



RESEARCH ARTICLE

MAINSTREAMING PERSON WITH DISABILITIES IN PROGRESS – BANGLADESH CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Disability is a prevalent phenomenon. Disability issues in Bangladesh remain at the backside of the development agenda for a variety of reasons. People in general, view incapacity as a curse and a cause of embarrassment to the family. These forget bars Person with disabilities (PWDs) from participating in ordinary economic, social and political things to do in their families, communities, vital offerings and education, etc. The present study documented economic and social factors that impeded their access to health care, education, leisure activities, future life chances etc. and also explored measures that may be taken to mainstream them. It will be difficult for Bangladesh to attain her development objectives without mainstreaming PWDs. The predominant goal of the research is to check the current reputation of the PWDs in Bangladesh so that possible action plans could be formulated in order to mainstream them in the national development.

INTRODUCTION

The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) has adopted a definition and criteria of declaring a person disable mostly in line with what has been done by WHO. While doing so the medical model of disability has been taken into consideration ignoring the social model of disability. But the society sees disability from different perspective based on one's own belief and socio-economic background. Usually people in general have a tendency to look down at PWDs and consider them as burden. It is hard to find reliable data on. Because no systemic and periodic surveys are undertaken, the prevalence of impairment is unknown. However, it is presumed that a considerable number in the society suffers from disability with prevalence in rural areas being higher. There are varying reasons for the cause of disability of which a significant portion could be avoided. Poverty is no longer only a motive of incapacity – it is additionally a foremost final result of disability. In Bangladesh, disabled humans have to struggle towards the difficulties of their impairments as well as the bad attitudes of the society. As such a very few of the PWDs is in the routine life of the society and remain isolated and confined to their own lives. Though the government has taken few initiatives to mainstream them but these are rarely implemented. They face challenges and discrimination at every step of their life including healthcare, education, recreation etc. Most disabled human beings are poorly educated or illiterate.

Problem Statement: Disability is a universal affliction that affects everyone. It has serious ramifications for the family, community, and the country as a whole. Disability concerns are frequently pushed to the bottom of the development agenda for a variety of reasons. This low precedence may be defined in public preference through the political weak spot of people with disabilities (PWDs), as properly as the excessive perceived monetary fees and low perceived benefits. Many humans in Bangladesh regard disability as a misfortune and a supply of household humiliation. Only a few systemic efforts to improve disability awareness at the grassroots level have been undertaken in Bangladesh. Women with disabilities are more likely than other women to have a disability. Social discrimination and neglect make them susceptible. PWDs are frequently left out of existing government and non-government development initiatives. This forget about prevents PWDs from taking part in normal economic, social, and political activities in their families, communities, and schools, among other things. The number of PWDs employed is estimated to be less than 1%. Data on special needs is sparse and often does not reflect reality. Bangladesh's development goals will be impossible to achieve unless PWDs are mainstreamed.

Research Objective: The specified objectives are listed below.

- To find out the major factors that affect in social exclusion-inclusion of PWDs in Bangladesh

- To identify some possible action plans for mainstreaming PWDs in the development of Bangladesh

Research Questions: Fundamental research question is "Are people with disabilities socially excluded, and can they be mainstreamed into the development?" Some of the specific research questions are as follows:

- What is the ordinary effectiveness of the current device and practices?
- What are the key determinants of PWDs social exclusion and inclusion in Bangladesh?
- What motion plans are possible for mainstreaming PWDs in Bangladesh?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Economically, Bangladesh has one of the low incomes in the world, has a easiest percentage of human beings dwelling in poverty. In early 90s, the lives of most PWDs had been dominated by the ignorance, fear and superstition held by others. The direct result of these beliefs has been the "neglect" of PWDs. This overlook manifests itself thru the relative invisibility of PWDs; exclusion from mainstream economic, social and political activities in their households and communities. Unfortunately this state of affairs is nonetheless unchanged for the majority of PWDs dwelling in Bangladesh. PWDs are generally left out of development due to a lack of awareness amongst the human beings who design and control developmental programs. They are frequently no longer conscious of the severe difficulties confronted by way of PWDs and most do no longer have access to obtain the competencies and understanding that would allow them to encompass PWDs and their families in development programs. These forget that results from this lack of information reinforces and multiplies the consequences of the bad attitudes that already exist inside households and communities. Most of the time, it is now not the handicap that reasons a PWD's exclusion from society, but as a substitute the attitudes and environmental variables that he or she faces in everyday life. Disability became a development agenda in the international context as a result of the declaration of United Nations Standard Rules in 1993, the Global Decade of Disability which used to be reinforced by way of assertion of the UN ESCAP Decade on Disability (1993-2002). All of these declarations, conventions, charters etc. name for an inclusive society, where the rights of all people, together with PWDs, will be upheld barring discrimination. However, PWDs have continually been discriminated and kept isolated, invisible from the view of the society. No such great initiative has been in place in the context of Bangladesh. To make them visible, and to make sure their full participation in the mainstream of the society, interventions based totally on the charity and welfare perspective will no longer be of any advantage at all. In March 2007, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities or Special Needs (UNCRPD) was signed,came intoglobal law in 3 May 2008.Bangladesh was eighth country to sign and ratify the UNCRPD, hoping that the CRPD should enter into force at an earliest feasible time. Social exclusion-inclusion is taken here as the state of psychological, economical, political, and social phenomenon. Social inclusion requires conducive environment, climate, or situation at external, industry level, and internal environment

