

Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in Bangladesh

This country profile on Bangladesh was developed as part of the regional mapping study on disability-inclusive education commissioned by the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia. It aims to provide a snapshot of the key policies, practices and strategies implemented from 2010 to 2020 to ensure children with disabilities learn in inclusive settings in Bangladesh. This profile focuses on the country's progress in four domains of an inclusive education system: (1) Enabling Environment, (2) Demand, (3) Service Delivery, and (4) Monitoring and Measuring Quality. Cross-cutting issues such as gender and humanitarian situations are also addressed in this document, although not in great depth. More information on the methodology and theoretical framework underpinning the mapping study can be found in the full report, *Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in South Asia*.

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Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in Bangladesh

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APSC	Annual Primary School Census
BPF	Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation
BSL	Bangla Sign Language
CBR	community-based rehabilitation
CDD	Centre for Disability in Development
C4D	Communication for Development
CFM	Washington Group/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	civil society organization
DMIE	Developing a Model of Inclusive Education
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education
DSS	Department of Social Services
ECCD	early childhood care and development
ECCE	early childhood care and education
ECD	early childhood development
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FY	fiscal year
GC4	General Comment No. 4 [Article 24, CRPD]
GDP	gross domestic product
GO-NGO	government-non-governmental organization [cooperation]
HOPE	Holistic Approach towards Promotion of Inclusive Education Project
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health
ICT	information and communication technology
IE	inclusive education
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MoSW	Ministry of Social Welfare
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NEP	National Education Policy
NGO	non-governmental organization

OPD	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
p.	page
PEDP	Primary Education Development Program
PPE	pre-primary education
PSQL	Primary School Quality Level
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SLIP	School Level Improvement Plan
SWAp	sector-wide approach to programming or planning
TQI-SEP	Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNICEF ROSA	UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WG	Washington Group on Disability Statistics
WHO	World Health Organization



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Inclusion is anchored on the fundamental human right to education for all promulgated in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

1

INTRODUCTION

Inclusion is anchored on the fundamental human right to education for all promulgated in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), specifically Article 24, strengthened the global shift towards inclusion by mandating States parties to improve education systems and undertake measures to fulfil the rights of persons with disabilities to quality inclusive education.²

Despite overall progress in education attainment globally, children with disabilities remain one of the most marginalized groups. They are less likely to participate in and complete their education compared to their peers without disabilities.³

In South Asia, an estimated 29 million children – 12.5 million at primary level and 16.5 million at lower secondary level – were out of school in 2018.⁴ Of these, a considerable proportion was estimated to be children with disabilities. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), it is not possible to generate statistics that

are regionally or globally representative of the status of persons with disabilities with regard to education because of the scarcity of national data.⁵ This is true for the South Asia region as well.

The lack of disaggregated education data poses a significant challenge for policy and programme development and implementation. In this regard, the United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia (UNICEF ROSA) commissioned a study to:

- map inclusive education policies, strategies and practices implemented at all levels of the education system in the South Asia region that are effective, or promise to be effective, in increasing access and/or learning outcomes of children with disabilities in education and have the potential for scaling up; and
- inform the development and strengthening of regional and country-level advocacy and programming for advancing disability-inclusive education across South Asia.

¹ United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.

² United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol, 2006.

³ World Health Organization and The World Bank, *World Report on Disability*, World Health Organization, Geneva, 2011.

⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics database, 'Out-of-School rates and numbers by SDG region, 2018', n.d.

⁵ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 'Education and Disability: Analysis of Data from 49 Countries', Information Paper No. 49, 2018, <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/ip49-education-disability-2018-en.pdf>, accessed 18 December 2020.

The mapping covered interventions towards establishing disability-inclusive education initiated at all levels of the education system in eight countries in the region: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

A theoretical framework was developed to guide the mapping exercise. The framework conceptualized inclusive education through four main domains: (1) Enabling Environment, (2) Demand, (3) Service Delivery, and (4) Measuring and Monitoring Quality. Cross-cutting issues, albeit not covered in great depth, were included in the review to provide an overview of the

intersectionality between disability and gender, and disability and humanitarian issues.

This country profile on Bangladesh was developed as part of this regional mapping study on disability-inclusive education. It aims to provide a snapshot of the key policies, practices and strategies implemented from 2010 to 2020 to ensure children with disabilities learn in inclusive settings in Bangladesh. More information on the methodology and theoretical framework underpinning the mapping survey can be found in the full report, *Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in South Asia*.⁶

⁶ Grimes, P., et al., *Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in South Asia*, United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, 2021.



With a 9.1 per cent disability prevalence in Bangladesh, social inclusion and equity for children with disabilities have become the backbone of educational plans and policies.

2

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Bangladesh is home to around 40 million diverse learners,⁷ catered by a large and complex education system. Education opportunities are available in formal and non-formal approaches managed by the government and augmented by government-supported as well as independent private and community-driven initiatives.⁸

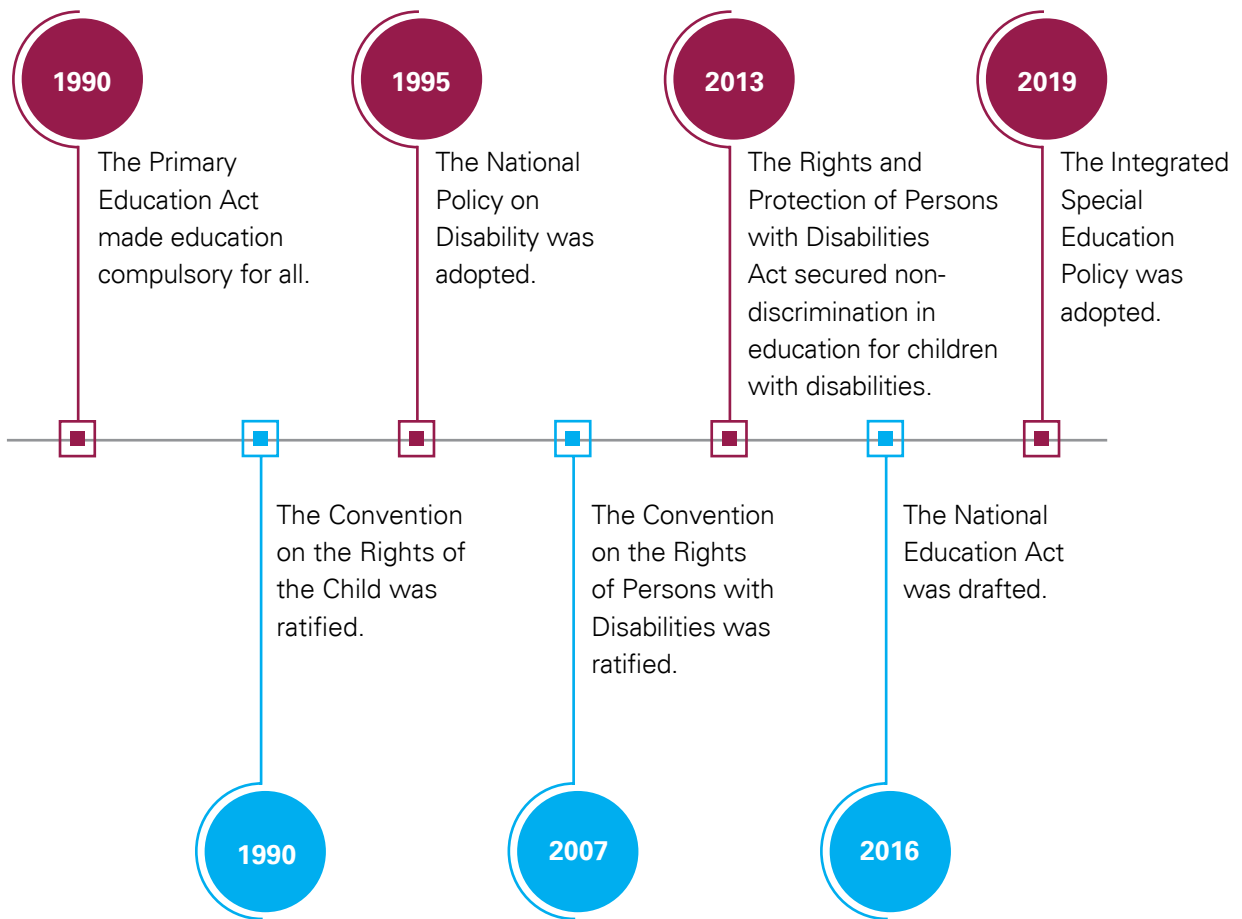
In a country with a 9.1 per cent disability prevalence,⁹ social inclusion and equity for children with disabilities have become the backbone of educational plans and policies. The country is evolving in its perspectives and practices on disability inclusion in education and social services, driven by active communities and supported by a strong development network.

⁷ Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Program Document: Fourth Primary Education Development Program, Dhaka, 2018.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ UNESCAP, *Disability at a Glance 2019: Investing in accessibility in Asia and the Pacific — Strategic approaches to achieving disability-inclusive sustainable development*, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 2019.

Milestones in disability-inclusive education





There are adequate provisions in existing laws and policies to build a foundation for Bangladesh's efforts in ensuring learners with disabilities learn in inclusive settings.

3

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The enabling environment includes interrelated conditions that enable or facilitate the development of a disability-inclusive education system, including policies, disability data, plans, leadership, coordination and financing.

3.1 POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The government has created a conducive policy environment for disability inclusion.

Bangladesh has no specific policy on inclusive education in place. However, existing laws, policies and commitments to CRPD and the Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantee non-discrimination in education for all children.

Bangladesh is mandated by its 1972 Constitution (amended in 2014) to provide a “uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extend free and compulsory education to all children” (Article 17) and protect its citizens against discrimination on grounds of “religion,

race, caste, sex or place of birth” in accessing or “admission to any education institution” (Article 28).¹⁰ Future amendments to the constitution should explicitly mention ‘disability’ to increase protection for persons with disabilities against discrimination in all aspects of life.¹¹

In 1990, the Primary Education Act granted the right to compulsory primary education for all children in any type of educational institution.¹² The first National Disability Policy was adopted in 1995, institutionalizing guidelines to ensure persons with disabilities receive early intervention, education, rehabilitation and employment, among other fundamental rights.

¹⁰ Bangladesh, Constitution of 1972, Reinstated in 1986, with Amendments through 2014, www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Bangladesh_2014.pdf?lang=en.

¹¹ Bhuiyan, S., *Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989: Bangladesh compatibility and gap analysis*, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Dhaka, 2016.

¹² Bangladesh Report submitted for the Ninth Consultation on the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (2012–2015), 2016, p. 6., as cited in www.unesco.org/education/edurights/index.php?action=countries&lng=en.

Table 1. Main laws, policies and programmes on disability and education

Government's action on international policies	Ratification
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)	1990
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)	2007
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Optional Protocol (2006)	2008
Main domestic laws, policies and programmes on disability and education	Adoption
Primary Education (Compulsory) Act	1990
National Policy on Disability	1995
Persons with Disability Welfare Act	2001
National Education Policy	2010
Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act	2013
Neurodevelopmental Trust Act	2013
Children Act	2013
National Education Act	2016 (draft)
Fourth Primary Education Development Program	2018 (ongoing)
Integrated Special Education Policy	2019

Expressly addressing education for children with disabilities, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2010 provides options for integration in mainstream schools or enrolment in separate schools, according to the degree of a child's disability (Chapter 18).¹³ While the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 secured the right of persons with disabilities to non-discrimination and the right to education, it provided a rather narrow definition of inclusive education as education provided only to children with disabilities (see Table 2). The draft National Education Act 2016 is expected to include provisions focused on raising the quality of education through the inclusion of all children in regular schools.¹⁴

Although important legislative frameworks supportive of inclusion are in place, stipulations that directly or indirectly endorse segregation exist. An Integrated Special Education Policy came into force in 2019.¹⁵ It was not possible to review the policy in this mapping, but future studies could look at the extent to which it supports inclusion.

Additionally, the Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW) through the National Foundation of the Disabled Persons manages the operations of special schools in the country.¹⁶ Placing special education outside the mandate of the education ministry indicates the prevailing welfare approach to disability and poses challenges in, for example, standardizing curriculum and assessment systems.

¹³ Ministry of Education, National Education Policy 2010, Dhaka, 2010, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/02.National-Education-Policy-2010-English.pdf>.

¹⁴ UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report, *Inclusion and Education: All means all*, 3rd ed., United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, 2020, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373718>.

¹⁵ The policy was only available in Bangla and therefore was not reviewed in this mapping study.

¹⁶ Grimes, et al., *Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices*.

