

## Inclusiveness in Development and Disability: Governance Challenges and Way Forward<sup>1</sup>

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### 1.1 Background and Rationale

- In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 (UNCRPD), the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013 [Section 2 (9)] defined disability as a long-term or permanent physical, mental, intellectual, developmental inadequacy or sensory impairment on a person caused by any reason which hinders his or her full and effective participation in the society on the basis of equity.
- According to the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013, types of disabilities include: autism or autism spectrum disorders, physical disabilities, mental disabilities, visual impairments, speech disabilities, intellectual disability, hearing impairment, hearing-visual impairment, cerebral palsy, down syndrome, multidimensional disability and other types of disabilities.
- Inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the country's development is necessary to make them capable of demanding and enjoying all the civic facilities provided by the state. This also ensures their comprehensive participation in all stages of socio-political, policy-making, governance and development process.
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) emphasizes to promote protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.
- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2030) commits on improving the quality of life of all people including those with disabilities through a commitment to development without leaving anyone behind.
- The Constitution of Bangladesh emphasizes on ensuring basic necessities of the life of all citizens of the country, prohibiting discrimination and ensuring social security [Article 15 (a) and (d)].
- The National Education Policy, Health Policy, Child Policy and Labor Policy have directed to make special arrangements for PWDs.
- The Seventh Five Year Plan covers various programmes including education, health, social inclusion, and social security.

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<sup>1</sup> Released through an online press conference on 11 February 2021.

- Despite the state's legal framework, inclusion of PWDs in development has not been properly ensured, as reported in various media and research reports.
  - Lack of disability-friendly health care and education services, lack of budget allocation for the welfare of PWDs, non-receipt of disability allowance cards without irregular payments, lack of skills in employment, lack of awareness of all stakeholders including parents, high risk of PWDs in natural disasters and epidemics, etc.
- The National Household Survey 2017 conducted by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) reports that 48% of the households experienced various irregularities and corruption while enlisted for disability allowance.
- Although there have been studies on specific issues related to the rights of PWDs as part of their inclusion in development, there is a lack of comprehensive research to identify governance challenges in regard to their inclusion in the process; thus there is an immense demand to conduct a research on good governance.
- TIB conducts various research and advocacy activities on marginalized, backward and disadvantaged communities. As a part of this, TIB organised a consultative meeting on 18 July 2017, where the demand was expressed to conduct a research on the inclusion of PWDs in development with a governance lens. At this backdrop, this study was undertaken.

## 1.2 Research Objectives

Identifying the governance challenges that hinder the inclusion of persons with disabilities in development.

### Specific objectives

1. To identify legal and institutional barriers in the inclusion of PWDs in development
2. To identify irregularities and corruption in various activities in the inclusion of PWDs in development
3. To provide policy recommendation for overcoming the identified challenges.

## 1.3 Scope of the Research

- Identification process of persons with disabilities and issuance of *Suborno* cards, education and health services, allowances and loans distributed, employment, transportation, judicial services, relief distributed to persons with disabilities during disasters, etc.
- Ministries, departments, foundations, trusts, social services offices, Disability Services and Help Centers, other service-related organisations and government-aided non-government organisations (NGOs) involved in providing services to PWDs.

## 1.4 Methodology

- This is mainly a qualitative study in nature; qualitative techniques have been applied for data collection and analysis. Moreover, some quantitative data have been collected and used whenever necessary.

### Data collection methods and sources

Data collection methods	Key informant interviews, group discussions, observations and review of relevant documents and books
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Primary sources of data	Persons with disabilities and their attendants or guardians, Department of Social Services and its branch offices, National Foundation for Development of the Disabled Persons, Physically Disabled Protection Trust, Neuro Developmental Disabilities (NDD) Protection Trust, Disability Service and Help Centers, educational institutions, hospitals, courts, shelters used during natural disasters, roads, public transport, NGO officers-employees and specialists
Secondary sources of data	Relevant laws, rules, policies, guidelines, relevant documents, research reports, database of National Household Survey 2017 conducted by TIB, annual reports, news and articles published in media and related websites