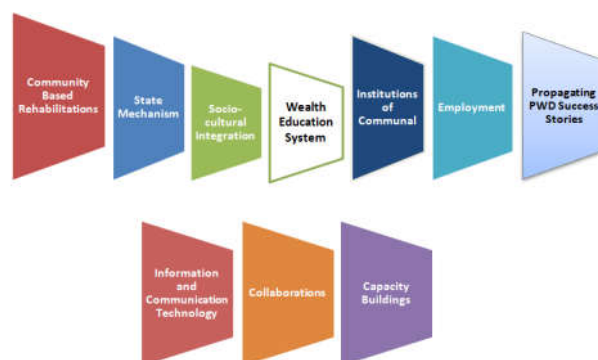
(e.g. Jauch&Glueck, 1988). Therefore, the state of social inclusion can be the source of all the possible wellbeing, empowerment, or mainstreaming of the PWD.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This report has been prepared based on desk review of existing literatures, internet sources and input from stakeholders in Bangladesh. This was followed by field visits to different organisations working with disability, intervention centres, meeting with end-users/disabled children and adults and series of meetings with key stake holders. Existing documents were reviewed and interviews supplied updated information.

FINDINGS OF THE ANALYSIS

Community Based Rehabilitations: There is a gradual change in attitudes towards the PWD. There is a greater awareness about the rights of disabled people and a variety of programmes are being developed to address these issues. Community based rehabilitation (CBR) is taken as major initiative in mainstreaming PWDs where the roles are played by the PWDs, family members, rehabilitation facilitators and the wider community. Many NGOs and government organizations have accepted strength of CBR as a viable model of rehabilitation. However, comprehensive rehabilitation approaches are very rare in Bangladesh.



Some action oriented rehabilitation programmes with proper involvement of the PWDs and their family stakeholders in every community are desirable. In the present context of favourable decision of Bangladesh government in resource allocation to the PWDs, there is an opportunity to make proper need assessment with help of family stakeholders to empower PWDs at community levels.

Ongoing PWDs trainings and empowerment programmes do not have proper linkage with market mechanism; therefore, some small but holistic packages of idea generation, capacity building, service product design, and fitting the product into the market can work as the best approaches in PWDs empowerment.

State Mechanism: State level interventions can bring about very effective PWDs mainstreaming initiatives. Government not only provides social security's to the PWDs but also initiates some non-discrimination strategies and affirmative action's. There are ample opportunities to offer education and employment to the PWDs. Prevention and early detection of disabilities with the basic health support is also a very important role state can play. Present government has given focus on reviewing and reforming policies, creating disabled

friendly infrastructures, developing social and economic infrastructure and opportunities, adopting policies to mainstream the rights and concerns in sartorial policies and programmes, initiating special programmes for rehabilitation, coordinating among development agencies, and launching programmes to prevent disabilities. Public identities of the PWDs can be created and altered by way of tax coverage of the government. The government budgeting and fiscal policy-making have emerged as tremendous methods via which incapacity can be politically recognized, administratively regulated, judicially mediated and financially supported. Ministry of Social Welfare (MOSW) is providing a disability allowances. Ministry of Women and Children is working to start a programme for early detection and support service. Ministry of Health has opened Child Development Centre in number of medical colleges and in the process of expanding further. In the new Education Policy, Inclusive and Special education are important areas of Ministry of Education that will allocates resource for infrastructure development, human resources, and support in school for the education of differently abled special children.

