

Disability Allowances – Livelihood and Social Protection Support to Persons with Disabilities (PWD)



Background

Disability Allowances means an amount of money paid by the Government of Bangladesh to the people who are unable to work because of a disability. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 defined Person with Disability (PWD) as any person with any form of disability.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) survey in 2022 disclosed the total 4.7 million Persons with Disability (PWD) (47.42 lakh persons) which is 2.4% of total population of the country (the report published on 14 June 2022). The BBS identified these people either physically or mentally disabled.

Findings of the BBS survey, mentioned that 3.29% men and 2.34% women in the country have some form of disability.

According to the survey, Persons with Disabilities are lagging behind at an alarming rate in cases of access to health care, education and employment. 40.55% children with disabilities are able to go to school. Only 27.21% of the disabled are able to participate in any economic activity.

Key features of the Disability Allowances (OAA) 2022-2023

Number of beneficiaries	2,365,000 (2.36 Million)
Amount of monthly allowance	BDT 850 / US\$ 09
Selection criteria	Must be a permanent resident of the concerned area; Registration and identity card must be obtained from the social services office. The applicant must be severely disabled; To be selected by the selection committee
Implementing agency	Department of Social Service

Source: Department of Social Services

The survey, conducted on 36000 households, revealed that 2.92% living in rural areas and 2.45% in urban areas have at least one disability. BBS said that the objective of the survey is to bring 100% people with disabilities under social security program.

The rate of employment for the persons with disability is 40.39% for males and 7.30% for females.

The survey reveals that among the children with disabilities, 40.55% are enrolled in primary education and 24.36% in secondary level education.

Disability Allowances: Constitutional Obligation and Policy Guidelines

The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 drives to protect the rights and protection of persons with disabilities. Articles 15, 17, 20 and 29 of the Constitution of Bangladesh also indicate equal opportunity to the persons with disabilities. In line with Article 15(d) of the Bangladesh Constitution, the Government of Bangladesh introduced the Disability Allowance Program from the financial year 2005-06, as part of the state's responsibilities to the citizens. Initially 1,04,166 disabled persons were given allowance at the rate of Tk 200 per month. During 2022-23 fiscal year, the number of disabled beneficiaries increased to 2.36 million (23,65,000 persons). The rate of monthly allowance is increased from Tk 750 to Tk 850. The total amount of allocation for disability allowance program in the financial year 2022-2023 is BDT 2429.18 crore.

MJF initiatives for making disability allowance inclusive and transparent

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) under its Excluded People's Rights Project funded by FCDO, UK contributed to making the selection process for disability allowances more inclusive and transparent by engaging the community. The project enhanced community interaction with local government bodies – Union Parishad and Upazila Parishad and facilitated access of the community to locally elected representatives.

In the project areas, MJF under its EPR project facilitated in engaging Local Government Institutions (LGI) in beneficiary selection process through social dialogue and community meeting where beneficiary selection process was shared with the community people and with other stakeholders. The project strengthened information services on social protection schemes and other public service delivery schemes by using social accountability tools such as Ward Meeting, Citizen Report Card, Citizen Charter, Information Display Board, Public Hearing etc. The key information regarding disability allowances was shown in different public places and also the list of beneficiaries was displayed, so that deprived persons can inform his/her case of exclusion (if any) and request remedies for this.

Government procedure for grievance redressing on mis-targeting, inclusion error and exclusion errors was also shared with the community. Locally elected representatives got better idea on social inclusion which pushed all to 'leaving no one behind'. They are convinced on social accountability for efficient service delivery to the community.

As result of project interventions, the excluded persons availed the opportunity for being enlisted as beneficiaries and the project facilitated their access to public resources.

Challenge

- Field level investigation shows that, all the PWDs are not registered for allowances and in many cases, the number of registered PWDs represents a very small proportion of the estimated number of PWDs in a particular area. There is a big difference between the survey report on PWDs by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and the report of Department of Social Services. However, MJF recent survey (2022) at the project areas reveals 5.65% of the people are persons with disability.

"My daughter has been disabled since birth. She could not move and talk like other people. We tried our best but did not get the desired results. In addition, we were in a deep financial crisis. We did not know that the government provides allowances for disabled people. So when officials from Excluded People's Rights Project told us about the allowance, we immediately contacted the UP chairman. Thankfully, my daughter has been receiving the disable allowance for the last couple of years"

-Kulsum Begum, Delduar Upazila, Tangail District

- There is an inclusion error of women with disabilities in registration process. The National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) 2015 acknowledged that a greater proportion of women are disabled than men but over 60% of PWDs registered are men.
- As common in the rural community that death cases are not registered properly with the union parishad and so inclusion from waiting list is being delayed in many cases.
- TIB study in February 2021 mentioned that, 16% of people registered as disable by the Department of Social Services are not under the coverage of the disability allowance.

Issues to be considered by policy makers

- Ensure accuracy in statistics on Persons with Disabilities (PWD)
- Enhance citizen engagement in beneficiary selection process
- Special attention should be given for inclusion of women with disability in beneficiary list
- The payment frequency/installment of the allowance could be after two months instead of on six months basis
- Strengthen field level monitoring by DSS engaging the NGOs at local level.
- Introduce provision to receiving application throughout the year without specifying the month of only June-July.
- Enhance capacity on digital literacy for completing the online form which needs to be more easier.
- In order to quickly resolving grievances, the GRS should be at the local level in addition to logging online.
- Introduce Community monitoring through using Social Accountability Tools during implementation.
- Multiple cash transfer options can be deployed considering