Table 2. Definitions related to disability inclusion based on national laws and policies and international definitions

Terminology	Definition based on national laws and policies	International definition
Disability/ children with disabilities	<p>Disability refers to any person who is physically, psychologically and/or mentally not functioning properly due to social/environmental barriers. Any person who can't take part actively in society is considered to be disabled.*</p> <p>Children with disabilities remain one of the most marginalized and excluded groups of children, experiencing widespread violations of their rights. Challenged children are those who are blind, deaf and dumb and physically and mentally handicapped. These children are categorized as mild, semi and acutely handicapped according to the degree of their disabilities.</p> <p>– National Education Policy 2010</p>	<p>“Disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”</p> <p>– Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006</p>
Inclusive education	<p>Refers to equal education given to students with disabilities in every school in Bangladesh. No institution can omit the admission of any student with disabilities for any reason.*</p>	<p>“Inclusive education is the result of a process of continuing and proactive commitment to eliminate barriers impeding the right to education, together with changes to culture, policy and practice of regular schools to accommodate and effectively include all students.”</p> <p>– General Comment No. 4 (2016) to Article 24, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</p>
Special education needs	<p>Includes children with special needs, child workers, children living in difficult circumstances or remote areas, and those belonging to ethnic minorities.</p> <p>– Seventh Five Year Plan FY2016–FY2020</p>	<p>“Broad group of persons for whom schools need to adapt their curriculum, teaching method and organization, in addition to providing additional human or material resources to stimulate efficient and effective learning.”</p> <p>– UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Data for the Sustainable Development Goals Glossary</p>

***Source:** Women with Disabilities Development Foundation, *Persons with Disabilities Rights and Protection Act in Bangladesh*, User-friendly booklet, 2013.

The Seventh Five Year Plan FY2016–FY2020 reports that, overall, there had been insufficient support extended to learners with disabilities and special needs. Interventions on inclusive education are limited to children with mild physical disabilities, leaving children with more severe disabilities excluded from education.

The national government endeavours to augment support for inclusive education within the next five years.¹⁷ This is reflected in the Eighth Five Year Plan (2021–2025), which makes significant provisions for strengthening access and quality of education and other services for children with disabilities. Among these is a target of increasing the percentage of “primary schools [that] have adapted infrastructure and material” for children with disabilities from 34 per cent to 80 per cent by 2025.¹⁸

There are adequate provisions in existing laws and policies to build a foundation for the country’s efforts in ensuring learners with disabilities learn in inclusive settings. However, the legislative environment can be further improved by guaranteeing non-discrimination based on disability and clearly articulating all learners have the right to learn alongside their peers in inclusive mainstream classrooms. Furthermore, definitions related to disability inclusion must be attuned with international conventions (see Table 2).

CRPD conceptualizes disability from a rights-based perspective. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) defines functioning and disability in a similar way as “a dynamic interaction between health conditions and contextual factors, both personal and environmental”.¹⁹ Both definitions

consider barriers in the environment that are disabling, shifting the focus from categorizations of impairments towards a broader view that emphasizes the person behind the labels.²⁰

The concept of inclusive education must also be expanded from a disability-focused notion to a wider definition endorsed by CRPD that involves systematic reforms to facilitate the inclusion of all children, especially the most vulnerable. Aligning the country’s definitions of disability and inclusive education with international normative frameworks will help bring interventions in line with the social model.

3.2 DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE SECTOR PLAN

The Fourth Primary Education Development Program 2018–2023 (PEDP4)²¹ reinforces the right of children with disabilities to education.

The general aim of PEDP4 is to “provide quality education to all children (...) through an efficient, inclusive and equitable education system”. It is designed to achieve targets set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and aligned with NEP 2010, which guarantees “free and compulsory primary education for all children”.

Although inclusive education and/or disability were not explicitly defined in PEDP4, a section specific to analysing and planning for ‘children with special education needs and disability’ is included in the plan based on available disability data from a previous Annual Sector Performance Report.

¹⁷ Government of Bangladesh, General Economics Division, Seventh Five Year Plan FY2016–FY2020, GED, Bangladesh Planning Commission, Dhaka, 2015.

¹⁸ Government of Bangladesh, Draft Eighth Five Year Plan (2021–2025), Dhaka.

¹⁹ *World Report on Disability*, p. 4.

²⁰ UNICEF, *Definition and Classification of Disability*, Companion Technical Booklet, Webinar 2, United Nations Children’s Fund, New York, 2014.

²¹ An education sector analysis was carried out in 2019–2020 by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Primary and Mass Education in preparation for the new Education Sector Plan (2020–2025). The new Education Sector Plan was not available at the time of this mapping study. The focus of this section therefore is PEDP4 (2018–2023) and the Gender and Inclusive Education plan incorporated in PEDP4. Furthermore, the Secondary Sector Development Plan was not available for review.

PEDP4 aims to address the decreasing trend in enrolment of children with disabilities in primary education, from 91,000 in 2011 to 67,693 in 2016. (See also section 3.3 Data on children with disabilities) Furthermore, the sector plan is a response to the growing barriers to participation in education, including “limited facilities and inaccessible infrastructure, absence of accessible transportation, negative attitudes of the family, teachers and community”.²²

Included in PEDP4 is a Gender and Inclusive Education Action Plan where specific strategies to advance disability inclusion are articulated. Key interventions include the review of existing curriculum and reforms to create a more inclusive curriculum that “promotes inter alia gender equality and the inclusion of linguistic minorities, of children with special education needs and disability or physical disabilities, and of children who are disadvantaged and/or at risk of discrimination or other forms of exclusion”.²³

The plan articulated funding for the development of inclusive textbooks, teaching and learning materials and a flexible assessment system, supporting teacher education. This included continuous professional development of materials on gender and inclusive education, expanding the use of information and communication technology (ICT), building needs-based infrastructure and facilities and improving linkages with specialized services, among other interventions. (See also section 3.4 Funding and financing)

The plan also acknowledged the critical role of parents and the need to strengthen relationships between school management committees, teachers and parents in creating inclusive schools.

3.3 DATA ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Estimates on disability prevalence vary widely.

Data collection on disability is a significant challenge in Bangladesh. Reported disability prevalence varies greatly, ranging from 9.01 per cent in the household population reported in the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2010 to 1.41 per cent of total population found in the Population and Housing Census 2011.²⁴ In the Population Monograph released by the Bureau of Statistics, the discrepancies are attributed to differences in approaches to measuring disability.

Findings from both HIES 2010 and Census 2011, however, suggest that there are more persons with disabilities in rural than urban areas, physical and visual impairments are the most common disabilities, and persons with disability are less likely to access education compared to their non-disabled peers.²⁵ A lower disability prevalence (6.94 per cent) was later reported in HIES 2016.

The collection of child disability data needs a systematic approach.

At the national level, identification and screening for disability are carried out in disability support and service centres managed by MoSW, sometimes with support from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Shishu Bikash Kendra (Child Development Centres) in government tertiary medical colleges conduct an early assessment, diagnosis and early intervention for children who may have developmental delays.

²² Fourth Primary Education Development Program, p. 8.

²³ Ibid, p. 198

²⁴ UNICEF Bangladesh, *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 2014.

²⁵ Ministry of Planning, Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Statistics and Informatics Division (SID), ‘Disability in Bangladesh: Prevalence and pattern’, Population Monograph, Volume 5, Dhaka, 2015.

Table 3. Main sources of data on children with disabilities

Method/data type	Data collection activity/system	Responsible agency	Frequency	Latest report available	Includes data on children with disabilities	Adopted the CFM or WG Questions
Administrative data	Education Management Information System	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education	No information available	No information available	Yes	No
	Annual Primary School Census (APSC)	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Directorate of Primary Education	Annual	APSC 2019	Yes	No
Census	Population and Housing Census	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics	Every 10 years	2011	Yes	No
Survey	Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES)	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics	No information available	HIES 2016/17*	Yes	No
	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF	No information available	MICS 2019	Yes	Yes

CFM: WG/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning; UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund; WG: Washington Group on Disability Statistics.

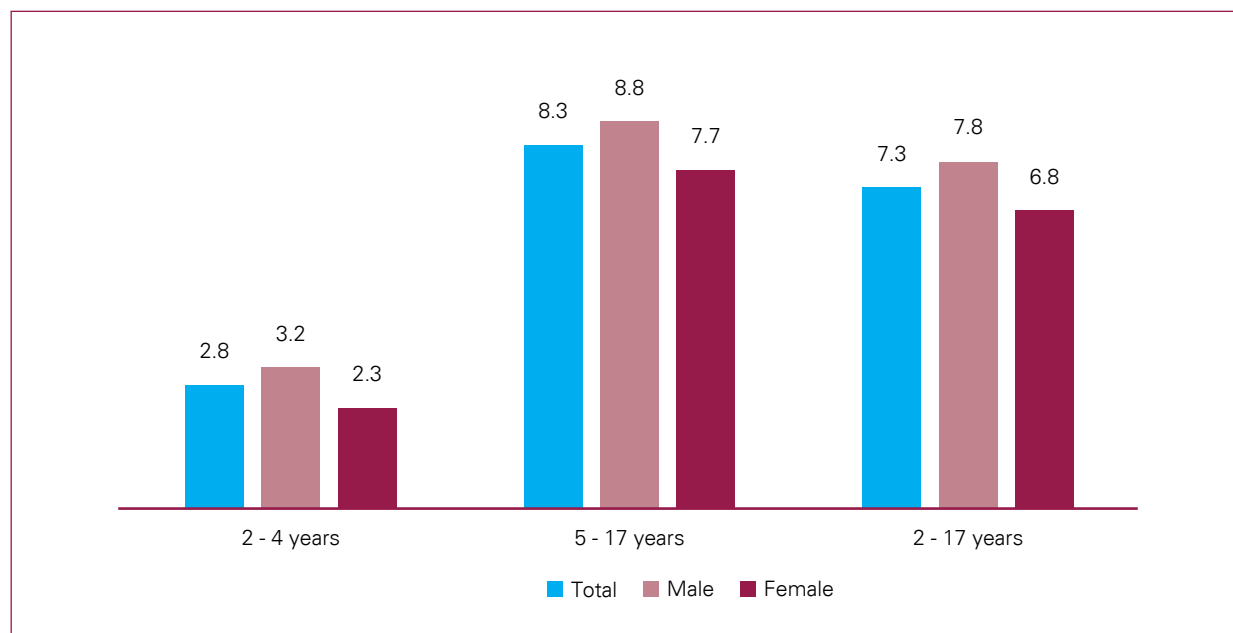
* HIES 2016/17 is the fourth round in the series conducted earlier by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in 2000, 2005 and 2010, <https://catalog.ihns.org/index.php/catalog/7399>.

Child disability data were captured in the most recent Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), carried out in 2019 by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and supported by UNICEF (see Figure 1). The survey adopted the Module on Child Functioning developed by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) and UNICEF and included the following domains for children aged 5–17 years: seeing, hearing, walking, self-care, communication, learning, remembering, concentrating, accepting change, controlling behaviour, making friends, anxiety and depression.

MICS found that:

- an estimated 7 per cent of children aged 2–17 years had functional difficulty in at least one domain;
- boys (7.8 per cent) were more likely to have functional difficulties than girls (6.8 per cent);
- the proportion of children with functional difficulties increases with age, from almost 3 per cent at 2–4 years to over 8 per cent at 5–17 years;

Figure 1. Percentage of children with functional difficulty in at least one domain by age group (%)



Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and UNICEF Bangladesh, *Progotir Pathey, Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Survey Findings Report*, BBS, Dhaka, 2019.

- depression and anxiety were the most common functional difficulties reported amongst children aged 5–17 (4 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively). High levels of depression and anxiety amongst children is a cause for concern; and
- disparities exist for functional difficulties reported for children. Children who live in rural areas and come from the poorest households are more likely to have functional difficulty in at least one domain.²⁶

Improvements in the Education Management Information System (EMIS) need to include disaggregated data on children with disabilities using tools based on ICF.

Bangladesh's EMIS was established through the OpenEMIS.²⁷ In 2018, Save the Children and IKEA implemented a review of EMIS aimed at making it more disability inclusive, enhancing features for identifying and tracking children with disabilities. The review involved identifying gaps in current processes, testing new data collection methodologies and subsequently sharing the information.²⁸

Save the Children carried out a pilot run in an upazila (subdistrict) using the WG question set, with some adjustments, to identify disabilities. Teachers were orientated on the tool and collected the data entered into EMIS. Disability prevalence in the upazila turned out to be higher

²⁶ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and UNICEF Bangladesh, *Progotir Pathey, Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Survey Findings Report*, BBS, Dhaka, 2019.

²⁷ UNESCO developed OpenEMIS to address the needs of its member states in improving data collection and generation of reliable evidence to support responsive policies and plans. It is an open source software that aims at facilitating the process of setting up national information systems that are adapted to the needs of the education administration at central, regional and local levels. For more information: www.openemis.org and <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000214777>.

