

Secondary Data Analysis Report on

Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) of People with Disabilities

SDG Goal: 5 and 10

Submitted to

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Bangladesh 

Introduction

Around 15% of the world's population are estimated to live with some form of disability. Disability disproportionately affects vulnerable populations and people with disability are disproportionately likely to be among the very poor¹. In Bangladesh, there are no reliable, up-to-date, nationwide statistics on disability. Existing data are based on projections, for example using the WHO/World Bank average prevalence rates for developing countries, or on sample surveys. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) has published a Household Income & Expenditure Survey (HIES) in 2010, which found a disability prevalence rate of 9.07%. But the 2011 National Census found only 1.7%. Earlier in 2005, NFOWD and Handicap International jointly found a prevalence rate of 5.6%².

Disable people are deprived of many rights including some basic human rights in Bangladesh. Children and women are the most vulnerable part among the entire disable population. According to Hussain (2008)³, 50% women with disabilities had never married, 72% lived with their parents or a sibling and 40% reported sometimes being mistreated by their families. Government of Bangladesh have already taken some legislative steps towards improvement of the situation of the disable people. Some of the signatory issues are United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asia Pacific Region; Biwako Millennium Framework for Action Towards an Inclusive, Barrier Free and Rights Based Society for Persons with Disability; UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Dhaka Declaration on Autism and Neurodevelopment Disabilities; Rights & Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013; Neuro-Development Disability Protection Trust Act; National Policy for the Disabled 1995; National Child Policy of 2011 etc. Besides, Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh guarantees the basic human rights of every citizen of the country and prohibits any form of discrimination between social groups, including persons with disabilities. Article 15(d) secures the right to social security for persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR⁴) of persons with disabilities are mostly overlooked by both the disability community and mainstream organizations. Persons with disabilities are the most marginalized group in terms of sexual and reproductive health & rights. Yet they have the same sexual needs, and thus the same need for these services as everyone else⁵. They might even have greater needs for SRHR education and care than persons without disabilities because of increased vulnerability to abuse as one recent study estimated that Persons with disabilities have 130% more chance of being a

¹ World report on Disability. WHO (2011)

² Disability Rights in Bangladesh, SIDA, 2014

³ Hussain, Akhter (2008). Report on Women with Disabilities in Bangladesh. Survey conducted by the Social Assistance and Rehabilitation for the Physically Vulnerable. Dhaka: SARPV.

⁴ SRHR is an umbrella for various issues that affect men and women alike. It represents four separate areas: sexual health, sexual rights, reproductive health, and reproductive rights (Global Citizen). Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) encompass the right of all individuals to make decisions concerning their sexual activity and reproduction free from discrimination, coercion, and violence (FAO, 2014). The term "sexual and reproductive health and rights" (SRHR) was explored nearly 20 years ago at the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW).

⁵ 2 Promoting sexual and reproductive health for persons with disabilities. Guidance note WHO/UNFPA (2009)

victim of violence, mostly domestic violence and sexual violence, than persons without disabilities⁶. The challenges in sexual reproductive health and rights are not necessarily part of having a disability but instead often reflect stigma and discrimination, a lack of social attention, legal protection, accessibility of services, understanding and support.

Key Findings of the Study

SRHR for the Person with Disabilities in SDG

Millennium Development Goals (MDG) has achieved a lot. It has helped direct aid flows towards a list of priorities, but the people with disabilities did not benefit from development. Because, there was no such targets or indicators in MDG to cover people with disabilities. On the other hand, inclusion of disability issues in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as a prominent issue has created a big room of hope that, persons with disabilities will this time tangibly feel the impact of development progress. Now is the time for action concerning SRH of persons with disabilities.

In SDG, there are few targets regarding person with disabilities have been mentioned in few goals. UN has also prepared document regarding SDG indicators related to disability. Some of the indicators are-
4.5 by 2030, *eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including **persons with disabilities**, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations*

8.5 by 2030 *achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and **persons with disabilities**, and equal pay for work of equal value*

4.a *build and upgrade education facilities that are child, **disability** and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all⁷.*

11.2 by 2030, *provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, **persons with disabilities** and older persons*

11.7 by 2030, *provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for women and children, older persons and **persons with disabilities***

10.2 by 2030 *empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, **disability**, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status⁸.*

17.18 by 2020, *enhance capacity building support to developing countries, including for LDCs and SIDS, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, **disability**, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts*

⁶ Lisa Jones and Al., (2012) Prevalence and risk of violence against children with disabilities: a systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies, The Lancet.

⁷ The ISO 21542:2011 standards on accessibility and usability of the built environment can be used as guidance for the school building(s).

⁸ This indicator is a disability disaggregation of the suggested indicator for target 17.8 in the List of proposals released by the IAEG-SDGs on 7 July 2015.