**Duration of Research:** December 2019 to November 2020

### Analytical Framework

Governance Indicators	Issues Covered		
Legal and institutional capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Laws, rules and regulations</li> <li>Budget &amp; Action plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human resources</li> <li>Infrastructure and logistics</li> </ul>	
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordination among related institutions</li> </ul>		
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Projects</li> </ul>
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to Information</li> </ul>	
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accountability system</li> <li>Supervision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lodging of complaints and redress mechanism</li> <li>Audit</li> </ul>	
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Behaviors of relevant authorities towards persons with disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Authority responses to address the challenges of persons with disabilities face during the COVID-19 situation</li> </ul>	
Irregularities and corruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negligence of duties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bribery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embezzlement</li> </ul>

## 2.0 Key Findings

### 2.1 Mentionable Govt. Initiatives

Topics	Government initiatives
Laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enactment of Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013, Neuro-Developmental Disability Protection Trust Act, 2013, and related rules</li> </ul>
Institutional capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of a database through disability identification survey programme</li> <li>Establishment of 103 disability services and help centers and establishment of corners for autistic children in each center</li> <li>Purchase of 32 special mobile vans with all types of therapy equipment and facilities</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Launch of 11 special schools for autistic children and provision of special therapy services and pre-primary education</li> <li>▪ Construction work on a 15-storey Disability Complex is underway</li> <li>▪ MPO registration of 60 private schools for the persons with mental disabilities</li> </ul>
Facilitation initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Training imparted to parents/guardians of children with autism and NDD</li> <li>▪ Distribution of loans and grants among persons with disabilities and relevant organisations</li> <li>▪ Distribution of ancillary materials under the project</li> </ul>
Awareness activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organize fairs and observance of Autism Day, National and International Disability Day to create public awareness</li> </ul>

## 2.2 Review of Laws, Rules and Regulations

Laws /Rules	Observation	Pragmatic challenges
Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013	There is no mention of special arrangements for lifting PWDs in public transport	Although seats are reserved in public transport, there is no special arrangement for wheelchair lifting, so all types PWDs cannot avail reserved seats.
	Not specified over which laws this law will prevail	Persons with mental disabilities are at risk of being deprived of their inheritance as the Lunacy Act 1912 states that mentally disable persons would not get inherited property.
	PWDs are not eligible to receive any benefits if they do not have <i>Suborno</i> Card / Identity Document (ID) [section 31(6)].	Disable persons who have not received ID are in the risk of not getting all types of state benefits
Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Rules, 2015	Processes for ensuring representation of PWDs not mentioned in National Coordination Committee, National Executive Committee, District Committee, Upazila/City Committee	Risks prevail for not ensuring representation of PWDs in different committees
	The responsibilities of the members of the committees were not specified and the interval between meetings was not mentioned	Deficits prevail in holding committees accountable
	The coordination process among the activities of national to upazila committees not mentioned	Implementation of the Rights and Protection of PWDs Act is at risk of being prolonged
Integrated Special Education Policy on Disability, 2019	The MPO registered schools that do not have their own land must acquire ownership of the land or building within two years of the policy being issued, otherwise they will not be recognized by the government [Article 13(6)].	Since the MPO registered schools do not have adequate fund, it is not possible for them to purchase land or build buildings. Therefore, their recognition is at risk

## 2.3 Institutional Capacity

### Budget and Actions plan

- No separate budget allocation has been made for the respective disability sector under different ministries. Although budget is spent separately under different ministries, it is not clear whether it is the actual allocation for the respective sectors associated with disability.

#### Allocation in the budget of the Ministry of Social Welfare for PWDs (in crore BDT)

Sectors of Budget	Fiscal year 2017-18	Fiscal year 2018-19	Fiscal year 2019-20	Increase between 2017-18 and 2019-20 (%)
Disability Identification Survey	1.50	1.50	1.50	0.00
Stipend for students with disabilities	54.50	80.37	95.64	75.49
Allowance for insolvent PWDs	693.00	840.00	1390.50	100.65
Physically Disabled Protection Trust	10.00	11.50	15.00	50.00
Disability Service and Help Centers	65.00	62.93	65.00	0.00
Neuro-Developmental Disabilities Protection Trust	10.50	25.50	27.50	161.90
Rehabilitation fund for the burnt and PWDs	1.50	1.50	1.65	10.00
National Disability Development Foundation	22.96	25.00	28.00	21.95
Government schools for the PWDs	-	4.52	5.75	-
Educational institutions for integrated response for the visually impaired persons	-	6.13	8.25	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>858.96</b>	<b>1058.95</b>	<b>1638.79</b>	<b>90.79</b>

