



Shikhbo Shobai (Everyone will Learn) Bangladesh

Project timeline: January 2021 - December 2025

Project budget: £2.94 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 Bangladesh¹** - 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 Bangladesh². This exclusion was exacerbated by the COVID-19 epidemic, which was present at the start of the project causing school closures and delays to our activities. 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 education³. **As such, there remains much to be done to increase access to education for children with disabilities.**

How we are helping

The Shikhbo Shobai (Everyone will Learn) Bangladesh 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 700 children with disabilities actively participating in learning, **with a focus on children with multiple and complex disabilities**. We are preparing children, through a structured course of pre-enrolment education, to enrol or re-enrol in mainstream schools. We also engage parents, community leaders, and OPDs, alongside strengthening school and teacher capacity to better serve children with disabilities. We have increased our focus on minimising dropouts, and are exploring how outreach support can encourage out of school children back into school. Community awareness raising by OPDs – targeting up to an estimated 20,000 people across the three districts - aims 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 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 are ensuring education ministries are aware of project achievements and are identifying ways they can promote joined-up support for children and their families with the Ministry of Social Welfare.

Project impact to date



Shikhbo Shobai (Everyone will Learn) Bangladesh has so far supported 491 children with disabilities (234 girls, 257 boys) of which 90 children (39 girls, 51 boys) in home-based education successfully transitioned and enrolled in mainstream schools. And in partnership with the Department for Primary Education, we have trained 37 master trainers and 337 teachers from 45 schools.



Through advocacy and collaboration meetings supported by the project, OPDs have gained significant recognition within their communities. They have established partnerships with service providers and committees at local government levels, which has led to people with disabilities joining several committees and government safety net schemes. As a result, 139 children (53 girls, 86 boys) have received disability allowance, and 13 have received assistive devices.



Our effective collaboration with local government resulted in the allocation of a budget of £1800 (2,500,000 Bangladeshi Taka) by a local authority in Narsingdi specifically for people with disabilities. This budget supports people and children with disabilities who have not yet received government issued disability cards or allowances, providing financial assistance for their education health and emergency needs during disaster response.

Discovering what works

The project is delivering 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 or contact

Claire Walsh at 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: https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/b343a8b4_956b_45ca_872f_4cf9b2f1a6e0/2022-06-13-15-24-ca6f018ab83c88a4db8ff51386439794.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