SRHR for the Person with Disabilities in SDG

Bangladesh government has made many resolutions and initiated various activities for the person with disabilities (PWD). During 2013, Government of Bangladesh ratified Disabled Persons Protection and Rights Act to protect PWD's rights. This was mentioned in 6th Five Year Plan. Government detailed out a comprehensive health services for PWDs. Although, government has set certain objectives and targets towards achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by ensuring reproductive health service for all; unfortunately, there was nothing related to their sexual and reproductive health rights. Following the 6th Five Year Plan, government elaborated different services for PWDs in 7th Five Year Plan. This time government also didn't mention about PWD's sexual and reproductive health rights. Five Year plan only mentioned about reaching PWDs under comprehensive health policy. During the 7th FYP period, government mentioned about properly addressing prevalence of various disability issues through appropriate advocacy campaign, effective coordination among concerned ministries, departments, and NGOs for proper preventive, curative and rehabilitative services including expansion of services to cater the need of different types of disabled along with making health-facilities disable-friendly. It is also ensured to uphold health rights and ethics, which will be incorporated in all medical, nursing and other education curricula along with proper sensitization initiatives for the existing health service providers.

Government has mostly mentioned of women and girls in terms of sexual and reproductive health, but there is nothing specific for male and PWDs. Physical, psychological, social and economic barriers often prevent people with disabilities, particularly girls, from enjoying full access to healthcare services. Under the 7th FYP, the Government is committed to address disability issues including mental health in order to provide equal access to healthcare services. Universal Health Coverage (UHC) has played an important role to formulate government's 7th Five Year Plan in terms of PWDs.

There are some certain provisions for PWDs, which is mostly about detecting disability and bring them under health service. Insurance and safety net program for PWDs are some key schemes from government's end. Government has committed to strengthening early detection of symptoms of disability and appointing trainee doctors, nurses and other caregivers to deal with disability issues. Besides, develop the capacity of the ministries and divisions to protect and promote PWD's rights has been also emphasized. Although, government emphasizes to enforce use of modern contraceptives and availability of modern contraceptives at a low cost especially in urban slums and remote areas, but still no specific

More than six-hundred million people living with disabilities worldwide are far less likely than persons without disabilities to receive information on family planning, or access to counseling through community initiatives, education systems, or via traditional routes in the home or social arena⁹. Besides, SRHR issues of people with disabilities especially women and girls with disabilities are absent in Bangladesh public discourses, policymaking, and programming. Government is interested in their livelihood exclusively, not in their SRH rights. On the other hand, private organizations and NGOs are not well focused. Very few development partners in Bangladesh are working on SRHR issues of people with disabilities exclusively.

According to one of the activists and organizer for person with disabilities who is also our key informant, "government has taken few uniform initiatives to reach PWDs, but most of them are getting benefit from

⁹ Groce, Nora Ellen. (2006, November). Expert meeting on sexual and reproductive health of persons with disabilities. Global Health Division, Yale University School of Public Health.

it.” She added that, SRH related information is conveyed in print on billboards or newspapers; but people who are blind are unable to receive information. Deaf persons cannot pick up information that is broadcast via radio campaigns.” On the other hand, public campaign is also a major way of government to reach the excluded like PWDs. Unfortunately, public campaigns are often confusing to individuals with intellectual disabilities who cannot process a surplus of information at one time.

According to the public discourse, persons with disabilities are often viewed as not capable of retaining information related to SRH, and thus no efforts are made to teach individuals about sexuality. Our key informant stated in this context that, “even family members don’t take it seriously to teach or inform the PWDs about SRH related issues. Furthermore, sensitivity is still active among most of the people. People feels shy to discuss SRH related issues with family members.” On the other hand, Government health services for PWDs are more promotive than preventive, curative and rehabilitative. 7th Five Year Plan has mentioned to uphold health rights and ethics to be incorporated in all medical, nursing and other education curricula along with proper sensitization initiatives for the existing health service providers. This scheme will also include PWDs. 7th Five Year Plan has also mentioned about including counselling services in reproductive and sexual health, but no specific plan is found for PWDs.

Basically. Government only offers treatment, rehabilitation, skill development, income generating, safety net program etc for the PWDs. Specific provisions and targets of SRHR of PWDs were absent in 6th Five Year Plan. 7th Five Year Plan didn’t make much improvement apart from proper disability identification mechanism. No mentionable SRH service are available for PWDs from government’s end. On the other hand, development partners are not so active in this sector. Very few NGOs and charity organizations work in this area.

Team Recommendation

Considering the current situation, we need to develop a comprehensive action plan including government entities, donor parties, NGOs, charitable organizations, research institutions and other interest groups. Because, it demands a collaborative approach to work on. Some of the key issues derived from this analysis are-

- Undertake adequate number of research activities to know the exact scenario.
- Sensitize family members and caregivers of PWDs.
- Formulate a task force including Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Health & Family Planning and Ministry of Education.
- Expand the safety net program launched for the PWDs. Safety net program need to be more comprehensive including education, health, recreational and sexual rights.
- Special campaign design for the PWDs.
- Use media to spread and promote awareness and information regarding disability issues and their sexual and reproductive health rights.

Summary

This report has been produced as a part of group work on SDG, Goal-5 focusing sexual, reproductive health and rights of the people with disabilities. Mostly secondary sources have been used to do this study. Besides, two activists were also been interviewed. According to the findings, there is no mentionable activities from both government and private sectors for people with disabilities regarding their SRHR. Government just perceives PWDs as just patient and as excluded community and therefore designs programs to ensure basic rights. Rehabilitation, treatment, disease identification, loan, income generating activities, skill development training, education etc are mainly government services for the PWDs. Private organizations, NGOs and charity organizations also do the same more or less. There is no such organizations who provide SRH service for PWDs exclusively.

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