

**Review of implementation of Incheon Strategy to “make the Right Real” for Persons with
Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific**

**Seventh Session
Committee on Social Development**

06-08 September
Bangkok (Online Platform)

Honorable Chair,

Distinguished Participants,

Very Good Afternoon.

Let me begin by thanking the Chair and the other members of the Committee for giving the chance. It is indeed an honour to be present here amongst you and speak about our endeavors towards implementation of the provisions of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter “CRPD”) in line with Incheon Strategy in our national context.

Bangladesh ratified CRPD in 2007. To put this piece of information into perspective I would like to shed some lights on our journey from a just struggle to freedom and thereafter to an inclusive society.

The Government of Bangladesh is committed to address the disability rights issues with a whole-of-society approach including through family, development partners, Parliamentarians, media, National Human rights Commission and others.

Honourable Chair,

Bangladesh is governed by the National Constitution (1972) which is based on the principles of equality, human dignity, and social justice for all citizens, as declared in the “Proclamation of Independence of Bangladesh”. The Constitution mandates equality, non-discrimination, and creates room for equitable measures to ensure that all backward & underprivileged sections of the population interact with all, on an equal basis with others.

The general principles and obligations of the CRPD are similar to the general and fundamental principles and directives of the Constitution of Bangladesh. As such, Bangladesh made no reservation while ratifying the Convention and thus is pledge-bound to adhere to the content and spirit of the CRPD, which starts with a right-based social model in its definition and classification of disability.

Distinguished participants,

The Government has created enabling environment through setting up legal framework through enacting Acts, formulating a number of rules/regulations, policies and work plans in order to take subsequent initiatives and measures in accordance with the provisions of the CRPD and Incheon Strategy. The names of the legal instruments itself would provide a clear message as to how intensely Bangladesh has been focusing to ensure that the rights enshrined in the CRPD, including rights of women with disabilities, rights of children with disabilities, rights to life, equality, non-discriminatory treatment, education, health, freedom of expression, mobility, accessibility, health, work and employment, rehabilitation, standard of living, are being progressively realized. Some of the legal instruments include,

- Rights and Protection for the Persons with Disability Act 2013

- Rights and Protection for the Persons with Disability Rules, 2015
- Neuro-Developmental Disabilities Protection Trust Act, 2013
- Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Protection Trust Rules, 2015
- Bangladesh Rehabilitation Council Act, 2018
- Mental Health Act 2018
- National Action Plan for the disabled persons 2019
- Indigent disability allowance implementation policy 2013
- Education stipend implementation policy 2013 for students with disabilities
- Disability Affairs Integrated Special Education Policy, 2019
- Disabled Person's data usage policy, 2019
- The Anti-discrimination Act is under way of enactment
- Strategic Action Plan for Neuro-Developmental Disorders (2016-2021) which is extended upto 2030

Besides the legal instruments, the Govt. also established Statutory bodies that includes Neuro-Developmental Disability Protection Trust in 2014; and Bangladesh Rehabilitation Council in 2019.

Steps to make the right Real:

- **Reduce Poverty and Enhance Work and Employment Prospects**
- Organizing the poor along with PwDs and bring them into the mainstream of society 492 Upazila Social Service Offices and 80 Urban Social Service Offices are working to alleviate poverty. A total of 4 interest-free micro-credit programmes called (i) Rural Social Service (RSS) activities in rural areas, (ii) Palli Matri Kendra (RMC) Programme (iii) Urban Social Service Programme and (iv) Rehabilitation activities of burnt and disabled persons' are being implemented by the Department of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Welfare.
- We have established different kind of training and rehabilitation centers;
- We are organizing job fair for employment;
- An apps 'EMPORIA' has been developed;
- We are providing grants and loan to the DPOs.
- Providing grants and loan to the Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs);
- A 32-seat hostel for both male and female with disabilitiesw employed/ job seekers is in operation;

- **Enhance access to the physical environment, public transportation, knowledge, information and communication**

The Rights and Protection of PwDs Act of 2013 ensures the engagement of DPOs and relevant NGOs in all activities to protect the best interest of PwDs through different committees. The Act in Section 34 further ensures that public establishments must be accessible to people with disabilities.