²⁸ Community Systems Foundation and Save the Children Bangladesh, 'National review for piloting Education Management Information System (EMIS) for inclusion of children with disabilities', OpenEMIS Bangladesh, 2018, http://www.communitysystemsfoundation.org/uploads/1/9/9/2/19920247/openemis_bangladesh.pdf.

Table 4. Disability data in the Education Management Information System (EMIS)

Criteria*	Included in EMIS
Contains data on students with disabilities	Yes
Approach to identifying disability	
Use of Washington Group set of questions to identify disability	No
Identified only by 'disability' or 'special needs'	Yes
Level of data collection	
Pre-primary	No
Primary	Yes
Secondary	Yes
Data collected	
Participation (enrolment, dropout, completion)	Yes
Learning outcomes	No
Type of disability/functional difficulty	No
Degree of disability/functional difficulty	No
Barriers to education at the school level	No
Children with disabilities who are not in school	No
Disaggregation available	
Sex	Yes
By definition of disability/functional difficulty	No
Geographical location	Yes
Type of institution (government/private)	Yes

Source: Data from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 'The use of UIS data and education management information systems to monitor inclusive education', Information Paper No. 60, 2019, and validated with UNICEF Bangladesh and Ministry of Education.

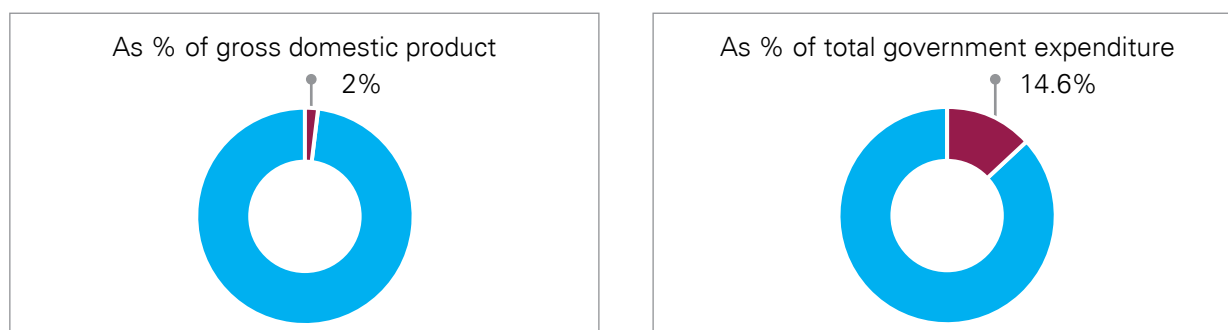
*Criteria adapted from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019.

than initially reported. When the pilot concluded in 2019, a few disability-related indicators were institutionalized into EMIS, but these were not based on the WG questions. Following up on this initiative and building on the gains in this small pilot is worth looking at. Plans to improve information and data collection on disability need to consider the adoption of the WG questions and building the capacity of teachers in its implementation.

3.4 FUNDING AND FINANCING

The government's investment in education is below the benchmark endorsed by the Incheon Declaration.

The Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action recommend that governments allocate 4.1 per cent of their total gross domestic product (GDP) and/or 15–20 per cent of total government expenditure to

Figure 2. Government expenditure on education (%), 2018

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 'Sustainable Development Goal 4 Country Profile: Bangladesh', n.d.

the education sector.²⁹ According to the most recent data from SDG 4 monitoring, Bangladesh falls short in fulfilling the funding commitment. The percentage of GDP was reported at approximately 2 per cent in 2018 (see Figure 2).

Inclusive education is prioritized in the budget for the education sector plan.

Initiatives specific to inclusive and special education are funded in PEDP4. A total of 95.5 million taka spread over five years has been earmarked for activities³⁰ supportive of special and inclusive education.

Social protection programmes encourage enrolment in general education.

An education stipend programme was initiated in 2007 by the MoSW Department of Social Services to encourage learners with disabilities to enrol in mainstream schools.³¹ The programme grants each child with a disability a certain amount, depending on the education level (300 taka at primary, 450 takas in secondary, 600 taka in higher secondary and 1,000 taka at higher education). Bangladesh reported a total of 60,000 beneficiaries who received the allowances in 2015–2016, amounting to a total of 4.2 million taka.³²

3.5 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Management structures and coordination mechanisms for disability-inclusive education are present.

There are management structures and horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms for inclusive education in the system, although, the extent to which inclusion is institutionalized into their structures and programming vary. Ministries responsible for primary and secondary education have integrated support for inclusive education and children with disabilities into their programming. Furthermore, disability-inclusive education is institutionalized in the roles and functions of key offices as detailed in Table 5.

No unit or department within the Ministry of Education (MoE) was identified in the literature as primarily responsible for ensuring inclusive education is practised at the school level. Nonetheless, the ministry has had programmes in strengthening its capacity to implement and support disability-inclusive education.

Among these initiatives are training of school committee members, head teachers and assistant teachers at the school level, training

²⁹ UNESCO, Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015, http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf.

³⁰ Fourth Primary Education Development Program, p. 37.

³¹ Seventh Five Year Plan FY 2016–FY2020, pp. 533–534.

³² Bangladesh Report submitted for the Ninth Consultation on the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (2012–2015), 2016, p. 12.

Table 5. Government units responsible for disability-inclusive education

Government unit/s responsible for disability/inclusive education	
Directorate of Primary Education, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education	Responsible for primary education in the country, including establishing and strengthening inclusive practices in schools.
Access and Inclusive Education Cell, Directorate of Primary Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinates the implementation of inclusive education vertically, from national to school level. Supports capacity building of teachers on principles and strategies for inclusion through the development and delivery of inclusive education modules.
Ministry of Education	Responsible for secondary and vocational education.
National Academy for Primary Education	Develops and delivers inclusive education modules for primary educators.
Upazila Resource Centres	Training for primary school teachers is delivered through the Upazila Resource Centres.
Department of Social Services, Ministry of Social Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Runs 64 integrated schools besides mainstream government schools. A resource centre supports schools through resource teachers. Provides books written in Braille. Responsible for special schools for children with hearing and visual impairments and children with intellectual disabilities.
National Coordination Committee and Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Disability Issues	The national body coordinates issues related to disability, including inclusive education. It was established by the Ministry of Social Welfare, with 18 ministries participating.
District Disability Welfare Committee	Coordination committee on disability affairs established in each district under the Persons with Disabilities Welfare Act 2001.

Source: Sightsavers, *Situational Analysis of Education of Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh*, 2015; Ahsan, M. T., *National Baseline Study for Developing a Model of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh Project Based on Secondary Data*, Plan International Bangladesh, 2013; Asian Centre for Inclusive Education, *Mapping of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh: Identification of good practices*, Save the Children International, CBM International Bangladesh and Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association, 2019.

of administrators at the district and upazila level, and providing opportunities for MoE staff to participate in overseas study tours and training on teacher development and special needs and inclusive education as part of the Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (TQI-SEP).³³ Several iterations of the project were implemented during 2002–2004, 2004–2013³⁴ and 2013–2017.³⁵

A sector-wide approach (SWAp) to policy development and implementation can be leveraged to advance disability-inclusive education.

SwAp was designed and implemented by 11 development partners, led by the Asian Development Bank. A comprehensive policy and institutional reform framework with common

³³ Asian Development Bank, *Policy Reform in Bangladesh's Secondary Education (1993–2013): Tracing causal processes and examining the Asian Development Bank's contribution*, 2015, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/evaluation-document/177777/files/topical-ban-sec-educ.pdf>.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Asian Development Bank, *Innovative Strategies for Accelerated Human Resource Development in South Asia, Teacher Professional Development: Special focus on Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka*, 2017.

outcomes, outputs and key performance guided the programming of government and development partners towards the programme goals.³⁶ Aside from this, a conceptual framework for inclusive education aligned to SDG goals and the social model of disability was developed as part of PEDP-3.³⁷

The explicit focus on inclusive education in policy and programming indicates evidence of government leadership supportive of disability-inclusive education.

A working definition of inclusive education was developed in consultative workshops on inclusive education in 2001.³⁸ PEDP-II, PEDP-3 and PEDP4 all have goals related to the development of quality of and access to education for all children.

Under PEDP-II, government primary schools were required to include children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Training on teaching children with disabilities led by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) started in PEDP-II. Furthermore, gaps found in the understanding of inclusive education in PEDP-II led to the development of a conceptual framework for inclusive education in PEDP-3 to guide inclusive programming and institutional capacity building, showing the commitment of leadership to improve the institutionalization of inclusive education across all levels of the system.³⁹

A particular component in PEDP4 emphasizes responding to the needs of children with disabilities through the curriculum and teaching-learning materials, teacher education and development, flexible examinations, strengthening linkages to specialized services,

and the provision of assistive devices and learning materials.

A supportive policy environment encouraging the practice of inclusive education strengthens the development of inclusive leadership.

Under PEDP-II, the Upazila Primary Education Plan and School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP) promoted decentralization in the management of schools.⁴⁰ SLIP under PEDP-3 put more emphasis on improving completion rates, learning outcomes and enrolment through the development of child-friendly schools.⁴¹

In relation to inclusive education, SLIP aimed to establish and strengthen child-friendly learning environments and inclusive education at the school level. It was piloted in 2007 and scaled up in 2009 through the establishment of upazila education offices.⁴² SLIP established a participative process for school improvement by guiding school leaders to include the school management committee, parents, teachers and community members in decision-making to improve learning for all children.⁴³

The Upazila Primary Education Plan aimed to develop the capacity of upazila education officers in planning and management, support school implementation of SLIP, document school needs through consolidating data submitted through SLIP, and improve community participation, knowledge management and information sharing of primary education data.⁴⁴ Aside from a facilitative policy environment, inclusive leadership is also facilitated by capacity building within the system.

³⁶ Asian Development Bank, *Bangladesh: Second Primary Education Development Program*, 2015.

³⁷ Ahsan, M., *Conceptual Framework for Inclusive Education in Bangladesh*, United Nations Children's Fund and Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Dhaka, 2015.

³⁸ Tahsein, S. S., and M.T. Ahsan, 'Four-year B.Ed. (Honours) Students' Attitude towards Inclusive Education in Bangladesh, *Primary Education Journal*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2016, pp. 27–49, http://nape.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/nape.portal.gov.bd/page/f4896617_7264_4889_aa0b_4072142919fb/journal2016.pdf#page=31.

³⁹ Ahsan, *Conceptual Framework for Inclusive Education*.

⁴⁰ Ahsan, *National Baseline Study*.

⁴¹ UNESCO, 'Bangladesh, Pre-Primary Education and the School Learning Improvement Plan', Promising EFA Practices in the Asia-Pacific Region, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000233004>.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ahsan, *National Baseline Study*.

⁴⁴ Ibid.



Mainstream media and popular culture bring increased visibility and advocacy for children with disabilities.

4

DEMAND

This domain focuses on initiatives supporting children with disabilities and their families to improve knowledge on their rights, demand for inclusive services, encourage changes in attitudes and behaviour, and increase participation in education. It includes involving the wider community, forging partnerships and putting in place systems and structures to facilitate meaningful engagement.

4.1 FAMILY, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

Policies and plans encourage the participation and collaboration of families, communities and development organizations for disability-inclusive education.

The government established coordination and implementation mechanisms between the national and upazila level. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 notes five layers of coordination: National Coordination Committee, National Executive

Committee, District Committee, Subdistrict Committee and City Committee.⁴⁵ The National Coordinating Committee is composed of 28 members formed by representatives from MoSW, other relevant ministries and OPDs.⁴⁶

Education plans introduced a decentralized school management system that encourages participation of and coordination between families and the school community.⁴⁷ SLIP encourages the active involvement of families and the community in school-level policy decisions. Focus is given to addressing barriers to learning, such as discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, ethnicity and socio-economic background.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ BRAC, *Study on the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013, Adaptation, Application and Recommendation*, BRAC Bangladesh, 2018, http://www.brac.net/program/wp-content/uploads/reports/Final%20Report_CPJ_ASC_Disability%205th%20August%202018.pdf.

⁴⁶ *Persons with Disabilities Rights and Protection Act*.

⁴⁷ Bangladesh Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, *Third Primary Education Development Program (PEDP-3) – Revised*, Dhaka, 2015.

⁴⁸ Ahsan, *National Baseline Study*.