- In last three years, budgetary allocations in the special expenditure sectors under the Ministry of Social Welfare has increased considering inflation and increasing number of PWDs. But, the increase is not sufficient considering the demand.
  - There is no allocation in the budget for conducting the activities of committees at different levels (e.g. upazila, city and district levels). As a result, regular meetings are not held.
  - Lack of budgetary allocation for the organisations for PWDs for doing their operations in the light with UNCRPD.
  - Among the registered persons with disability by the Department of Social Services, about 16 percent are not under the coverage of the disability allowance.
- Under social security programme, 18 lakh PWDs are being given an allowance of Tk. 750 per month. Unfortunately, the coverage of the beneficiaries compared to total number of PWDs and amount of allowance for maintaining their livelihood are not sufficient.

- In this case, the amount of allowance is increased without considering the basic demand and considering only inflation.
- According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) 2016, to fulfill minimum calorie intake, a person in Bangladesh needed Tk. 1800 per month at the rate of Tk. 60 per day which is much lower when inflation is taken into considerations. It is noteworthy that other basic needs like clothing, education, and health services are not considered here.
- A total of Tk. 20,000 for every four months is allocated as office expenses for the Disability Service and Help Centers, which is less than required.
- The major expenditure items include gel for UST therapy (each tube costs Tk. 500), internet bill, newspaper bill, ink for printer, entertainment when the high-ranking officials at the levels of secretary or deputy secretary visit, and cost for the distribution of supporting aides to PWDs.
- The Seventh Five Year Plan mentions various activities to establish the rights of PWDs. But there is a lack of allocation for its implementation, especially in the sectors like education, health care and social security.
- The preview of social safety net is still constrained in the 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan as in the 7<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan.
- There has been a dearth of allocation in budget to create access of disable people to employment and make them as educated and skilled manpower.
- Considering the Sustainable Development Goals, planning for an inclusive and equitable education for the welfare of PWDs is still absent. Similarly lacking also remains for their health care, employment, transportation and equal rights over resources.
  - The Ministry of Social Welfare has a large number of programmes related to social security, but, there remains a lack of integrated planning for the services mentioned in the Sustainable Development Goals.
  - The Social Services Officer was not included in the Social Security Committee formed to implement Sustainable Development Goals.
  - There is deficiency in the planning to ensure inclusive education and health care. Most public and private hospitals and educational institutions do not have a disability-friendly ambiance and specialized services.
- There is no effective initiative to determine accurate statistics regarding PWDs; therefore, no effective development planning can be devised for the welfare of PWDs.
- There are differences in the number of PWDs reported in different sources - both public and private
  - According to the Population Census (2011) around 1.41% of the total population in Bangladesh are identified to have disability, whereas according to HIES 2010 and 2016 the persons with disability reported were 9.07% and 6.94% respectively.
  - The number of persons with disability registered with the Department of Social Services is 21 lakhs 43 thousand 353 (30 November, 2020).
  - According to the estimates of World Bank (2011) and some NGOs around 9%-10% of the population in Bangladesh is disabled. Considering 9%, the total number of disable persons in Bangladesh in November 2020 was 1 crore 54 lakh. This implies about one out of every seven persons was registered as PWDs with the Department of Social Services.
- Despite some positive changes have taken place for PWDs through enactment of laws, undertaking of programmes and their implementation; equal importance has not been given to include all forms of disabilities in different planning and formulation of development programmes for them.
  - Relatively much emphasis has been given to autism-related activities. Therefore, NDD Protection Trust was established and awareness programmes have been taken

under it, medical grants were given to NDD sufferers, Autism Resource Center was established, 60 mentally disabled and autistic schools were included under MPO etc.