The Government has taken initiatives to make 25,000 government websites accessible. There is an open-source Bangla “Text To Speech (TTS)” which was developed locally.

Steps have been taken by Government to ensure **Accessibility** by following universal accessibility guideline in Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC), 2020 **and steps have been taken for** ensuring ramps, disability friendly bus, accessible toilets and drinking water facilities, along with need for assistive devices.

- **Social Protection**
- As part of the responsibilities of Article 15 (d) of the Constitution, the Indigent Disability Allowance Program was introduced and the number of beneficiaries has been increased from 260,000 in 2009-10 to 2.08 million in 2021-22, and the budget has been increased from BDT 93.6 million to BDT 18.20 billion.

Financial Year	Programme	No of Beneficiary (In Lac)	Rate of benefit per month (BDT)	Yearly Budget (In million)
2022-2023	Allowance for the PWDs	23.65	850	24291.8

- The Government is providing one-time medical allowance ;
- Financial assistance has been providing to PwDs;
- The Government has launched a health insurance policy titled “Bangobondhu Shuroksha Bima” for persons with NDDs inaugurated by Honourable Prime Minister on 1 March 2022.
- **Expand early intervention and education of children with disabilities**

Honourable Chair,

All necessary measures have taken to ensure the full enjoyment of Children with Disabilities with all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children. The Government is providing different services and programmes on an equal basis with other children accordance to their age and maturity, disability and age. Some sort of services are-

- **103** Neuro- Development Disability Corner (NDDC) for providing therapeutic services to NDD Children in the areas of Independent Living, Speech and Language therapy, Group therapy, Activities of Daily Living

(ADL) and the Institute of Paediatric Neurodisorder & Autism (IPNA) is working for early intervention;

- Education Stipend Program for the Student with Disabilities;
 - National Special Education Center;
 - Integrated Visually Impaired School Programmes (in all districts);
 - Schools for the visually impaired;
 - 86 schools have been established for different types of disable students.
 - **Child Helpline-1098 is also working.**
 - National Academy For Autism and Neuro-Developmental Disabilities (NAAND) Project is implemented to establish National Autism Academy;
 - During public exams, extra 30 minutes are allocated for students with Autism and NDDs and if necessary, parents or teachers can be with them;
 - Stipends opportunity is created for persons with Autism and NDDs in vocational training courses of Technical and Madrasah Education Division;
 - Regular training on Autism and NDD to special school teachers is provide by NDD Trust and 480 teacher received training¹. Autism and NDD is included in training module of Technical and Madrasah Education Division and training is ongoing;
 - **Ensure gender equality and womens empowerment**
A hostel for Women with Disability is being run by the Jatiyo Protibondhi Unnayan Foundation (JPUF) under the MoSW.
 - **Ensure disability- inclusive disaster risk reduction and management**
 - 1. In 2015, Bangladesh Government adopted National Disaster Management Policy. Section 10.3 of the Policy reserved special provisions for the persons with disabilities titled “Disaster and Persons with Disabilities”. It says:
 - • Keep information on the number of people with disabilities, their gender and disability types all unions during disaster risk stage;
 - • At all committees on Disaster, there should be have at least 1 (one) disable person and 1(one) disable practitioner who will represent the disabled at national and field level;
 - • The infrastructures such as tube wells, latrines, disaster fairs etc. created by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief or any development program must be designed in a way which is favorable to disable and elderly people Bangladesh.
-