SWAp was first adopted during the development of PEDP-II and applied in the succeeding PEDP-3 and PEDP4, as a response to the challenges and learnings from the first PEDP. SWAp allows for a more holistic and coordinated approach in the development and implementation of the PEDPs, in which MoPME and 11 development partners collaborate towards a common set of outcomes.⁴⁹

Among the SWAp goals is strengthening coordination mechanisms between the government and development partners and synchronizing their implementation, management and monitoring processes.⁵⁰ Secondary education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sectors have also applied SWAp following its successes in primary education.⁵¹

NEP 2010 underscores the importance of working with non-governmental and private organizations as well as national and international development partners in the delivery of primary education programmes.⁵² For instance, development partners provided technical inputs on PEDP4 and advocated the inclusion of community engagement and social mobilization to improve accessibility and equity in primary education.⁵³ UNICEF provided technical assistance focused on gender and inclusive education programming.

The GO-NGO (government-NGO) cooperation⁵⁴ formalizes the government's partnership with NGOs through a set of guidelines defining roles and outlining systems of coordination. Partner NGOs' contributions extend from social services

to education delivery, such as pre-primary education. GO-NGO's objectives⁵⁵ focus on providing a forum for working collaboratively, strengthening consultative governance and harmonizing initiatives of the government and various development partners.

Advocates from all levels of the community bring inclusion closer to home.

Strong participation of persons with disabilities, including children, and their community is evident in some programmes and initiatives in Bangladesh. Community-based rehabilitation (CBR) is a community development strategy where the principal actors are persons with disabilities, their families and the community.⁵⁶ They are supported by relevant local and national agencies and civil society organization (CSO) partners.

Save the Children's Holistic Approach towards Promotion of Inclusive Education (HOPE) project⁵⁷ aims to reduce the barriers that children with disabilities experience at home, in school and in their communities through a CBR strategy. The HOPE project works towards strengthening and scaling up effective cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms by institutionalizing the CBR approach within the government.

Implemented in 45 project schools in six Unions within three upazilas⁵⁸ (two rural and one sub-urban district), the HOPE project is supported by all levels of the government, as well as local NGO partners such as the Village Education Resource Centre and Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation (BPF),⁵⁹ to help organize and sustain

⁴⁹ Second Primary Education Development Program.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Khan, M. A., *Situation Analysis of Bangladesh TVET Sector: A background work for a TVET SWAp*, RMDG Australia, 2019.

⁵² Third Primary Education Development Program.

⁵³ UNICEF Bangladesh, 'Executive summary', *Country Office Annual Report 2018, Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 2018.

⁵⁴ Third Primary Education Development Program.

⁵⁵ Hassan, M. K., 'Collaboration between Government and NGOs in Social Protection: Establishment of a Sustainable Platform', 2019, <http://socialprotection.gov.bd/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Presentation-GO-NGO-Collaboration.pdf>.

⁵⁶ Save the Children, *Mainstreaming Inclusive Education: Sharing good practices*, 2019.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Asian Centre for Inclusive Education, *Mapping of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh: Identification of good practices*, Save the Children International, CBM International Bangladesh and Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association, 2019, <https://zeroproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Revised-Final-Report-of-IE-Mapping-Study1.pdf>.

⁵⁹ *Mainstreaming Inclusive Education*.

inclusive education programmes. The HOPE CBR centres, renamed as the Union Disability Service Centres,⁶⁰ provide rehabilitation, education and awareness campaign services for children with disabilities and their families.

Consultation and participation mechanisms were developed where knowledge and issues about disability and education services, including issues and experiences of children with disabilities and their families, are shared and discussed. The CBR centre management committee has an assessment mechanism that uses a toll-free number and message box to obtain feedback from community members on CBR implementation.⁶¹ Collected information is used to improve the centre's function and services.

Regular courtyard meetings⁶² for parents created an avenue for capacity building, knowledge sharing and consultation, essentially giving families a direct and active role in improving access to inclusive education.

Children's voices are also heard through a child-to-child approach where children become their own advocates. The Child Forum, composed of children with and without disabilities, empowers children to join school and community meetings and Union Parishad (rural council) dialogues to raise awareness on issues that affect them. The forum has made efforts to address negative attitudes towards children with disabilities, bring out-of-school children to school and successfully lobby government officials for budget allocation for education and CBR centres and improved school and community infrastructure and public spaces.⁶³

The same active involvement of families and children was evident in the Inclusive Preschool Education for Children with Disabilities project

by ADD International Bangladesh. Implemented in 15 government primary schools in three districts, the project involved capacity building interventions for teachers to develop child-centred and inclusive learning environments and cultivate positive attitudes towards children with disabilities.⁶⁴ The project allowed for the full participation of children with disabilities, families, communities, schools and OPDs in implementing and managing schools. Examples of participation mechanisms formed were the parents' committee and the student brigade.⁶⁵

While participation mechanisms are in place, active involvement of children with disabilities, their families and OPDs in higher-level decision-making and programming remain limited. Coordination between ministries and development partners such as in SWAp can be further strengthened through the involvement of implementing partners at the discussion table and appropriate capacity development of all stakeholders at different levels.

4.2 AWARENESS, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

Education plans and initiatives embed multilevel and diverse communication and social mobilization strategies.

Communication for Development (C4D) and media partnerships of the government and development partners have led to various initiatives on awareness of disability and child rights issues. Support from families and communities for their active participation in improving access to child-friendly quality pre-primary and primary education begins with developing and reinforcing inclusive values and beliefs.

⁶⁰ *Mainstreaming Inclusive Education.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Mapping of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

UNICEF provided technical inputs on the communication strategy for PEDP4 through the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), which aimed to address prevailing attitudes and practices on the education of vulnerable children.⁶⁶ PEDP4 espoused a multilevel and multipronged communication approach that included systems strengthening and institutional development, social mobilization and community empowerment, and behaviour and social change at the individual personal level through open dialogue and interaction.

Previous PEDPs included a communication and social mobilization component to raise awareness on disability and inclusion and promote positive attitudinal and behavioural change.⁶⁷ The PEDP-3 communication strategy built on lessons learned from the implementation of previous plans. It included research, capacity building, communication materials development, awareness-building sports and cultural events⁶⁸ and strong collaboration with the media.⁶⁹

A communication strategy combining awareness-raising campaigns, media and marketing focused on improving equity and access of youth with and without disabilities to secondary education and TVET was used as a response to the growing labour market and efforts to reduce poverty, child marriage and child labour.⁷⁰ Advocacy and awareness efforts by the International Labour Organization in Bangladesh led to increased disability-friendly TVET schools across the country.⁷¹

MoSW, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Ministry of Women and Children Affairs conducted several sensitization training sessions⁷² on working with children with autism and other developmental disabilities for their administrative, professional and medical staff. This training, alongside awareness and advocacy activities, was also provided to parents and caregivers of children with disabilities.⁷³

Community and upazila-level enrolment and advocacy campaigns built into a well-functioning CBR system have led to more families bringing their children with disabilities to community schools.⁷⁴ UNICEF's C4D interventions in schools, including child-friendly pedagogical training for teachers, helped enrol more out-of-school children, including many with disabilities.⁷⁵

Mainstream media and popular culture bring increased visibility and advocacy for children with disabilities.

Education development plans articulating a social mobilization and communication strategy provided strong guidance for development partners to increase awareness on disability issues and promote positive attitudinal and behavioural change towards children with disabilities.

A strong partnership with the media through the years together with knowledge sharing has brought increased mainstreaming of disability and children's right issues. The presence of children with disabilities in popular media,

⁶⁶ UNICEF Bangladesh, 'Executive summary', *UNICEF Annual Report 2012 for Bangladesh, ROSA*, Dhaka, 2012.

⁶⁷ Third Primary Education Development Program.

⁶⁸ Included the Bangabandhu and Bangamata gold-cup football tournament, inter-school sports, inter-Primary Training Institute cultural competition.

⁶⁹ Third Primary Education Development Program.

⁷⁰ Khan, *Situation Analysis of Bangladesh TVET Sector*.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities*.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ *Mainstreaming Inclusive Education*.

⁷⁵ *Country Office Annual Report 2018, Bangladesh*.

Table 6. Examples of awareness-raising initiatives on disability-inclusive education

Medium	Examples of initiatives
Television and news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bangla Sign Language was introduced in a national television news broadcast. UNICEF supported a group of child journalists who included a child with disabilities. The Meena audiovisual communication package on the education of children with disabilities was developed. The Meena Live programme was aired on national radio. Radio presenters acted as the popular cartoon characters, Meena, Mithu and Raju. They interacted with children all over Bangladesh and talked about issues affecting their lives. Radio and TV spots and printed communication materials on disability were produced and regularly broadcasted on national television. Broadcasts reached an estimated 50 million people. Child disability and non-participation in education were issues raised in the media and at international events with high-level support from the office of the prime minister. Feature articles on children's issues, children with disabilities and primary education were published in two prominent English and Bangla newspapers. A public service announcement on disability was produced and circulated by six media partners.
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional folk performances known as 'Pot' and 'Gomvira' were performed in communities, depicting how disability affects children's lives. Mass rallies were organized by parents of children with disabilities. The Child-to-Child Network provides peer support and advocates for the inclusion of children from marginalized groups, including children with disabilities. The government and partner advocacy groups led the annual celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Interactive popular theatre shows were performed in communities by the Department of Primary Education with technical support from UNICEF. National events were conducted including the Bangabandhu and Bangamata gold-cup football tournament, inter-school sports and inter-Primary Training Institute cultural competition.

Table 6 (continued)

Medium	Examples of initiatives
Knowledge sharing (workshops and conferences for teachers, parents, community workers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop on 'Creating Barrier-Free Inclusive Communities and a Rights-Based Society for Children with Disability' by the Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation in 2004. • Regional Conference on Autism and Developmental Disabilities organized by the government in 2011. • International Conference on Inclusive Education in Dhaka organized by the Asian Centre for Inclusive Education in 2013. • Training of broadcast journalists on disability was conducted by the National Institute of Mass Communication with UNICEF support. • Children aged 10–17 years from around the country were trained on techniques of child participation in broadcast media to improve their direct participation and presence in mainstream media. The training was led by the National Institute of Mass Communication with inputs from UNICEF.

Source: UNICEF Bangladesh, *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 2014; UNICEF Bangladesh, 'Executive summary', *UNICEF Annual Report 2012 for Bangladesh, ROSA*, Dhaka, 2012; UNICEF Bangladesh, *Annual Report 2014*, Dhaka, 2014; Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Third Primary Education Development Program (PEDP-3) – Revised, Dhaka, 2015, UNICEF Bangladesh, 'Executive summary', *UNICEF Annual Report 2015, Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 2015.

together with advocacy campaigns at national to community level, help generate national discourse and promote positive action across society on the inclusion of children with disabilities (see Table 6).

Pre-service teacher training⁷⁶ significantly impacts teachers' attitudes and perception towards inclusive education.

Several studies on teacher attitudes and perceptions towards disability and inclusion have

been conducted. Results from these studies found that in general, attitudes towards disability are positive, but there are concerns on the inclusion of children with certain disabilities in regular classes.

A 2018 study⁷⁷ found that the lack of training in Braille, sign language and individualized academic programmes contributed to teachers' negative attitudes towards children with disabilities who had high support needs.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Pre-service teacher training means "recognised and organised, private and public educational programmes designed to train future teachers to formally enter the profession at a specified level of education. Graduates receive a government-recognised teaching qualification" (<http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/pre-service-teacher-training#:~:text=Definition,a%20specified%20level%20of%20education>). In the Bangladesh context, while the term is not in use, preparatory education and training for aspiring teachers largely exist through diploma, certificate, training, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes from government and private Primary Teachers' Training Institutes and universities. In this report, 'pre-service' training refers to preparatory education or training for teachers prior to formal teaching service.

⁷⁷ The study involved a survey of 1,632 pre-service teachers in primary education and secondary education levels.

⁷⁸ Ahsan, T., and U. Sharma, 'Pre-service Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusion of Students with High Support Needs in Regular Classrooms in Bangladesh', *British Journal of Special Education*, 2018.

An earlier study⁷⁹ in 2014 reported that teachers who had significant experience with children with disabilities during their pre-service teacher training tended to have a more positive attitude and confidence in teaching children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms.⁸⁰ Additionally, teachers who knew local legislation on inclusive education were more likely to have more favourable attitudes towards inclusion. Some participants of the study, however, noted that several other barriers, such as inaccessible school infrastructure, limited class hours and lack of human and material resources, contributed to their hesitation to teach children with disabilities in regular classrooms.

These findings validated the results of a 2013 study on the readiness of teachers in pre-service

programmes to implement inclusion,⁸¹ which also found negative attitudes to be rooted in the lack of appropriate pedagogical training and accessible teaching resources in class. The study also suggested that teachers were most likely reluctant to bring children with disabilities into large-sized classes, where a typical class in Bangladesh had around 65 to 90 students, and without proper training and support.