- But, there are shortcomings in the management and implementation of these activities effectively.
- There is a lack of effective planning for conducting a specialized survey at national level for the identification of PWDs.
  - The surveyors were not properly trained. Moreover, they did not get insufficient time for conducting the survey.
- There is a lack of disability support training plans.
  - In conducting training in technical and vocational education and training institutions; hearing, vision and physical and other disabilities are not considered and the needs of students with disabilities are not assessed.
  - Physically disabled persons cannot to participate in any training if it is conducted on any floor other than the ground floor. In many cases, for the computer training of visually impaired persons, JOZ and NDVO software are not available.
- No programme at policy level has been undertaken for employment creation of disable people keeping the development of skilled manpower, services and capacity. Rather, the government has been confined to implement various types of allowance giving activities.

## **Human resources**

### **Staff**

- In some institutions that provide services to PWD, there is lack of required manpower. In those institutions, many approved posts remain vacant and there are less manpower than required.
- Manpower shortages are most prevalent in the offices of Social Services and in schools for the mentally disabled and autistic.
- There is lack of manpower with technical and specialized knowledge like Occupational and Speech Therapists in Disability Service and Help Centers, Therapists in the schools for mentally disable and autistic, Art Teachers, Computer Instructors in the schools for the visually and hearing impaired persons.
  - As a result, children and adults with disabilities sometimes experience substandard services and delays in getting regular services.

### **Recruitment and Fixation**

- Recruitments has been stopped for a long time in institutions that are assigned to deliver education services to visually and speech impaired persons. Moreover, recruitment of the Superintendent in the integrated school for visually impaired persons are halted. As a result, teaching of PWDs has received less importance.
- The ministry and foundation have delayed in giving approval to the fixation of the teachers' and other employees' jobs in the schools that are assigned for the services of mentally disable and autistic children.

- The employment at the Disability Service and Help Centers is not under the revenue budget. Since salaries and allowances have remained the same for a long time, there has been frustrations among its employees.
- There is a shortage of trained Occupational and Speech Therapists.
  - Among 103 centers, the posts of Speech Therapists and Occupational Therapists are vacant in 95 and 98 centers, respectively.
  - The posts of Occupational and Speech Therapists are second class, which is lower considering the required qualifications. This has made the job less expected among job aspirants.

In July, 2018; the School Management Committee recruited two persons whose regularization process is going on. However, they have not been receiving any salary. As their job has not been regularized, they remained absent most of the days in a week. As a result, students have been deprived of regular lessons.

*-The Head Teacher in a school for mentally disable and autistic children*

### **Skills**

- A section of the therapists and their assistants at the Disability Service and Help Centers lack specialized training on therapy matters and use of technical equipment.
- Health Assistants at family planning and government hospitals have deficiencies in skills to deal with speech and hearing impaired disable people.
- Teachers in specialized schools lack BSEd and others training (e.g. occupational and behavioral training) that are needed for ensuring protection of PWDs.
  - As a result, physical well-being, mental and intellectual development are delayed for PWD, especially children.

### **Infrastructure & logistics**

- Related service delivery offices, educational institutions, government hospitals, courts, disaster shelters, voting centers and roads, footpaths, foot-over bridges, launch and ferry terminals etc. do not have disable-friendly facilities.
  - Most of the offices and institutions do not have suitable facilities for PWDs, such as ramps, toilets.
  - Hospitals do not have separate units or rooms for PWDs. Moreover, they lack relevant medical equipment.
  - Many schools that provide lessons to mentally disable and autistics students are housed in dilapidated buildings. Many schools do not have playing grounds. Most of the therapy equipment are idle.
  - Most of the schools that serve hearing and visually impaired persons are in ramshackle state. Their furniture is also old. They lack rooms as well.
- There are no schools according to different types of disabilities in each district and upazila. There are five government schools for the visually impaired, eight government schools for the hearing impaired. MPO-registered schools for the mentally disabled and autistics are in the Sadar upazila of each district.
- Neuro Development Trust does not have own building. Furthermore, it does not have offices at district level.
- Disability services and help centers



- Due to the provision to repair therapy machines at central level, many non-functioning therapy machines are not repaired for a long time.
- Some mobile vans and sophisticated therapy machines installed in the vans are non-functional due to lack of proper maintenance.
- There is a shortage of supportive accessories (tricycles and hearing aids, etc.) for distribution to PWD.

