities in Bangladesh. And that is what we tried to do through this research."



Ayon Debnath
Advocacy, Communication Coordinator & Campaign Lead
Sightsavers Bangladesh Country Office

"Complying with the principles enunciated by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), the Bangladesh government passed the Persons with Disabilities Rights and Protection Act 2013, to promote the implementation of global standards for the inclusion and effective participation of persons with disabilities. However, implementation of this comprehensive Act has continued to be a challenge even after a decade of its promulgation. Moreover, persons with disabilities are encountering significant difficulties to access public and private sector jobs. In addition, there is no mandate for securing guaranteed employment in the private sector for persons with disabilities. This his research has helped us develop a framework for evidence-based interventions and evidence-based advocacy to address the challenges mentioned above."



Khandaker Jahurul Alam
Executive Director
Centre for Services and Information on Disability

"Bangladesh put increased impetus into its efforts and initiatives to improve the situation of the person with disabilities. Despite legislative and policy steps by the Government of Bangladesh towards advancing the rights of persons with disabilities, there are gaps in implementation. Access to economic opportunities for persons with disability is limited in Bangladesh and this is compounded by lack of employable vocational skills among persons with disability. This can be partly attributed to the policy barriers, lack of clarity on existing policies, inconsistencies in policy implementation frameworks and negative attitudes of employers."



Aziza Ahmed
Head of Operations
Bangladesh Business and Disability Network

"There is a need to shift the focus towards disability inclusive social protection measures that support the participation of persons with disabilities in economic activities, including employment. Provision of tax rebates and incentive schemes for employers for hiring persons with disabilities should be revisited. And the government should make sure that the students with disabilities can get their stipends alongside getting the disability allowance if eligible."



Rashida
Peer Researcher
British Academy Youth Futures Research

"We, people with disabilities, face multifaceted challenges in accessing education. We need the support of a writer during an examination, however, getting the approval for this is very tough and, in most cases, the writer lacks knowledge to match with our examination requirements."



Bishu Sutradhar
Peer Researcher
British Academy Youth Futures Research

"I passed in written tests and appeared in interviews in many places but unfortunately, I have not got any job yet. There are many people with disabilities who are facing a similar situation, they pass in the written tests, and they get rejected in the interviews. I am saying this from my personal experiences. People with disabilities should get the jobs according to their abilities."