Results from these studies emphasize the importance of a pre-service curriculum and training programme founded on a rights-based approach to education and embedded with principles of Universal Design for Learning and inclusion. This entails reforms in both pre-service teacher education curriculum and in-service teacher development programmes.

⁷⁹ The study used a mixed method approach that included secondary literature review, classroom observations, survey and interviews with teacher educators, master trainers, policymakers, government representatives from key education institutions, heads of teacher training Institutions, head/senior teacher of practicum schools and NGO representatives running inclusive education programmes.

⁸⁰ ActionAid Bangladesh, *An Assessment of the Status of Teacher Education Programme in the Perspective of Inclusive Education for the Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh*, 2014.

⁸¹ Malak, M. S., 'Inclusive Education in Bangladesh: Are pre-service teachers ready to accept students with special educational needs in regular classes?', *Disability, CBR & Inclusive Development*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2013, pp. 56–81, www.researchgate.net/publication/287618686_Inclusive_Education_in_Bangladesh_Are_Pre-service_Teachers_Ready_to_Accept_Students_with_Special_Educational_Needs_in_Regular_Classes.



The policy environment enables the integration of inclusive education principles in pre-service and in-service professional development for teachers.

5

SERVICE DELIVERY

This domain deals with the availability of and access to various services for children with disabilities and initiatives to strengthen different aspects of the education system.

5.1 APPROACHES TO EDUCATING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Children with mild to moderate disabilities participate in mainstream education and those with severe disabilities remain in segregated settings.

The Bangladesh Education Statistics reported that in 2018, there were approximately 46,000 children with disabilities enrolled in government primary schools.⁸² MICS 2019 recorded 66,705 children (male: 33,901; female: 32,803) aged 5–17 years with disabilities, with 83 per cent (55,730) of them attending school. In the 2–4 years age range, 14,072 children (male: 7,321; female: 6,751) were reported to have a disability. Of these children, 9,462 aged 3–4 years were eligible to enter early childhood education programmes, but less than 20 per cent (1,787) attended.

There are limited data, however, on the participation of children with disabilities according to education provision and level. In Bangladesh, the approach to educating children with disabilities depends on the type and degree of their disability.

Types of disabilities mentioned in NEP 2010 are blind, deaf, dumb, physically and mentally handicapped.⁸³ These disabilities are further categorized as “mild, semi, and acutely handicapped”.⁸⁴ The policy notes that many children with disabilities can participate in mainstream education settings with some accommodations, but children with severe disabilities will be provided special education services.⁸⁵

Strategies for improved special education outlined in the policy include the following that directly relate to children with disabilities:

⁸² Global Partnership for Education, *Education Sector Analysis (ESA) for Bangladesh*, Approved version (under editing process), 2020, www.globalpartnership.org/content/education-sector-analysis-bangladesh-2020.

⁸³ National Education Policy 2010, p. 51.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 51.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

a survey of learners with disabilities; coordination of education system and services; secondary schools with an integrated education programme for children with disabilities under the Department of Social Services (DSS); formation of an integrated education programme for children with disabilities at the primary level for district and upazila levels; creation of separate schools based on the disability of learners; and implementation of a flexible curriculum for learners “unable to cope up with one or more than one subject”.⁸⁶

There are opportunities for children with mild to moderate disabilities to learn in more inclusive settings, however, children with more severe disabilities are at a higher risk of exclusion. Investments and commitments can be shifted towards transitioning specialized and integrated education provisions to more inclusive systems that support all kinds of learners.

Inclusive education initiatives give children with disabilities a chance to learn alongside their peers.

MoE took on various initiatives to include vulnerable children, including children with disabilities, in education services. Free universal primary education was implemented to bring more children to school. Complying with Education for All (EFA), the National Plan of Action-II 2003–2015 was developed to enrol all vulnerable primary school-aged children (3–5 years pre-primary and 6+ – 10+ years primary), including those with disabilities, and ensure they complete primary school education.⁸⁷

Policies adopted, such as NEP 2010 and the Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and

Development Policy 2013, try to address barriers to education experienced by children with disabilities. The policies give focus on inclusion starting with early education learning centres, preschools and other institutions that provide early childhood development care and education services.⁸⁸

PEDP-II 2004–2011 introduced inclusive education.⁸⁹ It outlined efforts to address the barriers faced by children with disabilities. While inclusive programmes for secondary school students are few, MoSW tries to support teachers in regular secondary schools that support learners with visual impairments by providing resource rooms containing accessible learning materials, such as books in Braille.⁹⁰

Provisions of inclusion in many existing policies remain on paper, however, as intuitional barriers to accessible education for children with disabilities continue to be unaddressed and a strategic and gradual transition to a fully inclusive education system is missing.

Development partners help bring children with disabilities to school.

Several development partners continue to help increase the participation of children with disabilities in school. Projects such as Developing a Model of Inclusive Education (DMIE) make promising strides in making education for young children accessible and learner centred. Other initiatives provide integrated and specialized education for children with specific disabilities. These schools provide education and rehabilitation services, as well as support to the families and caregivers.

⁸⁶ National Education Policy 2010, p. 51.

⁸⁷ Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO, *Report on EIU Situation in Bangladesh*, Ministry of Education, Dhaka, 2013.

⁸⁸ *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities*.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Table 7. Approaches to educating children with disabilities

Approach	Examples	
	Government	Private
Inclusive education (IE) Regular primary schools providing education for all children	The Department of Primary Education under the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education implements IE in all regular primary schools; all head teachers were given training on IE under PEDP-II. PEDP-3 supports the implementation of IE in all government primary schools.	Some private organizations operating inclusive schools are the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed, Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation (BPF) in Dhaka, and BRAC, which enrolled 28,144 children with disabilities. The Underprivileged Children's Education Programme runs IE programmes for "ultra-poor" (Sightsavers, 2015, p. 21) children with disabilities in urban communities.
Integrated education A special unit within the compound of the regular school; provides a resource room/centre and resource teachers to support children with disabilities	64 integrated schools together with government regular schools in 64 upazilas, under the Department of Social Services (DSS) of the Ministry of Social Welfare. These schools provide support to learners with visual impairments, such as subsidized books in Braille.	The Baptist Sangha Integrated School for the Blind in Dhaka is a residential school for girls. The Integrated Children's Center run by the Salvation Army also caters to children with visual impairments.
Special education A "segregated educational setting" (Sightsavers, 2015, p. 20) that follows a special curriculum and provides teaching materials and aids and "special teachers" (Sightsavers, 2015) for children with disabilities	DSS runs 7 special schools in 7 upazilas for children with hearing impairments with an enrolment of 700 children and residential facilities that can accommodate 18 children. DSS also operates a special school for children with intellectual disabilities and 5 residential special schools for children with visual impairments that can accommodate 500 children. DSS established the National Center for Special Education in Dhaka, a residential special school accommodating 190 children with hearing, visual and intellectual disabilities and autism.	The Bangladesh National Federation for the Deaf in Dhaka has an estimated 1,400 students with hearing impairments. HICARE, an NGO, runs 10 special schools across the country for children aged 3–16 years with hearing impairments. The Society for Assistance to Hearing Impaired Children established the National Center for Hearing and Speech in Dhaka that accommodates preschool-aged children with hearing impairments. The Society for the Welfare of the Intellectually Disabled-Bangladesh runs about 40 schools around the country for children with intellectual disabilities. BPF also runs special schools for children with cerebral palsy, autism and intellectual disabilities.

Table 7 (continued)

Approach	Examples	
	Government	Private
Vocational and technical education	The National Education Policy 2010 ensures that students with disabilities are provided due special attention to guarantee their participation in vocational and technical education.	

Source: Sightsavers, *Situational Analysis of Education of Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh*, 2015; Ministry of Education, National Education Policy 2010, Dhaka, 2010.

Organizations that provide educational opportunities for children with disabilities include:

- Plan International Bangladesh supports quality inclusive primary education through their project, DMIE in Government Primary Schools in Bangladesh, in 50 government primary schools in five upazilas.⁹¹ The project applies a social approach to disability inclusion founded on CRPD and a whole school approach to development.⁹² Key features of DMIE are the use of existing systems, improvement of school infrastructure, children and community participation at all levels of implementation, community-based early education for all children (aged 3–5 years), advocacy and awareness on inclusive education and rights of children with disabilities, and professional capacity building.⁹³
- The Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation has a network of 13 urban and rural schools mainstreaming inclusive education. Children with mild disabilities learn alongside their non-disabled peers under the same national curriculum.⁹⁴
- BRAC initiated the Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs programme that provides pre-primary and basic primary education for children with mild to severe disabilities. The programme also supports inclusive secondary education and teacher training.⁹⁵
- The Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed manages a primary school for children with and without disabilities. The school's Special Education Needs Unit and Inclusive Education Unit utilize a multidisciplinary approach providing occupational, physical and speech and language therapy to support students with disabilities. The school advocates inclusive early stimulation and preschool education for children aged 3 to 5 years.⁹⁶

Access of young women and youth with disabilities to technical and vocational education has improved.

NEP 2010 ensures that students with disabilities are provided due special attention to guarantee

⁹¹ *Mapping of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh*.

⁹² Ahsan, M.T., *Study report on 'End Line Study of the Project – Developing a Model of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh (DMIE) project'*, Plan International Bangladesh, 2019.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities*.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

their participation in vocational and technical education. In response to the policy, the National Strategy for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Skills Development aimed to improve the access of youth with disabilities to skills development programmes and develop their employability.⁹⁷

The TVET Reform Project by the government, together with the International Labour Organization and European Union, was initiated to improve vocational education and training to prepare a labour market-responsive workforce and address poverty in the country.⁹⁸ An inclusive skills training programme was developed providing more opportunities for young women and youth with disabilities.⁹⁹

Access to TVET has seen a steady increase from 476,000 students enrolled in 2009 to 1.07 million in 2018, however, the National Skills Development Authority faces challenges in planning and coordination between various ministries and education and training partners.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, there is a need to create mechanisms that monitor and ensure the quality standards of programmes and the National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework are applied in all training programmes.

5.2 EDUCATION WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHER TRAINING

The policy environment enables the integration of inclusive education principles in pre-service and in-service professional development for teachers.

A facilitative policy environment supports the integration of inclusive education principles in

the professional development of teachers. The departments responsible for pre-service and in-service teacher professional development for both primary and secondary education have taken steps to incorporate inclusive education into the pre-service curriculum and in-service training programmes for teachers.

NEP 2010 gave the imperative for teacher training colleges and the Higher Secondary Teachers' Training Institute¹⁰¹ to include content that developed teachers' skills to teach learners with disabilities in mainstream classes and address the needs of diverse learners. TQI-SEP initiated the revision of the pre-service teacher training (Bachelor of Education) curriculum to promote inclusive education. The standards for teacher training institutions have also been revised to promote inclusion.¹⁰²

Integration of inclusive education in pre-service programmes.

A national baseline study done in 2013 indicated that inclusive education was not integrated into the curriculum across subjects, but was discussed in a unit within the professional studies course. It also found that the Secondary Level Bachelor of Education Curriculum for secondary level pre-service teachers was able to integrate inclusive education across subjects in the curriculum (see Box 1).¹⁰³

Partnerships with NGOs build the capacity of teachers for inclusive practice.

Aside from government initiatives, a number of NGOs contribute to strengthening the capacity of teachers to implement inclusive education. Plan International Bangladesh,¹⁰⁴ Save the Children in Bangladesh,¹⁰⁵ ADD International

⁹⁷ Khan, *Situation Analysis of Bangladesh TVET Sector*.

⁹⁸ Thompson, S., *Disability Inclusive Development Situational Analysis for Bangladesh*, Institute of Development Studies, 2020, www.researchgate.net/publication/343306518_Disability_Inclusive_Development_Situational_Analysis_for_Bangladesh.

⁹⁹ Khan, *Situation Analysis of Bangladesh TVET Sector*.

¹⁰⁰ *Education Sector Analysis for Bangladesh*.

¹⁰¹ National Education Policy 2010, p. 52.

¹⁰² Ahsan, *National Baseline Study*.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ *Assessment of Status of Teacher Education Programme*.

¹⁰⁵ *Mapping of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh*.

Box 1. Secondary Level Bachelor of Education Curriculum

Inclusive education is integrated across different subjects. Clear instructions are provided across the curriculum to address diverse communication needs and encourage various ways of assessing learning.

- Educational Studies and Secondary Education – inclusive values, learner-centred learning theories and assessment methods.
- Curriculum and Child Development – includes a unit on teaching children from marginalized contexts, including disability.
- Professional Studies – unit on the development of safe and inclusive learning environments.
- Mathematics and Science – incorporates strategies for addressing diversity in the classroom.
- Science – includes teacher competencies to strengthen teachers' capacity to identify the unique, individual needs of learners and teach a whole class facilitative of inclusion of all learners.

