

# Shober Jonno Shikha (Education for All) Bangladesh

**Project timeline:** January 2021 – December 2024

**Project budget:** £2.45 million

**Capturing the power of collaboration:** Sightsavers, Action on Disability and Development (ADD), Sense International, Centre for Disability in Development (CDD), Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK), Shafol Protibondhi, Alor Prodip, Back to School Alliance, Programme for Evidence to inform Disability Action (PENDA).

**Every child has the right to education.** However, children with disabilities in low and lower middle-income countries – **including an estimated 1.6 million school aged children with disabilities in Bangladesh<sup>1</sup>** - are more likely to be left out of school or to receive a sub-standard education compared to children without disabilities. **That is why Disability Inclusive Development - Inclusive Futures is part of the global movement to transform inclusive education for children with disabilities in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We are working with partners to open up education systems - and children's future opportunities.**



## The situation in Bangladesh

Sixty percent of school aged children with disabilities are not enrolled in formal education in Bangladesh<sup>2</sup>. This exclusion has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which closed Bangladeshi schools for almost two years, additionally forcing many of those children with disabilities who were in education, out of school. Bangladesh's Education Policy 2010 includes children with disabilities and the country's Ministries of Education

are working to provide free education to all children by 2030. However, in practice, children with disabilities fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Welfare, meaning their educational needs are siloed from those in charge of education<sup>3</sup>. **As such, there remains much to be done to increase access to education for children with disabilities.**

## How we are helping

The Shober Jonno Shikha (Education for All) project is working with 45 schools in the Narshingdi and Sirajganj districts of Bangladesh to improve access to education for children with disabilities.

**We have brought together a consortium of experts**, including Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), education practitioners, international and local non-governmental organisations and research institutes. The team is strengthening systems for enrolling, retaining, and providing quality primary education for children with disabilities, with a focus on girls and boys aged 5 – 10 years, with multiple and complex disabilities.

Children with disabilities in Bangladesh face multiple barriers to participation including inaccessible schools, a lack of qualified teachers and support services and discrimination. **This project addresses these barriers through three pillars of action:**

- **At community level** we want to see 500 children with disabilities actively participating in learning, **with a focus on children with multiple and complex disabilities**. During the pandemic, we supported children with disabilities and their families to learn at home. Looking ahead, in the final two years of implementation, we are preparing children, through a structured course of pre-enrolment education, to enrol or re-enrol in mainstream schools. We are engaging with parents, community leaders, and OPDs, alongside strengthening school and teacher capacity to better serve children with disabilities. Community workers are providing one-to-one support and our goal is to transition as many children with disabilities to school as possible. Community awareness raising by OPDs will aim to reduce negative stereotyping and strengthen referral pathways to increase participation in learning.



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“I received guidebooks and financial support for private tuition...a ray of hope to me. I could think about continuing my education again and my family were also encouraged.”

Akhi, 17, was supported to continue education while schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **At system strengthening level** we are working with upazila (district) officials, school management committees and teachers at 45 schools to demonstrate how mainstream schools can be inclusive for children with disabilities through cost effective and contextually appropriate practices. We are delivering teacher training via master trainers and with the support of OPDs, school level improvement plans for each school will be completed. Plans will include accessibility audits and support to apply for government-funded renovations.
- **At governance and policy level** we want to see commitments to scale up inclusive education in Bangladesh. From the outset, we have engaged national, state and local government area education bodies on the project’s steering committee and, thanks to our five partner OPDs, effective advocacy plans are being implemented. We will ensure education ministries are aware of project achievements and will identify ways they can promote joined-up support for children and their families with the Ministry of Social Welfare.

## Project impact



By the end of the project, we will have supported 45 schools to sustainably improve their education provision for children with disabilities through improving environmental accessibility and training 36 master teacher trainers, 225 teachers, and school management committees.



Ultimately, we will reach over 500 children with disabilities – in and out of school - and support children with multiple and complex disabilities to transition to school. Wider community reach will be even more significant – with an estimated 20,000 people in targeted districts improving their awareness of educational inclusion for children with disabilities.

## Discovering what works

The project will deliver learning resources to add to the global evidence base on disability inclusion through a **randomised control trial** (currently underway), reflective reports and blogs. Read our **qualitative study** undertaken at project inception in the targeted districts to explore the experiences of children with disabilities, their parents and teachers which informed the project's design and visit our **project web page**.

## Delivering change for children with disabilities

Disability inclusion is critical for reaching the Global Goals and we have produced the evidence on what works in a range of different areas. We now need the allocation of resources for disability inclusion in education to turn evidence into action.

**To find out more visit**

**[inclusivefutures.org/inclusive-education](http://inclusivefutures.org/inclusive-education)** or contact Claire Walsh at **[cwalsh@sightsavers.org](mailto:cwalsh@sightsavers.org)**.

### Endnotes

- 1 The National Forum of Organizations Working with the Disabled (2002) as referenced in Inclusive Futures / Institute of Development Studies (2020), Bangladesh Situational Analysis Version II - June 2020, p.24
- 2 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2021) Report on National Survey on Persons with Disabilities. Statistics and Informatics Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of Bangladesh. Available online at: **[http://203.112.218.65:8008/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/latesreport/NSPD\\_%202021.pdf](http://203.112.218.65:8008/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/latesreport/NSPD_%202021.pdf)**
- 3 UNICEF (2014) Situation analysis on children with disabilities in Bangladesh. UNICEF, Dhaka as referenced in Inclusive Futures / Institute of Development Studies (2020), Bangladesh Situational Analysis Version II - June 2020, p.14