## **2.4 Institutional Coordination**

### **Coordination among concerned stakeholders**

- Slow pace observed in the implementation of the action plan enshrined in the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 largely due to the lack of coordination between the Ministry of Social Welfare and the National Foundation for Development of the Disabled Persons.
  - Committees' meetings do not take place regularly.
  - There is a lack of awareness-raising activities to protect PWDs from all forms of physical and mental abuses, including inheritance, sexual harassment and rape, etc.
- There is a lack of coordination between the Ministry of Social Welfare and other ministries in adopting an integrated action plan.
  - Lack of coordination among different ministries and organisations that include the Ministry of Health, Primary and Mass Education, Education, Planning, Road Transport and Bridges, Women and Children Affairs, Labor and Employment, the Ministry of Law, etc. is considered as one of the major obstacles for the welfare of the PWDs.
    - Lack of planning for disability-friendly inclusive education and health care.
    - Initiatives to introduce ramp in District Sadar Hospital and new primary schools are limited.
- In most instances, the city/upazila Social Services Offices and Disability Service and Help Centers do not discuss among themselves on activities relating to the identification of PWDs, disability allowance, loan disbursement, etc.

## **2.5 Participation**

### **Participation of stakeholders in preparation of budget, work plan and adoption of projects**

- There is a lack of initiative by concerned ministries to receive views of PWDs to determine allocation for the welfare of PWDs.
- Although there are committees in most of the districts and upazilas, members do not have opportunities to express their views due to irregular meetings. In some cases, majority of the members cannot express their opinions in the district level committee meetings.
- Lack of effective participation of organisations and NGOs for PWDs in the implementation of most of the government schemes. In many cases, their opinions are not given due importance.
  - Expert opinions were overlooked while making mobile vans, MPO registration of mentally disabled and autistic schools.
- There is lack of participation of PWDs in the planning of disaster management.

- Most of the development projects are not disability friendly as there is a lack of participation of architect firms, donors and organisation of PWDs in planning of those development projects implemented by concerned government agencies. Only exception is the metro rail project.
- Lack of participation of organisations and non-governmental organisations that work with PWDs in formulating government action plans for the purpose of creating employment.

## 2.6 Transparency

### Information management and access to information

- Information of various initiatives and projects mentioned in the action plan for the implementation of the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 is lacking. Moreover, published information is not up to date.
- The website of the Ministry of Social Welfare lacks information about the committees. Furthermore, since the annual reports have not been uploaded on the website of Department of Social Services for the last six years, there is a lack of information on disabilities.
- Links to some organisations' websites are not functioning – for example the websites of the Department of Social Services and NDD Protection Trust. Moreover, Different websites, apps, online services and information and services presented there are not accessible to visually impaired persons, i.e. buying tickets through railways website.
- Upazila / City Social Service Offices and Disability Services and Help Centers under the Ministry of Social Welfare lack required information in the updated Citizen Charters and Information Boards.
  - Lack of information about the amount of allocation for PWDs, how many are getting allowances and how to get those allowances.
  - Lack of detail information on 'rehabilitation activities for burnt and disabled persons'
- Lack of information on the dissemination of information and awareness activities of different services catering the needs of PWDs.
  - Some PWDs and their parents sometimes go to the offices of social services without required documents to get the *Suborno* card.

## 2.7 Accountability

### Accountability System and supervision

- The meetings of various committees formed at center to grassroots level for the implementation of the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 do not take place due to lack of accountability and supervision mechanism. Consequently, the implementation of the action plan is slowing down and people with disabilities are deprived of due benefits.
- There is a lack of supervision (on-the-spot inspection, investigation of various irregularities and corruption, etc.) in various service delivery activities and projects for the welfare of PWDs – e.g. education, credit and allowances, identification of PWDs and distribution of *Suborno* cards, etc.
- There is a lack of proper oversight in the activities of the Disability Service and Help Centers in the field, especially in health care, counseling, therapy and distribution of assistive devices.

“There is no query from central level how this office is being run. Even, there is no phone call to learn about its operations.”