Source: Ahsan, M. T., *National Baseline Study for Developing a Model of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh Project Based on Secondary Data*, Plan International Bangladesh, 2013.

Table 8. Examples of education institutions offering academic programmes on special education

Education institution	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Doctorate
Bangladesh Institute of Special Education	✓	✓	
Dhaka University	✓	✓	✓
Rajshahi University	✓	✓	✓
Chittagong University	✓	✓	
Khulna University	✓	✓	
Jagannath University	✓	✓	
Noakhali Science and Technology University	✓		
National Institute for the Intellectually Disabled		✓	
National Centre for Special Education	✓		
University of Rajshahi	✓	✓	

Source: UNICEF Bangladesh, *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 2014.

Table 9. Examples of in-service training available for primary and secondary school teachers

Level	In-service
NGO-led*	Plan International Bangladesh, Save the Children in Bangladesh, ADD International Bangladesh, Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee, Shuchona Foundation and Sightsavers have implemented capacity building programmes for in-service teachers on inclusive education in government primary schools.
Government-led	<p>The Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) has supported many initiatives to support teacher development in inclusive education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DPE Access and Inclusive Education Cell revised their training manual to include inclusive education in the modules used in Primary Teacher Training Institutes. • A three-day inclusive education training was initiated by DPE aimed at teachers and other education personnel. • A Diploma in Primary Education Programme is a mandatory 18-month in-service teacher education course for teachers, which includes modules on inclusive education. <p>The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education provides training on peace and human rights for teachers and education staff and administrators. Cluster training, refresher courses and continuous professional development courses contain topics on inclusive education, gender and life skills-based education.</p>

***Source:** ActionAid Bangladesh, *An Assessment of the Status of Teacher Education Programme in the Perspective of Inclusive Education for the Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh*, 2014; Asian Centre for Inclusive Education, *Mapping of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh: Identification of good practices*, Save the Children International, CBM International Bangladesh and Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association, 2019.

Bangladesh,¹⁰⁶ Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee,¹⁰⁷ and Sightsavers¹⁰⁸ have conducted capacity building programmes on inclusive education for in-service teachers in government primary schools.

5.3 SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Policies and standards include improvements in accessibility and safety of learning environments, but monitoring implementation and assessment of quality are lacking.

The first PEDP (1997–2003) had various projects that focused on rehabilitation, construction and development of Primary Teachers' Training Institutes and provision of textbook materials. Despite this, the situation analysis of children with disabilities in Bangladesh in 2014 reported that many school buildings were still inaccessible to learners with disabilities. The study found that schools generally lacked gender-appropriate and accessible toilets and many secondary school buildings were multistoried without accessible pathways.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ *Mapping of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh*.

¹⁰⁷ *Assessment of Status of Teacher Education Programme*.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities*.

Notable initiatives to address these gaps have been recorded by the same study. NEP 2010 includes a focus on providing accessible sanitation facilities in schools to respond to the needs of learners with physical disabilities. MoPME drafted a new policy that required the installation of ramps in all new government schools.¹¹⁰ With inputs from UNICEF, the ministry developed designs for accessible school latrines. Additionally, the National Building Code and the Dhaka and Chittagong City Corporation Rules of 2007 also required all new public buildings in Dhaka and Chittagong City to be made accessible for persons with disabilities.¹¹¹

The implementation of these policies, however, faced challenges, such as slow construction, insufficient funding and poor building code implementation by approving authorities.¹¹² PEDP-3 and PEDP4 included subcomponents on need-based school environments and infrastructure development to further improve the quality of the teaching and learning environment in primary schools. The implementation of the PEDPs brought about some positive results, such as new infrastructures including the improvement of gender-appropriate and disability-accessible school buildings, sanitation facilities and furniture.¹¹³

One of the components of PEDP4 is the development of a guideline on key safety requirements for school design and construction, school facilities and furniture.¹¹⁴ Various CSOs and international development partners have been contributing towards improving the accessibility of schools. BRAC, Underprivileged Children's Education Programme, Plan International Bangladesh and UNICEF, among others, have built accessible classrooms and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities and installed ramps in existing schools.¹¹⁵

Concrete actions to address stigmatization, discrimination and violence against children with disabilities at the school level is lacking.

To help ensure that schools provide a safe learning environment to all learners, the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 forbids educational institutions and other organizations from discriminating against persons with disabilities. Violation of the law will result in fines and imprisonment.¹¹⁶

Despite this, a study in 2013 noted that while almost all teachers obtained some form of training on gender equity, learner-centred pedagogy and inclusive education, classroom environments did not provide an encouraging and positive space for learners with disabilities.¹¹⁷

An EFA review in 2015 also found that one of the main reasons for non-enrolment and dropout in primary education along with disability and poverty were negative attitudes of teachers and peers towards disability, bullying and discrimination.¹¹⁸ There is limited evidence to show mechanisms that foster a positive learning environment and measures to prevent abuse and bullying of children with disabilities are in place at the school level.

5.4 CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT

An ongoing curriculum reform promises a more learner-centred pedagogy and assessment for primary and secondary levels.

NEP 2010 is Bangladesh's first policy on improving the quality of education for all levels and streams.¹¹⁹ It includes general statements on providing a flexible curriculum for children with disabilities, but does not outline strategies

¹¹⁰ *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities.*

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Fourth Primary Education Development Program.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ *Mapping of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh.*

¹¹⁶ Thompson, *Disability Inclusive Development Situational Analysis.*

¹¹⁷ *Report on EIU Situation in Bangladesh.*

¹¹⁸ Bangladesh Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, *Education for All 2015: National review*, Dhaka, 2015.

¹¹⁹ *Policy Reform in Bangladesh's Secondary Education.*

for inclusive curriculum development. Under the provisions for curricula and syllabi, NEP stipulates that curricula and course content should be developed by a committee, without shedding any light on specific goals and assumptions necessary for curriculum development.

In the primary curriculum for Class I–V,¹²⁰ there was limited to no mention about it addressing the needs of children with or without disability, but rather, the focus was on achieving competencies.¹²¹

A comprehensive curriculum review is ongoing to revise the pre-primary and primary curricula, as well as teaching and learning materials.¹²² The reform gives attention to the responsiveness of the curriculum to children with “special education needs and disability”.¹²³

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB)¹²⁴ is the main agency leading the curriculum development and works closely with DPE. NCTB also develops and produces textbooks. Features of a learner-centred and developmentally appropriate curriculum are evident in the NCTB’s key areas of development for pre-primary curriculum: physical and locomotion, sensory, social, emotional, ethical, language and communication, numeracy, creativity, environmental, science and technology, and health and safety-related development.¹²⁵

PEDP4 provides a continuity of the reforms initiated by its predecessors to address the gaps in quality and equity in the primary education curriculum. Under the quality component of PEDP4, particular emphasis is given to curriculum

revision along with the development of a flexible assessment system.¹²⁶

There is a shift in focus from public examinations requiring rote learning towards more school-based formative assessment.¹²⁷ The assessment framework will be revised to gather more accurate evidence of student learning that will inform improvements in teaching and learning processes.¹²⁸ Moreover, PEDP4 is explicit on developing flexible assessment systems for children with disabilities linked to education planning, provision of assistive devices, as well as diagnostics and intervention services as necessary.¹²⁹

The same assurance on equity in education is articulated in the Bangladesh Vision 2021, in which key objectives for primary and mass education include identifying inclusion and access together with upgrading the education curriculum.¹³⁰

The secondary education curriculum has undergone three phases of reform since 1993:¹³¹

1. The 1993–1995 curriculum revision supported by the Higher Education Secondary Project and Secondary Education Development Program.
2. The 1999–2006 development of a uni-track curriculum supported by the Secondary Education Sector Investment Program.
3. The 2006–2013 development of a new multitrack curriculum supported by the Secondary Education Sector Development Project.

¹²⁰ Ministry of Education, Primary Curriculum: Class I–V, Dhaka, 2011.

¹²¹ National Education Policy 2010.

¹²² Fourth Primary Education Development Program.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 35.

¹²⁴ *Policy Reform in Bangladesh’s Secondary Education*.

¹²⁵ *Mapping of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh*.

¹²⁶ *Education Sector Analysis for Bangladesh*.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Fourth Primary Education Development Program.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ *Education Sector Analysis for Bangladesh*.

¹³¹ *Policy Reform in Bangladesh’s Secondary Education*.

The change in government and lack of continuity of reforms led to delays in finalizing and implementing the curriculum. Major revisions took place and led to the National Curriculum 2012, a skill-based, activity-based curriculum that adopted the principles of Bloom's Taxonomy.¹³² There is a need, however, to strengthen student assessment at the secondary education level through flexible, school-based formative assessment.¹³³

Part of improving the access and quality of TVET in Bangladesh is the introduction of more flexible assessment mechanisms of learner skills. The Recognition of Prior Learning was introduced, formally recognizing the skills of a learner for entry or re-entry to a training course.¹³⁴ This system allows adolescents with disabilities to enter a skills training programme upon demonstrating a minimum required skill. This can be shown through an output product or documentation from a prior programme.¹³⁵

The Bangladesh Technical Education Board Act 2018 mandates the board to conduct a competency-based assessment, examination and certification linked to the National Technical and Vocational Qualification that ensures that the TVET curriculum matches the current skill requirements of the labour market.¹³⁶

Reforms in curriculum and assessment systems reflect a strong commitment to improving the quality of education and its responsiveness to learner needs. As reforms are ongoing, the impact of the new curriculum is yet to be seen. However, an effective implementation and monitoring mechanism will help ensure that

promising strategies are put into action and successes and opportunities for improvement are documented.

Moreover, an explicit focus on Universal Design for Learning will strengthen the responsiveness of the curriculum. This will require developing the technical capacity of NCTB and supporting it to institutionalize continuous curricular development.¹³⁷ Coordinating and harmonizing curricular reform and implementation can be a challenge with multiple ministries involved. An effective coordination and continuity mechanism is therefore needed.

5.5 LEARNING MATERIALS

Efforts are ongoing to develop and provide accessible and learner-centred materials for children with disabilities

NCTB has the responsibility to prepare subject-based textbooks, supplementary materials and teaching aids for both primary and secondary levels. The primary learning material is the textbook, and NEP 2010 has indicated a great need to develop these materials for the use of children, especially in local communities and remote areas.

Teaching and learning materials are expected to be high quality and comprehensible. Materials that are expected to be developed include textbooks for the blind following the Braille method and textbooks that are sensitive to local and indigenous communities.¹³⁸ Books in Braille are made available in the resource centres in some secondary schools provided by DSS to support students with visual impairments.¹³⁹

¹³² Ibid.; Bloom's Taxonomy is a learning theory that categorizes educational goals from basic to complex: remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating. The framework can be applied in designing more responsive instruction and assessment in the classroom. Teachers can develop activities and questions on the same topic, but in varying levels based on Bloom's Taxonomy to accommodate different learners' needs. It supports diverse learners to have greater participation and better access to the curriculum. For further information: <https://educationaltechnology.net/blooms-taxonomy>.

¹³³ *Education Sector Analysis for Bangladesh*.

¹³⁴ Khan, *Situation Analysis of Bangladesh TVET Sector*.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ *Policy Reform in Bangladesh's Secondary Education*.

¹³⁸ National Education Policy 2010.

¹³⁹ *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities*.

To complement the efforts to improve teaching and learning in the classroom, the ICT Masterplan for 2012–2021 sets out objectives and strategies for secondary to higher secondary education, madrasah and technical and vocational education for secondary and higher secondary levels. The masterplan includes preparing teaching and learning materials for learners with disabilities (such as text to speech, screen reader) and developing and patenting inexpensive Bangla text processing tools (text to speech, screen reader) and print to audio conversion software.¹⁴⁰

Consistent with the ongoing curriculum reform, PEDP4 includes strategies to improve the quality of education through revision and development of more learner-centred and accessible learning materials that support a flexible curriculum and assessment system.

NCTB will develop enhanced textbook development guidelines aligned with the equity and inclusion principles of the new curriculum. Textbooks and learning materials are then expected to be accessible, contextualized, gender-sensitive and culturally appropriate, and reflect learner-centred and competency-based content and pedagogy.¹⁴¹

NGOs and OPDs help bring more children with disabilities into mainstream classrooms through the Bangla Sign Language (BSL) and accessible teaching and learning materials.

There are initiatives to create more accessible teaching and learning materials in the form of Braille materials and local sign language¹⁴² and multilanguage education.¹⁴³ The Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) has led the development of BSL and, together with OPDs and persons with disabilities, has developed sign

language manuals, toolkits and training.¹⁴⁴ These initiatives have facilitated more effective and contextualized communication for Bangladeshis with speech and hearing impairments and capacitated teachers, students, families and caregivers, and other actors working with persons with hearing impairments.