Socio-cultural Integration: The accessibility is about more than just ramps and inclusive education in the Education Policy but it lies at the core of human belief systems. Congregations are also important part of human lives and the communities of faith represent one of the largest sources of the PWDs inclusion. PWDs community has grappled with legislation aiming to improve civil rights for them but the social advancement of rights for PWDs can be easier with civil society mobilization by cultivating higher social values and behaviours. The society is governed by social norms rather than rule of the government. Overemphasis on the PWDs inclusion by formulating act turned as a negative reinforcement mainly to the stakeholders and the organizations, groups, and civil societies (Anderson, 2006). For example, non-discrimination in all spheres lies at the heart of the constitution of Bangladesh and the PWD Act envisages equal opportunities with full participation to the PWDs but disabled persons continue to be excluded and marginalized. Then, how is it possible to mainstream PWD only focusing on polity advocacy and constitution building process rather than opting multiple and multi-level initiatives?. Socio-cultural integration can best be possible with empowerment of the parents of children with disability as also commented by Indian Congress leader Srimoti Sonia Gandhi in International Autism conference held at Dhaka on 25 July 2011, jointly organised by Autism Speaks and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University. Mass awareness of rights of PWDs can help in integration processes. Accessibility in all social structure including local government institution can make the PWDs more integrated. In rural area PWDs can be distributed with 2 core bigha fallow land to make them socially included.

Education System: The training of disabled youth is viewed as remember of typical goodwill and welfare rather than a proper that each toddler seek. In Bangladesh, the division between one-of-a-kind and regularly occurring education policy clouds the development of an inclusion policy. According to the national rules of business, all affairs related to disability are within the responsibilities of Social Welfare Ministry. But they are not equipped to provide sufficient support for the education, because most of the resources are under the Ministry of Education. Only because of the rules of business, presently the Ministry of Education can find excuses

to ignore the education of the disabled. PWDs are hindered in achieving the stage of education that may have an impact on labour force participation, income, poverty and broader participation in society. Empowering women with disability is very important to mainstream PWDs in development. The social status of women with disabilities in Bangladesh is like double discrimination. Bangladesh Government has made the provision of providing free primary education to all. Therefore, it is not exclusive to the able children only, by act the government is committed to provide education to the disabled also. The way of inclusion not only covers the physical but also the psychological treatment to the PWDs in mainstreaming them in the civic and inclusive education. Government has succeeded to bring about 99% of the school age children under primary education. The one percent left includes mostly the disable children. As such inclusive education can be an effective measure to achieve Sustainable development goals (SDGs)(2015-2030) and education for all by 2030 in Bangladesh. Many PWDs are incapable of undergoing normal education curriculum due to their inherent limitation. Flexible curriculum considering the types of disability need to be prepared for PWDs accepting their limitations. Also appropriate recognition needs to be given. This will help them to find employment. Opportunities for vocational training need to be expanded for PWDs which would also enable them to find employment.

Institutions of Communal: Equality for PWDs is contingent on economic equality and economic independence as the facts constantly show that disabled human beings are the poorest, least skilled and greatest minority in the world. Therefore, the asset accumulation strategies can be used to alleviate the poverty confronted by way of many PWDs. Developing some public trusts or institutions can be the key in pulling self, groups and municipalities from the poverty.

Employment: Employment seems to play an important role in raising positive feelings and perception. It appears to be instrumental in integrating PWDs into the mainstream of community and social life. Besides, it can have important economic and social effect that helps to increase efficacy level of PWD (Schur, Schields, & Schriener, 2003). Contingent and part-time work can play a necessary position in increasing economic opportunities for many PWDs and have to be addressed in policies designed to enlarge their employment levels. However, the employers are reluctant to make lodging for part-time and contingent employees with disabilities. In industrialized societies, over two-fifth of people with disabilities are in some form of non-standard job and the fee is nearly double than the non-disabled peers (Schur, 2003). There are limited industrial job opportunities in Bangladesh. The public, private and corporate sectors need to make disabled friendly environment especially for their employment if needed on charity basis too. After the International Autism conference BGMEA (Bangladesh Garments Manufacturer Export Association) have declared to employ 1500 PWDs annually.

Propagating PWD Success Stories: There are many successful blind, deaf, physical, and cognitively disabled persons in Bangladesh. These successful PWD professionals can be a source of inspiration to other PWDs. Most of success cases are possible since they could develop their different abilities out of the disability.

Media can play the vital role of catalyst in propagating these success stories and sensitizing the society as a whole.