*An Officer at a Disability Service and Help Center.*

### **Lodging of complaints and redress mechanism**

- Most of the city/ upazila social service offices cater an opportunity to lodge a written complaint but there is no prescribed form. Moreover, there is no register for receiving complaints and most offices do not have a complaint box.
- Most people with disabilities do not file complaint about services because there is no publicity about the procedure to lodge a written complaint. The services include education, health, allowances, loans, *Suborno* card etc.
- Although there is a hotline for reporting anomalies in service provisions and different forms of harassment, most people with disabilities do not complain due to lack of its publicity.

### **Audit**

- Audit was not conducted in most of the Upazila Social Service Offices that were directly involved in providing services to PWDs between 1996-2019. Moreover, no office has been audited since 2016.
- One hundred and three Disability Service and Help Centers established in 64 districts were not audited. The National Foundation for Development of the Disabled Persons has not been audited since 2016.

## **2.8 Responsiveness**

### **Behaviors of relevant authorities towards persons with disability**

- Disabled persons are not enlisted if PWDs do not apply to the Social Services Offices physically. Moreover, the door-to-door identification process has been non-functioning for several years.
- A section of doctors at government hospitals are not adequately sympathetic in giving services to PWDs. There are instances when they felt annoyed while giving services.
- Doctors at upazila level health centres express their displeasure on disable pregnant women. They are asked to collect certificate from the chairman of Local Government Institutions if they need any surgery support.
- Sometimes, doctors do not refer the persons with disability to the therapist when needed.
- Apathy of some school teachers toward the persons with disability pose a barrier to inclusion of disable people into the mainstream of the society.
  - A head teacher of a school once said that disable people would disturb the ambiance of their school if a school for the persons with disabilities is established beside their school.
- Due to the lack of disability-friendly environment, there is a very limited opportunity for their education at MPO schools and universities.
- Although there is an employment quota for PWDs in government services, it is not disclosed in the job circulars. Moreover, visually impaired disable persons sometimes experience different types of discriminations at Public Service Commission.
- There is a lack of initiative to create access of persons with physical disabilities to the courts. Expert sign language interpreters are not provided for people with hearing impairments. Furthermore, many visually and intellectually impaired women and girls are deprived of fair justices from the cases of sexual harassment as their statements based on physical sensitivity are not taken into cognizance by the counts.
- Although some seats are allocated for the disabled, women and children in the public transports in Dhaka, no separate seats are assigned for PWDs. Moreover, the seats that are allocated for them are beside the driver or engine and they are not spacious and disable-friendly.

- Though certain seats in public transport are preserved for the PWDs, they do not always get chance to sit on those.
- The disabled persons and their guardians sometimes experience bad behavior while traveling on public transport.
  - Transport workers misbehave with PWDs while on-board and getting down.
- There is a lack of initiative from concerned authorities to make public toilets (owned by the government and non-government bodies) disable-friendly across the country.
- There is a lack of necessary measures to evacuate PWDs to safe place during natural disasters.

### **Authority's Responses to address challenges of persons with disabilities face during the COVID-19 situation**

- Students with disabilities were notified late about the teaching activities during COVID pandemic. Moreover, teaching of disable students through online classes was not given importance.
  - As poor disable students do not have smart phones, they cannot participate in the online teaching activities.
  - As schools have been closed for a long time, disable students who came to special schools regularly are at risk of dropping out after the situation has become normal.
- Depending on the type of disability, many require regular treatment and different types of therapy (speech therapy, occupational therapy, psychological therapy, behavioral therapy, etc.).
  - The therapy and counseling services at the Disability Service and Help Centers were closed during April-May due to the COVID-19 situation. As their service provisions had become limited, overall health risks for people with disabilities increased more compared to the general population.
- In the case of COVID-19 tests, most of the test centers did not specify separate rows for the PWDs. No hospitals were specified for their treatment as well. In most cases, people with disabilities who were infected with corona were not treated at COVID hospitals.
- In the COVID-19 situation, most of the unemployed poor families were not able to provide necessary treatment and therapies to the PWDs in private arrangements. They have not received government assistance for their treatment.
- The PWDs were not enlisted in the government assisted program that gave people Tk 2,500 financial assistance and the Ministry of Social Welfare did not take any initiative in this regard.
- The government distributed relief only to those people who had IDs. In some cases, they distributed sub-standard rice.
  - Most poor disabled persons who did not have *Suborno* card became more marginalized during COVID situation. As a result, it was difficult for them to survive.
- In some areas, health risk of disable people multiplied as social distance was not maintained during distribution of relief among them.