Prior to the development of BSL, only modified forms of British, American, Australian and indigenous sign language were available. CDD is the largest printer of Braille books and other publications in the country and is the sole provider of Braille textbooks for primary school.¹⁴⁵ Complementing the work of CDD, the Society of Deaf and Sign Language Users has been providing BSL interpretation, training, and advocacy for the institutionalization of BSL and the right to bilingual education (BSL and Bangla) of children with hearing impairments.¹⁴⁶

The initiatives led by CDD and Society of Deaf and Sign Language Users have helped increase the participation of more children with visual and hearing impairments in mainstream classes. To ensure the sustainability and wider reach of accessible teaching and learning materials, however, there is a need to institutionalize production and quality assurance of teaching and learning materials in accessible formats, such as Braille, tactile and audio materials.

A systematic and equitable distribution mechanism should also be established as there have been reports that these materials do not always reach the most marginalized children with disabilities, especially those in rural areas.¹⁴⁷ Strengthening the capacity of NCTB, MoE and MoPME on the production of accessible learning materials can help strengthen equity-focused planning and budgeting processes.

¹⁴⁰ Ministry of Education, Masterplan for Information and Communication Technology in Education 2012–2021, Dhaka, 2013.

¹⁴¹ Fourth Primary Education Development Program.

¹⁴² *Mapping of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh.*

¹⁴³ *Education Sector Analysis for Bangladesh.*

¹⁴⁴ *Mapping of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh.*

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities.*

5.6 SUPPORT SERVICES FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Existing support services for children with disabilities and their families focus on early childhood care and intervention, screening and identification of disabilities, and rehabilitation and health care support.

Efforts by the government and development partners to expand support to families of children with disabilities are seen in policy development, training opportunities and social protection mechanisms.¹⁴⁸

The National Children Policy 2011 states clear commitments to support families of children with disabilities. Assistance is given through disability prevention and assessment programmes. Provisions include monthly allowance and education stipends to children with disabilities and their families as a social protection strategy.¹⁴⁹ The policy also includes provisions for training parents and family members of children with autism. The training focuses on the overall development of children with disabilities, including social and life skills.¹⁵⁰

The National Health Policy 2011 also emphasizes the need to prioritize and allocate resources to meet the health care requirements of persons with disabilities.¹⁵¹ MoHFW, together with development partners and NGOs, has expanded the access to free primary health services to community level. The referral system involves 12,537 community clinics across the country established to support children with disabilities.¹⁵²

Development partners and CSOs help strengthen the impact of disability-related services and widen their reach.

UNICEF worked with the Schuchona Foundation¹⁵³ in advocating disability-related policy and plans.¹⁵⁴ UNICEF supported PEDP-3 and PEDP4, playing a key role as chair of the PEDP-3 Development Consortium.¹⁵⁵ It also provided much of the education response in Bangladesh through around 2,500 learning centres, focusing on improving the quality of learning, increasing access and integrating education with child protection.¹⁵⁶

WHO has supported the development of a training manual and conducted training on mental health and neurological disabilities for physicians, nurses and other health personnel.¹⁵⁷

Several CSOs have organized and supported CBR programmes, specialized services, awareness training and disability screening for children with disabilities, their families and health workers. The Centre for Neurodevelopment and Autism in Children, a training and research facility for paediatric neurodevelopment and autism-related disorders, provides extensive care and support to children with disabilities and their families.¹⁵⁸ The Jatiyo Protibondhi Unnayan Foundation established numerous one-stop service centres providing services to children with autism spectrum disorders.¹⁵⁹

The BRAC Limb and Brace Fitting Centre delivers rehabilitation services and assistive devices, such as physiotherapy, counselling, education,

¹⁴⁸ *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities.*

¹⁴⁹ Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, National Children Policy, Dhaka, 2011.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities.*

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ UNICEF Bangladesh, 'Executive summary', *Annual Report 2017, Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 2017.

¹⁵⁴ Grimes, et al., *Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices.*

¹⁵⁵ Brinkmann, S., *Improving Education Quality in South Asia: A review of UNICEF's efforts*, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, 2018.

¹⁵⁶ UNICEF Bangladesh, 'Executive summary', *Country Office Annual Report 2019, Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 2019.

¹⁵⁷ *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities.*

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

artificial limbs and braces and includes training on their use. The Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association initiated Hope for Life, in collaboration with MoSW. The programme allows children with disabilities to receive assessment, medical rehabilitation planning and assistive devices at their homes in rural areas.

CBR programmes and Union Disability Service Centres, supported by the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed, Centre for Disability in Development and several development partners, developed a system of targeted service delivery combined with community development.¹⁶⁰

Access to early childhood care and development (ECCD) services are crucial for children with disabilities.

Almost all newly nationalized primary schools offer one year free pre-primary education. In 2012, there were an estimated 3.4 million children eligible for pre-primary education.¹⁶¹ To support the government in providing early childhood care and education, a large number of private kindergartens, madrasahs and NGOs also manage non-formal schools offering pre-primary education.

UNICEF partnered with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs on an ECCD project in 2013–2016. The project was run by the Bangladesh Shishu Academy and the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board in disadvantaged areas targeting ethnic minority children.¹⁶² While

the project was limited to the Hill districts, it provided ECCD services to a significant majority of underserved ethnic minority children.¹⁶³

Pre-primary education is an essential component of many CBR projects, like the HOPE¹⁶⁴ and DMIE projects, run by development partners and local partners and supported by the government. These CBR projects have developed a system of education and health care provisions for children with disabilities and their families, where schools are capacitated to identify children needing support and refer them to appropriate health care support services.¹⁶⁵

Despite the numerous efforts in expanding early education, care and health services, MICS 2019 results showed that only 12.5 per cent of surveyed children with functional difficulties aged 36–59 months were attending early childhood education programmes.¹⁶⁶ Non-participation in early education programmes negatively affect access to care and health services that are linked to schools through a referral system.

The government has established a coordination and implementation mechanism of service delivery led by the National Coordination Committee.¹⁶⁷ The five levels of coordination include various levels of the government. This mechanism can be strengthened by a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of each level.¹⁶⁸ CBR has a well-oiled coordination system that is built on existing community partnerships.

¹⁶⁰ *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities.*

¹⁶¹ Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, *Country Report on Early Childhood Care & Education in Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 2013.

¹⁶² 'Bangladesh, Pre-Primary Education and the School Learning Improvement Plan'.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ *Mainstreaming Inclusive Education.*

¹⁶⁵ Ahsan, *Developing a Model of Inclusive Education.*

¹⁶⁶ *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019.*

¹⁶⁷ *Study on Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013.*

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

Table 10. Available support services

Support Services	Examples
Early identification and intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation (BPF) provides services, endorsed by the Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW), such as early intervention, education and rehabilitation services. • The Department of Social Services initiated a disability identification survey in 2012 and a national disability detection survey in 2013–2014. • Shishu Bikash Kendra (Child Development Centres) in district hospitals/government tertiary medical colleges conduct early assessment and diagnosis. • The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) piloted 2 programmes on screening and early detection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Home-based screening of autism and neurodevelopmental disabilities in children from birth to 9 years of age in selected upazillas. o Screening and early detection in community health clinics.
Early childhood development (ECD) and early childhood care and education (ECCE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government provides one year free pre-primary education (PPE) to all children aged 5 years at government primary schools. • In 2020, the government approved the provision of an additional year of PPE to fulfil the National Education Policy 2010 recommendation of two years PPE. This will start on a pilot basis in 2021. • Various development partners offer ECD and early education services to children with and without disabilities around the country.
Services to transition from ECCE to primary to secondary education	<p>In a country report on ECCE in 2013, it was noted that all pre-primary students were automatically promoted to primary level.</p>
Therapy interventions and family support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoHFW's 2 pilot programmes on screening and early detection included training and awareness-raising activities for families of children with disabilities at the upazila level. • The National Children Policy 2011 mandates that parents and family members of children with autism shall be provided training focused on the overall development of their children, including social skills. • The Centre for Neurodevelopment and Autism in Children provides extensive care and support to children with disabilities and their families. • The BRAC Limb and Brace Fitting Centre delivers rehabilitation services and assistive devices, such as physiotherapy, counselling, education, artificial limbs and braces, and includes training on their use. • The Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association initiated Hope for Life. The programme, in collaboration with MoSW, allows children with disabilities to receive assessment, medical rehabilitation planning and assistive devices at their homes in rural areas.

Table 10 (continued)

Support Services	Examples
Community-based rehabilitation programmes	Community-based rehabilitation programmes, supported by the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed, Centre for Disability in Development and BPF, combine service delivery with community development.
Multidisciplinary support for teachers and parents	–
Collaboration mechanism and referral system between teachers and providers of specialized services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoHFW, together with development partners and NGOs, has expanded access to free primary health services to community level. The referral system involves 12,537 community clinics across the country established to support children with disabilities. • The Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association's needs-based Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities project provides children with disabilities health and rehabilitation services, along with referral linkage to service delivery institutions.
Referral systems	–
Multidisciplinary monitoring and review	–
Financial support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly allowance and education stipends to children with disabilities and their families. • An allowance programme for persons with disabilities who are insolvent is in place. They receive a monthly cash transfer of 300 taka per person.

Source: UNICEF Bangladesh, *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 2014; Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and UNICEF Bangladesh, *Progotir Pathay, Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Survey Findings Report*, BBS, Dhaka, 2019; Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, *Country Report on Early Childhood Care & Education in Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 2013; Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, *National Children Policy*, Dhaka, 2011; Asian Centre for Inclusive Education, *Mapping of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh: Identification of good practices*, Save the Children International, CBM International Bangladesh and Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association, 2019; UNESCAP, *Disability at a Glance 2012: Strengthening the evidence base in Asia and the Pacific*, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 2012.



Disability inclusion is measured in school-level quality standards.

6

MEASURING AND MONITORING QUALITY

This domain includes measures to ensure the quality of education and support services for children with disabilities.

6.1 STANDARDS AND INDICATORS FOR INCLUSION

Disability inclusion is measured in school-level quality standards.

The Primary School Quality Level (PSQL) indicators serve as a tool to gauge if minimum standards are met at the school level.¹⁶⁹ Indicators relevant to inclusive education include the number of children with ‘mild and moderate disabilities’ enrolled in mainstream primary schools; percentage of teachers who receive continuous professional development training; percentage of teachers with professional qualifications (e.g., Certificate in Education,

Diploma in Education, Bachelor’s degree in Education); percentage of teachers and school leaders who have participated in curriculum training; and accessibility of WASH facilities to children with disabilities.¹⁷⁰

The data from the schools are consolidated at the upazila level.¹⁷¹ In particular, PSQL indicator 16 (aligned with SDG Target 4.5.1), measuring the number of enrolled children with ‘mild and moderate disabilities’ in mainstream primary schools, aims to have 80 per cent of children with mild and moderate disabilities enrolled in mainstream primary schools. The performance of the sector against PSQL is discussed annually in the Bangladesh Primary Education Annual Sector Performance Report.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Fourth Primary Education Development Program.

¹⁷⁰ Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Directorate of Primary Education, *Bangladesh Primary Education Annual Sector Performance Report – 2019*, Dhaka, 2019.

¹⁷¹ Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Directorate of Primary Education, *Bangladesh Primary Education Annual Sector Performance Report – 2013*, Dhaka, 2013.

¹⁷² *Primary Education Annual Sector Performance Report – 2019*.

6.2 MONITORING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The education sector plan includes a set of indicators for inclusive education outcomes.

PSQL indicators articulated in PEDP4 concerning disability-inclusive education include the number of children with 'mild to moderate disability' in mainstream primary schools, percentage of teachers and head teachers who have received special education training, and percentage of upazilas that have made accommodations for children with disabilities in district-level summative examinations.¹⁷³ Monitoring is the responsibility of the Monitoring and Evaluation Division of DPE.

Capacity building programmes in monitoring has been conducted for key government officials.

UNICEF, as part of their initiative to support PEDP monitoring, organized teams from MoPME and DPE to make unannounced monitoring field visits in schools to assess the impact of their programmes. The Monitoring and Evaluation Division conducts a two-day Quality Standard Taskforce workshop quarterly and biannually at the division level to review the achievement of indicators.¹⁷⁴ Capacity building programmes to improve monitoring and quality assurance have also been conducted.

¹⁷³ *Primary Education Annual Sector Performance Report – 2019*.

¹⁷⁴ UNICEF, *Situational Analysis, Strategies, Recommendations and Action Plan for Gender and Inclusive Education*, United Nations Children's Fund, n.d.



The government has engaged in several programmes to address the gap in participation of girls, including girls with disabilities, in secondary education, such as policy-backed stipends and scholarships.