Information and Communication Technology: Technology is the manner of software of understanding and to locate high-quality solutions to social troubles. Its outcome e.g. infrastructure, systems, and devices can dramatically affect the environment where PWDs live and work. Thus, technology can immensely empower PWDs if that is developed within the framework and priority of PWDs (Albert, McBride, & Seddon, 2002). ICT is one of the central driving forces for development in the recent times. ICT accessibility for PWDs can be an important aid in the social inclusion of the disabled empowering them in education, mobility, accessibility, communication, entrepreneurship, employment, and health. Usage of computer aids and Internet technology is essential in PWDs empowerment. It enables the disabled persons in information sharing, online publication, reading digital books, creating virtual work team, and other knowledge works.

Collaborations: Collaborative initiatives are necessary among the PWDs and their stakeholders for mainstreaming. The initiatives can be taken at interpersonal, group, organizational, institutional and state levels. It is necessary to understand the fact that most marginalized PWDs are those who have severe disability and dependence. Collaborative culture develops the synergic effects that emphasizes active role design of PWDs members in possible areas and also expect stakeholders in other areas. Such collaborative initiatives maximize the reciprocity, governance, equity, social justice, and social responsibility. Such collaboration among researchers, development activists, planners, media persons and funding agencies are desirable to mainstream PWDs in development.

Capacity Buildings: It is necessary to develop the organizational capacity of the PWDs and welfare organizations. Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare in association with other ministries, such as, education, health, and local government should design capacity building programmes of the PWDs related organizations. There are many federations, self-help organizations, welfare organizations, and schools running in the PWDs sectors in Bangladesh. The number of PWDs organizations has crossed 300 but their impact on the Bangladeshi rural community is almost negligible. Such programme should give focus on identifying needs, setting strategies, making short and long-term plans, specialization of organizations in related areas, making norms and standards of performance appraisals, and designing collaborative action oriented programmes.

Recommendation

Basing on the above research fact, the state should take following disabled-friendly steps:

- To give priority to the PWDs in distributing the 2 core bigha fallow lands in their own locality.
- To ensure implementation of existing employment quota (10%) for the PWDs.
- To provide them with bank loans on easy conditions basis in order to create/encourage disabled-friendly entrepreneurship.
- To facilitate and reward those private institutions those ensure the employment of the PWDs.

- To create disabled friendly environment in every educational institution.
- To increase the number of recipients and the amount of allowances to at least 900 taka (the present amount is only 300 taka per month).
- To spend 10% of the education budget for the development of education of the Children with Disabilities.
- To give at least 1000 taka health allowances to pregnant disabled women.
- To allocate budget in the IT sector in order to increase the skills of the PWDs.

Conclusion

It is the time to decide whether we want to have 5 core 20 lakh PWDs or 2 core 80 lakh by 2031. This decision has to be positive as it is a great criminal offence not to facilitate PWDs. And also because those disability prevented, 2 crore 40 lakh people will be able to successfully contribute to the socio-economic development of our country. PWDs suffer all those deprivation-distress that could be possible for human beings. However, deprivation of PWDs could have three dimensions— as PWDs, as a poor-poverty stricken-ultra poor non-abled person, as poor disabled women. On the basis of the survey, it can be said that, Government of Bangladesh (GOB) must put more emphasis on the improvement of disabled rural people. GOB must put more emphasis on the poor ultra-poor lower middle class disabled people. There are some factors which GOB should consider in defining the relationship between disability and poverty. Firstly, disability is not a social-economic and class neutral factor. Poverty is one of the main reasons of disability Secondly poverty causes disability and hence, disability makes people poorer. PWDs need more care but they are mostly kept unproductive. So disability causes poverty. Thirdly, when the state to take the responsibilities of the PWDs and does not take proper steps to remove disability, then disability is bound to increase poverty. Fourthly, disability creates a perpetual deprivation cycle among the poor as well as rich people. Powerlessness, weakness, poverty, isolation/alienation and psychological distress--- these five factors constitutes the deprivation cycle.

Disability is not a socio-economic-class or neutral fact. The rate of disability among the poor is higher than that of among the rich people. Disability creates a deprivation-cycle. In this cycle poor disabled persons become poorer. The very small allotment and expenditure of government for the improvement of their quality of life indicates high degree of disrespect for them. On the present structure, keeping other conditions unchanged, the chance of employment of the disabled is very little. In spite in our constitutional obligation, it is a matter of doubt whether our government regards the disabled as human beings. It is very important to define extent of respect of the government to the disabled people. The analysis of the current development budget shows that--Among 1,000 development projects only seven projects are directly or indirectly related to the welfare of disabled people. Among them three projects are directly disabled-friendly while the remaining four projects are indirectly related to the welfare of the disabled people. It means only 0.7% of the total projects under annual development program are disability –friendly!

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