### **2.9 Irregularities and Corruption**

- Doctors in charge of some government hospitals and some of their assistants have been accused of extorting money to certify people as PWDs.
- The doctors in district hospitals who are responsible to certify PWDs are relatively busy. Therefore, disable people sometimes experience delays and other forms of harassment.
- In the case of the enlistment of disable people into the database of Upazila /City Social Service Office, money is extorted from the disabled person or from his/her close relatives.

- Local MPs and a section of the officials and employees at the Secretariat and District Administrations lobby with the Social Services offices to get *Suborno* card for their relatives and acquaintances even after they are not real PWDs.
  - Real PWDs are deprived of getting *Suborno* cards.
- There are allegations against a section of local government representatives at union level that they collect money illegally for *Suborno* cards.
- There are allegations that PWDs sometimes do not receive deserved services or benefits despite having the *Suborno* Cards and some mediation is required to get those services or benefits.

### **Regarding disability allowance**

- The payment of disability allowance to the disable people at field level depends on the will of people's representatives.
  - There are allegations of political influence to get the disability allowance card.
  - In some cases, there are allegations against a section of people's representatives to enlist the PWDs by taking money illegally.

### **Types of irregularities and corruption faced to be included for disability allowance**

Types of irregularities and corruption	Percentage of Households faced irregularities and corruption (%)
Bribery or illegal money	23.4
Delay	19.3
Nepotism	11.0
Deception	7.9
Interventions of influential and political leaders	5.2
Embezzlement	4.8
Demanding Bribe	2.7

Source: According to the data analysis of the National Household Survey 2017 on corruption in the service sector conducted by TIB.

- In FY 2019-2020, new two lakh PWDs were included under the disability allowance programme. However, there are allegations that a part of that allowance is embezzled.
  - Some officers of Upazila Social Service Office, officials of concerned bank and people's representatives at Union Parishad are allegedly involved in embezzlement.

### **Procurement related**

- Various therapy machines and accessories for the children and adults with disabilities purchased by the National Foundation for Development of the Disabled Persons are of low quality despite adequate budgetary allocation.
- A considerable section of the officials of Disability Service and Help Centers are running their operations by renting out homes owned by the relatives and acquaintances of some officials at various levels of the National Foundation for Development of the Disabled Persons.
  - There are allegations that both parties are financially benefitted through collusion. In most cases the infrastructure of these rented houses are not disability friendly.

### Regarding grants to NGOs

- The National Foundation for Development of the Disabled Persons provides financial support to NGOs under conditions. A part of the NGOs receive grants through a collusion with concerned officials of the foundation.
- There are allegations of illegal collection of money for receiving grants. These NGOs do not implement all agreed activities as they have to pay illegally.

### Concerning the minutes of meetings

- To achieve annual targets, some upazila committees prepare meeting minutes with the signatures of the president and others without conducting the meetings.

### Concerning transportation fare

- In some cases, there are allegations that public transports collect full transport fare from PWDs in place of stipulated half fare applicable for them.

### A summary of corruption faced by the persons with disability in different service sectors

Service sector	Types of services	Victims of corruption (%)	Victims of bribe (%)	Average bribe (Tk)
Education (Government and MPO)	Enrollment for stipend, receiving of books, admission/re-admission, admission card	11.3	8.0	250
Health (Government)	Purchase of tickets, medical tests, bed, uses of wheelchair, medicine	13.6	5.5	236
Local government institutions	Different types of certificates, allowances, arbitration	34.7	14.1	1361
Banking	Withdrawal of allowances and remittances	4.2	1.7	-*
Social Services Office	Identification and distribution of <i>Suborno</i> card, allowance	17.4	8.7	-*

Source: According to the data analysis of the National Household Survey 2017 on corruption in the service sector conducted by TIB

\*Analysis was not performed due to insufficient data

### Corruption in various services related to disability

Types of services	Amount of bribe or extra money/percentage
Disability identification in government hospitals	Tk 1,000-1,500
Inclusion of names in the database	Tk 100 - 200
Receipt of <i>Suborno</i> card	Tk 1,000-3,000
Inclusion for disability allowance	Tk 1,000-3,000
Getting disability allowance	24% -67% Embezzlement