7

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

7.1 GENDER

Girls with disabilities are more vulnerable to social discrimination and neglect.¹⁷⁵

Some studies show that many people in the country still view disability as a burden and embarrassment to families. This is particularly even more glaring for women and young girls with disabilities. Girls with disabilities tend to be more prone to marginalization compared to boys with disabilities. Part of the problem is the limited access to quality education and provision of gender-appropriate facilities in primary education systems.¹⁷⁶ However, Bangladesh has made significant progress in achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education.

Policies and plans reflect the government's commitment to EFA Goal 5: Gender Parity.

NEP 2010 mandates the allocation of funds for women's education for mobilization and advocacy of women's participation in education at all levels.

The first PEDP had gender specialists working to mainstream gender through ensuring education materials were gender-balanced and provided opportunities for training.¹⁷⁷ A task force under PEDP-3¹⁷⁸ included an extensive action and implementation plan of the gender and inclusive education strategy continued through PEDP4.

Building on the first PEDP, the succeeding education plans brought expansion to access in primary education. Free universal pre-primary education for one year in government primary schools and compulsory primary education for children aged 6 to 10 has been instituted, increasing the participation of girls in education.¹⁷⁹

To complement this, efforts to improve infrastructure were also undertaken. Better roads and transportation provisions significantly affected the enrolment and school attendance of girls, especially in rural areas.¹⁸⁰ Additionally, the development of the National Standards for WASH in Schools that required sanitation facilities to be

¹⁷⁵ 'Disability in Bangladesh: Prevalence and pattern'.

¹⁷⁶ UNICEF Bangladesh, *Third Primary Education Programme (PEDP-3): Situational analysis, strategies, recommendations and action plan for gender and inclusive education*, Dhaka, 2013.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ UNICEF Bangladesh, *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 2014, www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/reports/situation-analysis-children-disabilities-bangladesh-2014.

¹⁷⁹ 'Pre-Primary Education and the School Learning Improvement Plan'.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

accessible and gender appropriate brought more girls with disabilities to school.¹⁸¹

These gender initiatives contributed to achieving gender parity in primary education in the country, with a 51:49 female to male ratio.¹⁸² In secondary education, the net enrolment rate for girls remained steadily higher than that of boys from 2011 to 2019 (50 per cent in 2011 to 73 per cent in 2019 for girls and 43 percent in 2011 to 62 percent in 2019 for boys).¹⁸³

The dropout rate for both girls and boys has been decreasing, however, the dropout rate for girls remains slightly higher than for boys.¹⁸⁴ Girls' dropout can be attributed to a number of related and complex factors, such as issues in access and safety, motivation, child labour and child marriage, among others.

MICS 2019 reported that around 3.8 million women aged 20 to 24 years were married before they turned 18 and around 0.7 million before the age of 15.¹⁸⁵ The government has engaged in several programmes to address the gap in participation of girls, including girls with disabilities, in secondary education, such as policy-backed stipends and scholarships. To further encourage girls to stay in school, the secondary curriculum is linked to skills training, developing employability and increasing their chances to actively contribute to the economy.

The National Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality in TVET in 2012 by the National Skills Development Council¹⁸⁶ and the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with

Disabilities in Skills Development 2013¹⁸⁷ have supported gender equity and disability inclusion in the TVET sector. The National Skills Development Council collaborated with the International Labour Organization TVET reform project for the TVET Gender Equality Strategy, addressing key barriers experienced by adolescent girls, such as perceptions on gender roles, distance to training institutions, lack of accessible and safe transportation facilities, and shortage of job placement services and opportunities.¹⁸⁸

As a result, efforts to increase the capacity of TVET institutions on gender was made, with many training centres made accessible to girls and boys with disabilities, a national goal of 40 per cent female enrolment in TVET set for 2020 and attention given to changing perceptions on women in non-traditional occupations.¹⁸⁹ With the two strategies as drivers for gender equality and disability inclusion, development projects and government programmes on TVET have placed increased priority on the inclusion of adolescent girls with and without disabilities.¹⁹⁰

7.2 HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

In responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the education sector placed significant attention on the most marginalized learners, including children with disabilities.

Discontinuation of learning, learning loss, inequality in learning and increasing risk to learning outcomes and assessment are some of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to

¹⁸¹ UNICEF Bangladesh, 'Executive summary', *Country Office Annual Report 2011 for Bangladesh*, ROSA, Dhaka, 2011.

¹⁸² 'Pre-Primary Education and the School Learning Improvement Plan'.

¹⁸³ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 'Sustainable Development Goal 4 Country Profile: Bangladesh', 2020. <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/bd?theme=education-and-literacy#slideoutmenu>.

¹⁸⁴ *Education Sector Analysis for Bangladesh*.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Khan, *Situation Analysis of Bangladesh TVET Sector*.

¹⁸⁸ *Education Sector Analysis for Bangladesh*.

¹⁸⁹ Khan, *Situation Analysis of Bangladesh TVET Sector*.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

education in Bangladesh. Schools were closed for almost a full year (43 weeks),¹⁹¹ affecting around 36.8 million students who relied on remote learning approaches to lessen the disruption in their education.¹⁹²

Bangladesh's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan (Education Sector) recognized the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on marginalized children, such as those with disabilities. Learning delivered through identified platforms, such as electronic media including television broadcasting, mobile phones, radio and the internet, is not always accessible for all learners, not least, children with disabilities.

The government is addressing these critical challenges and has devised various interventions to widen the reach of distance learning, including:

- engaging parents and students who are at a higher risk of dropping out, including girls and children with disabilities;
- teachers providing additional learning support to students who have fallen behind in their schooling, including children with disabilities;
- employment of low-tech modalities, such as interactive radio, short message service (SMS), interactive voice responses and adaptive technologies; and
- development of low-cost learning packages with adaptations for children with disabilities.

The plan follows a three-phased approach, which provides a framework for immediate response to ensure safety and learning continuity, while preparing for reopening and planning long-term and sustainable measures to build more resilient schools.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ UNESCO, 'UNESCO figures show two thirds of an academic year lost on average worldwide due to Covid-19 school closures', 25 January 2021, Paris, <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-figures-show-two-thirds-academic-year-lost-average-worldwide-due-covid-19-school>.

¹⁹² UNICEF, 'Bangladeshi children share experiences of remote learning and the challenges they face', 8 December 2020, www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/stories/bangladeshi-children-share-experiences-remote-learning-and-challenges-they-face.

¹⁹³ Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and Ministry of Education, COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan, Dhaka, 2020.



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Investments and commitments can be shifted towards transitioning specialized and integrated education provisions to more inclusive systems that support all kinds of learners.

8

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

1. Ensure laws and policies support the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream settings.

There are adequate provisions in existing laws and policies in ensuring learners with disabilities receive an education. However, it must be clearly articulated that children with disabilities have the right to learn alongside their peers in inclusive classrooms and provided with the appropriate support.

Definitions related to disability-inclusion that are narrow and based on the medical model must be attuned with international conventions. A unified definition and explicit articulation of inclusive education should be developed by the government to guide all education stakeholders. The adoption of the Integrated Special Education Policy must not reinforce segregated forms of education.

2. Revisit the mandate of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry of Education to education for children with disabilities.

Consider placing the management of inclusive education as MoE's responsibility instead of MoSW's.

3. Adopt a systematic approach to the collection of child disability data.

There are initiatives implemented to gather information and improve data collection on disability in the country. Given that there are plenty of available data, the challenge lies in the quality and robustness of the information gathered. Issues will continue to occur unless there is a consistent definition of disability, a unified approach to identification, measurement and monitoring of disability, and standardized data collection processes across sectors and at all levels of governance. Plans to improve information and data collection on disability need to consider the adoption of the WG questions and building the capacity of teachers in its implementation.

4. Define clearly goals, roles and accountabilities of coordination committee members.

Clear goals, roles and responsibilities are needed for effective communication, mutual support and an organized service delivery system. Planning and coordination between various ministries and education and training partners for TVET need to be strengthened. Moreover, there is a need to create mechanisms that will monitor and ensure the

quality standards of programmes following the National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework are applied in all training programmes.

5. Adapt effective multisectoral coordination and mechanisms for community participation.

Effective multisectoral coordination should be adapted, replicated and institutionalized, especially in rural and hard-to-reach areas. Initiatives of various development organizations and government ministries can be better harmonized.

6. Change teachers' attitudes towards teaching children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms through systemic capacity building.

Changing teachers' attitudes calls for systemic capacity building on inclusive teaching and learning pedagogies and Universal Design for Learning that involves reform in both pre-service curriculum and in-service teacher development programmes. Additionally, inclusive principles can be embedded in the education curriculum and professional training to develop inclusive values and practices among all learners and the future workforce.

7. Conduct studies on prevailing knowledge, attitudes and practices towards disability.

Studies should be conducted to create an evidence base that will support strategic programming on inclusion.

8. Adopt school-based formative and flexible assessment of student learning.

School-based formative and flexible assessment should be pursued at all education levels as it will benefit children with and without disabilities. Assessments should be used to inform education planning and improve the teaching and learning process.

9. Institutionalize production and quality assurance of teaching and learning materials in accessible formats.

This will ensure sustainability, quality standards and national distribution of these materials. A systematic and equitable distribution mechanism should be established. Strengthening the capacity of NCTB, MoE and MoPME on the production of accessible learning materials can help strengthen equity-focused planning and budgeting processes.

10. Establish and implement clear procedures for safeguarding the rights of children

Clear safeguard procedures will protect children from stigmatization, bullying, abuse and discrimination.

11. Embed Universal Design for Learning principles in the curriculum.

This will ensure the inclusion of and responsiveness to diverse learners and will require strengthening the technical capacity of NCTB.

12. Review the school quality standards to include inclusive education implementation guidelines for schools.

Structure the standards so that it provides the school community with a method to assess infrastructure, curriculum, pedagogy, learning equipment and materials, teacher development and school support services against clear expectations. Develop national inclusive education indicators aligned to SDGs that can serve as a framework for assessing the progress of inclusive education policies and programmes.

13. Develop a systematic multidisciplinary monitoring system.

The multidisciplinary monitoring system would help review services and programmes for children with disabilities and their families

to discover effective ways of working and improve on the delivery of services. Children with disabilities, their families and OPDs should have an active role not only in the planning, coordination and implementation of services, but also in its review and monitoring.

14. Review available professional development programmes for school leaders.

The programmes should be reviewed against the competencies school leaders must have to be able to support the development of inclusive learning environments for all learners.

15. Assess the gaps in skills and competencies in teacher education institutions on teaching inclusive education.

A strategic plan should be developed to address the skills gaps identified in teaching inclusive education across all subjects.

16. Develop a teacher professional competency framework that reflects the knowledge, skills and attitudes of disability-inclusive education.

This can guide the content and delivery of pre-service and in-service professional development activities by the government and other stakeholders. Develop a professional development strategic plan that can improve synergy and coordination between organizations and departments delivering training to teachers and school leaders.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

1. Build the capacity of stakeholders in the care of children with disabilities.

Build the capacity of OPDs and parents and caregivers of children with disabilities to engage in monitoring and evaluation activities.

2. Put in place mechanisms that close the gap between policy and practice.

These mechanisms should be put in place even while there are existing policies that ensure the participation of children with disabilities, their families and OPDs that represent them. Implementation of participation and collaboration strategies can be further strengthened through more active involvement of implementing partners in high-level discussions and capacity building of all stakeholders at different levels.

3. Shift investments and commitments to more inclusive education systems.

Investments and commitments can be shifted towards transitioning specialized and integrated education provisions to more inclusive systems that support all kinds of learners.

4. Scale up effective ways of CBR service delivery.

Ways of delivering services and working with various partners found effective in the implementation of CBR should be documented, shared, replicated and scaled up.

5. Include a focus on disability-inclusive education and clear messages on a rights-based approach to disability in advocacy and awareness campaigns.

Part of this is developing strong policy advocacy to lobby the transition of highly specialized education provisions to inclusive education. While children with disabilities have a presence in mainstream media, they should be portrayed in a positive light, highlighting their ability instead of disability and focusing on their right to equal opportunities. Advocate for person-first language and the abolition of the use of negative language pertaining to children with disabilities, especially in government policies and other official documents. Terms such as 'dumb' and 'ultra-poor' should be revised.

8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Conduct further research on the horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms for promoting and strengthening inclusive education.

Identify gaps and challenges in coordination and develop an action plan to strengthen coordination between and within ministries

and sectors to improve education delivery and support services for children with disabilities and their families.

2. Conduct further research on the practice of inclusive leadership within the education system.

This will help identify challenges, successes and recommendations that can strengthen inclusive leadership in the system.

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Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in Bangladesh



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