



Bangladesh – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 28 January 2016

Any difficulties a child with speech issues or an intellectually disabled child might face in Bangladesh.

A document published on the website of the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed states:

“In Bangladesh, physical limitations are often not the most difficult obstacles a disabled person needs to overcome. Attitudes to and perceptions of disability are often even more challenging. As with many southern countries, there is little awareness in Bangladesh of disability, its causes and consequences. Many 'traditional' views on the subject still prevail, especially in rural settings. Disability is often seen as a curse from God, inflicted as retribution for the sins of the disabled person's parents. Many believe that disability is infectious and that having a disabled person in the house will bring on an 'evil wind' after which others will be infected with this condition.” (Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (2010) *Perceptions of Disability in Bangladesh*)

This document also states:

“Too little work is done in raising awareness about disability or educating people about how disability occurs and how to prevent it. Children rarely mix with disabled friends. The segregation of disabled children prevents stigmas being removed at an early age.” (ibid)

The Executive Summary of a report published by UNICEF Bangladesh, in a section headed “Right to equity and non-discrimination”, states:

“Discrimination in the family, the community and the workplace is at the core of most violations of the rights of children with disabilities in Bangladesh. The belief that disability is a curse and a punishment for sinful behaviour permeates all levels of society and affects access to adequate care, health services, education and participation. While progress is slow, changes have been noted due to policy modifications and social mobilization. For children with disabilities this includes increased access to school and to opportunities for skills development and employment. Now that they are seen as contributors rather than burdens, their status in the family and the community is improving. However, the paradigm shift – from viewing children as having disabilities to viewing their ‘abilities’ and from a welfare approach to a rights-based approach – is yet to be developed. Social beliefs are deeply rooted and exist at all levels. Despite great improvement, laws and policies continue to discriminate, are slow to be implemented and are often not adequately funded. Most initiatives for children with disabilities are specialized and separate rather than addressed within mainstream programmes and services. Furthermore, data from a variety of sectoral programmes at national level are not disaggregated by disability, this contributing to the ‘invisibility’ of children

with disabling and inhibits planning that factors in disability inclusion in mainstream programmes. (UNICEF Bangladesh (June 2014) *Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh*)

A UN Human Rights Council report, in a section headed “Equality and non-discrimination” (paragraph 22), states:

“Noting the adoption of the Sixth Five-Year Plan (SFYP), UNICEF stated that girls and particular groups of children, including refugee children, children with disabilities, children of ethnic and religious minorities, and children in slums and rural areas, continue to face discrimination and disparities.” (UN Human Rights Council (8 February 2013) *Compilation prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21*, p.7)

A report from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in a section headed “Children with disabilities” (paragraph 52), states:

“While noting with appreciation the State party’s efforts to put in place an online database to store data and information on persons and children with disabilities and provide reports for planning and programming, the Committee is, however, concerned:

(a) At the lack of reliable disaggregated data on children with disabilities in the State party;

(b) At the absence of specific information on initiatives and programmes for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children with disabilities, particularly for those children suffering from multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination;

(c) At the persistence of negative attitudes and discrimination against children with disabilities;

(d) At the deprivation of a high number of children with disabilities of education and that most schools are not accessible and lack adapted education;

(e) That children with disabilities face major obstacles in accessing appropriate social and healthcare services.” (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2 October 2015) *Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Bangladesh* (Advance Unedited Version, p.10)

A report published by the ‘Voices of the Marginalised’ consortium, in a section titled “Access to education” (paragraph 5.2.2 “Lack of infrastructure and facilities”), states:

“The NGO peer researchers agreed that children with disabilities rarely access education. Those with hearing and speech impairments, or who are blind, or have low vision suffer the most because it is difficult for them to follow lessons. Teachers often teach by reading out texts, so if children cannot hear or see they cannot learn. The situation has improved for children with disabilities, but not enough, they said. One example of improvement they gave is the introduction of ramps in all government primary schools. The

government has also included disability in teacher training curricula. The NGO peer researchers explained while this is not good enough, at least government has taken the initiative. They pointed out that there are very few specialised schools for children with disabilities and these are not accessible to people who are poor. There are one or two schools that provide free education, but competition for a place is high and the very poor, who live in slums, do not know that these services are available. In rural areas, specialist schools are only available at divisional level and it is not possible for children with disabilities to get to them.” (“Voices of the Marginalised’ consortium (April 2015) ‘ *We can also make change*’: *Piloting participatory research with persons with disabilities and older people in Bangladesh*, p.26)

In section 5.3 “Livelihoods” this report states:

“The NGO peer researchers added that those living in poverty do not have time to support livelihood training for their children. They told the story of how one NGO arranged for a group of children with hearing and speech impairments to be trained in making and then marketing paper bags. On the day of the training, only six children turned up. People who are poor cannot afford to give up their time for training, they explained. In any case, the teacher doing the training knew sign language but not sign language in the right dialect to communicate with the group.” (ibid, p.30)

A 2010 article from Bangladeshi newspaper the Financial Express states:

“Bangladesh is still fighting with poverty. Poor and illiterate parents don't even know that education is the birthright for their child. Access Bangladesh Foundation claims that presently 1.6 million disabled children are deprived of education in the country. As 1 in 5 people are living on less than a USD a day, how can they support their disabled child's growth and development? They often take them to the street to start their life in the profitable business of begging showing the handicapped part of their child.” (Financial Express (12 December 2010) *Disabled young ones can also become assets and not liabilities*)

See also 2015 Financial Express article which states:

“The subject of the rights of persons with disabilities is one of the least understood or rather one of the most misunderstood issues in Bangladesh. It has remained as one of the most neglected development agenda both by the state and non-state actors. People with disabilities are in most cases treated as though they are after charity and welfare. According to the law, any person suffering from the following forms of disorders are considered disabled: autism or autism spectrum disorders, physical disability, mental illness leading to disability, visual infirmity, speech impairment, intellectual disability, hearing infirmity, deaf-blindness, cerebral palsy, down syndrome, multiple disability, and other disabilities. In Bangladesh, approximately 15 million people suffer from various disabilities. Unfortunately, their problems are hardly addressed by mainstream rights organisations engaged in the fields of human rights, women's rights, children's rights, religious minorities' rights or indigenous peoples' rights and so on.” (The Financial Express (7 March 2015) *Protecting the rights of disabled persons in Bangladesh*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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