- 2. National Plan for Disaster Management (2016–2020) also ensures inclusiveness and representation of persons with disabilities at all disaster management programmes Bangladesh.
- 3. National Task Force to implement Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Management was formed where Ms. Saima Wazed ain is the Chief Advisor and five meeting of this task force was held. According to the decision of the task force, training module on psycho-social support is developed and relevant ministries and organisations are instructed to provide training. With support from renowned American Psychologist Joanne Byron, 194 government officials, Police, Ansar, Army, Fire Fighters, University teacher and NGO worker were trained on Psycho-Social support and they providing in post disaster situation regularly. Measure is taken to use Disability Database of Department of Social Services for priority relief and other support for persons with disabilities.
- 4. According to direction of Ms. Saima Wazed, the Chief Advisor, a memorandum of understanding is signed with Dockyard and Engineers Limited, Bangladesh Navy to build disability friendly search and rescue boat to be used during disasters. Total 60 boat building (20 in each year) is ongoing and separate washroom, ramp and other facilities for person with disabilities are ensured in boat design.
- 5. Different assistances like financial, medical and others have been provided to the disabled persons or to the family of disabled persons during pandemic. This type of assistance is also continuing to the flood affected area.
- 6. Special steps have been taken to ensure the vaccination of all disabled persons who are enlisted in the Disability Information System by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Health Services Divisions.
- **Improve the reliability and comparability of disability data**

The Government of Bangladesh is conducting a Disability Detection Survey Program to calculate accurate statistics for people with disabilities through a software (www.dis.gov.bd) entitled “Disability Information System”. It works to determine the number of families/persons with disabilities in Bangladesh, to identify visible and invisible disabilities in the country, to register persons with disabilities and provide identity cards, provide data base with information including photographs of people with disabilities. The purpose of this program is to facilitate targeting strategies and to ensure the welfare of people with disabilities in accordance with the National Policy on Disability. This is an ongoing process;

The Government has approved the Policy on Use of Data of PWDs, 2021 to enable various public/private institutions, general people and PWDs to use the information obtained through this programme. The registered data Up to 31st August, 2022 the total number of PWDs 2.78 million by type which is shown below:

Persons with Disabilities by type up to 31st August,2022(Source-DIS)

Sr	Type of Disability	Male	Female	3rd gender	Total
1	Autism or autism spectrum disorders	44531	28146	65	72742
2	Physical Disability	889854	488890	1289	1380033
3	Mental illness leading to disability	60695	40750	89	101534
4	Visual disability	221245	160491	121	381857
5	Speech Disability	101167	74812	108	176087
6	Intellectual Disability	113758	83495	245	197498
7	Hearing Disability	55658	45139	63	100860
8	Deaf-blindness	6653	5279	5	11937
9	Cerebral Palsy	65344	41689	31	107064
10	Multiple Disability	133554	96632	129	230315
11	Down Syndrome	3119	2494	7	5620
12	Other Disability	10113	7149	627	17889
	Total	1705691	1074966	2779	2783436

- **Accelerate the ratification and implementation of the UNCRPD and the harmonization of national legislation and the convention**
- The Constitution of Bangladesh is the supreme law of the land. While guaranteeing non-discrimination and equal protection of law for all citizens, the Constitution allows affirmative action targeting the backward and underprivileged sections of the society which includes persons with disabilities. Other principal machineries to implement CRPD include the Parliament, the Cabinet, numerous administrative bodies and different autonomous.
- The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013 was enacted after Bangladesh's ratification of the CRPD. Hence care has been taken to ensure that the legislation adheres to the human rights model of the disability to the extent possible institutions.
- Two long-term Plan of Action (**National Action Plan 2019 & National Strategic Plan for Neuro-developmental Disorders (2016-2021 extended upto 2030)**) is under implementation which has been developed through wide stakeholder consultation involving also the persons with disabilities. **The Ministry of Social Welfare and Health Services Division** is monitoring the implementation of the action plan accordingly. The gaps and issues identified or to be identified in the current plan would be addressed in the future action plans.

Honourable Chair,

The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated the pre-existing vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities. Our Government, therefore, adopted an inclusive and human-centered approach in its COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. We continue to intensify focus on imperatives for persons with disabilities through social and economic participation.

Thank you very much.