Types of services	Amount of bribe or extra money/percentage
Financial grants for NGOs from the National Foundation for Development of the Disabled Persons	Tk 20,000-70,000

### 3.1 Overall Observations

- Although the welfare of PWDs has received importance from ethical and legal perspectives, there are capacity constraints in the implementation of existing action plans for the welfare of PWDs and they are not inclusive as well.
- The government budgetary allocations for PWDs are not realistic and sufficient. Moreover, allocations do not reach to PWDs due to various irregularities and corruption.
- Since there are limitations in regular supervision and auditing, irregularities and corruption prevail in service delivery.
- Due to a lack of effective action from the policy level to determine real number of PWDs, most PWDs are deprived of fundamental human rights and state facilities.
- There are coordination and participation gaps among concerned ministries, government and non-government organisations and organisations of PWDs in devising action plans for the welfare and inclusion of PWDs.
- The inclusion of PWDs in the development is hindered due to lack of effective initiatives from policy level for ensuring inclusive and equitable education, health services, employment, transport, friendly infrastructures, equal rights on property and wealth and social justice.

### 3.2 Recommendations

#### Concerning laws and regulations

1. Realistic reform of laws and regulations has to be made and implementation of laws has to be ensured.
  - a. Following reforms are required in the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013.
    - Provisions of ramp facilities should be mentioned for physically challenged persons for their on-boarding and getting down from public transports.
    - It has to be specified over which laws the law will prevail.
    - The provision of having ID for PWDs has to be abolished so that they would get designated services applicable for them.
  - b. Following reforms are required in the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Rules 2015.
    - The process of ensuring representation of PWDs in all committees should be mentioned.
    - Committees should be held accountable by specifying the responsibilities of the committee members and the meeting interval.
    - Coordination procedure among the committees should be specified.
  - c. Following reforms are required in the Integrated Special Education Policy on Disability 2019.
    - The section 13 (6) should be reformed so that registered MPO schools for PWDs can be given government land through lease and initiatives can be taken to construct their buildings.

### **Concerning institutional capacities**

2. In the national budget, separate allocations should be made under different ministries regarding disability. The budget of the Ministry of Social Welfare should be increased according to the demand related to disability.
3. All types of institutions, roads, bridges, public toilets and all related infrastructures should be disability-friendly.
4. At both district and upazila levels, each government hospital has to have separate units for the treatment of PWDs. The unit should have adequate manpower including doctors and nurses and treatment facilities. Training should be imparted for their capacity building.
5. Considering the types of disabilities, specialized schools and Service and Help Centers for the PWDs should be established in each district and upazila.
6. Adequate manpower should be recruited in all concerned organisations that provide services to the PWDs and specialized trainings have to be organized for their capacity building on disabilities.
7. Following internationally recognized method(s), actual number of PWDs should be estimated.

### **Concerning responsiveness, coordination and participation**

8. The government has to take effective initiatives to meet basic livelihood needs of children and individuals with disabilities during all types of disasters (especially their health and education services, food assistance, etc.). The concerned NGOs need to be involved in these initiatives.
9. Involving other ministries, the Ministry of Social Welfare has to take initiative for the employment of PWDs. Appropriate trainings need to be organized.
10. Participation and coordination of concerned ministries, government and non-government organisations and representatives from organisations of PWDs must be ensured in formulating appropriate plans for the development of PWDs.

### **Concerning transparency**

11. The websites of all concerned organisations should be made informative (annual report, committee information, project information, etc.) and information needs to be updated regularly and dissemination of service related information and awareness activities need to be increased. Moreover, some web-based/online services, different software and apps have to be made accessible to PWDs.

### **Concerning accountability and prevention of irregularities and corruption**

12. All offices providing services to the PWDs need to ensure effective supervision and accountability and regular audits to prevent irregularities and corruption in their operations. Moreover, the Ministry of Social Welfare has to take the responsibility to monitor disability matters of other ministries.
13. Steps should be taken to publicize grievance redress mechanism by all concerned offices that provide services to PWDs and a separate hotline has to be set up to lodge grievances.
14. The corrupt officials and employees involved in providing services to the persons with disabilities should be brought under punishment.