

Introduction

Holistic approach towards Promotion of Inclusive Education project (HOPE project) is working to promote inclusive education through engagement of local government and community with the approach of Child Friendly Local Governance (CFLG). Child Friendly Local Governance (CFLG) comprises a rights-based child programming approach and a set of social accountability initiatives that works to facilitate, promote and institutionalize the empowerment and participation of children in the governance arrangements at the local level. CFLG places children and at the centre of the development agenda of local government. It facilitates their inclusion in institutional mandates such as ward shovas and open budget sessions as well as building their understanding and capacity to effectively influence decision-making process and to monitor services and resources. Through the approach the project is working closely with Local Government and community as well as children and school to make local government accountable to promote inclusive education and engage community for taking responsibility to ensure the educational rights of children with disabilities. HOPE Project mobilized community to increase engagement around inclusive education through sensitize community and local government to act as responsive duty bearers.

Save the Children approach to creating enabling environments for inclusive education

Save the Children is strongly committed to ensuring that all children have equal access to quality inclusive education. Our approach to inclusive education follows the Save the Children Theory of Change in order to achieve more for children – especially the most vulnerable – leverage our resources in a more efficient and sustainable way, and succeed in inspiring the global breakthroughs we want to see for children.

What Save the Children ask for?

Targeting children who are most vulnerable and at risk of exclusion, making sure that they are in school and effectively learning, is the only way to reach Education for All goals and ensure that every child enjoys his/her right to education. The promotion of inclusive education cannot be realized through isolated initiatives, but instead is part of an ongoing process. In order to break the cycle of exclusion from and within education, continuous action needs to be undertaken at all levels.

HOPE Project Background

Despite the significant progress in access to primary education, 4 million ¹school going age children including children with disabilities are still out of school in Bangladesh. This indicates that the education system in Bangladesh is not ensuring the provision of Right to

¹ Out of School Children in Bangladesh, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF, December 2014

Education to all children. Children with disabilities are the most vulnerable amongst the disadvantaged groups of children in Bangladesh.

Children with disabilities have to face multiple social barriers in accessing their right to education and development. The first challenge is their own parents and environment at home. They are considered a stigma, a burden and at times an almost non-existent part of the family. In case the parents realize their rights and tries to help their child in accessing education, the barrier is not conducive and non-protected communal environment. Denial of the fact that everyone is born different and that some of children might have different types of needs in relation to other children is widespread. Another level of social separation is the non-provision of facilities by authorities. As example, the nearest schools are not opening up for inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular education system, and social welfare and health system do not offer rehabilitation services to help children with disabilities in coping with social environment.

Local government specially the Union Parishad has a significant role to ensure the educational right of children with disabilities through mobilizing resources and implementing projects. The very nearest structure of the government can monitor and supervise the primary education at its jurisdiction so that every child admit and complete the primary level of education. According to the Union Parishad Act 2009 ²the UP standing committee of Education, Health and Family planning are more responsible to ensure the rights of education for all children as well as for children with disabilities.

Community engagement in education is widely recognized as a vital force in the effort to remove barriers in achieving quality education for all³. Although generalized problems can be identified externally (i.e., low school enrolment), it is a community's engagement in the reflective analysis of its particular situation that leads to locally generated, locally viable, long-term solutions. Successful engagement empowers communities to participate in multiple facets of education support. Community engagement also fosters the willing contribution of local resources (human, material, and economic) for the benefit of inclusive education. Community ownership of education initiatives endows such initiatives with a greater likelihood of being successful, and of being sustained over time. Community can play significant role to remove the social stigma towards Inclusive Education through participating at the workout of inclusive community.

Holistic approach towards Promotion of Inclusive Education (HOPE) Project

With the support from IKEA Foundation, ⁴the project titled, Holistic approach towards Promotion of Inclusive Education (HOPE) is implementing in 3 districts of Bangladesh through 2 implementing partners. Through this project Save the Children is striving to enable children with disabilities and their out of school peers to access high quality primary education in formal schools by working with government, teachers, parents, education officials, local governments representatives and other relevant stakeholders (NGOs, Inclusive education network, media and CSOs) to take on their responsibilities of realizing children's rights to education and protection. The project aim is to strengthen policies and practices of inclusive education and create enabling environment through multi-agency

² Local Government (Union Parishad) Act-2009, Bangladesh

³ De Negri, B., Thomas, E., Ilingumgabo, A., Muvandi, I., & Lewis, G. (1998). Empowering communities: Participatory techniques for community-based programme development. Nairobi: The Centre for African Family Studies (CAFS)

⁴ IKEA is a home furnishings company founded in Sweden, in 1943, by Ingvar Kamprad. IKEA believes that home is the most important place in the world and children it's most important people.

coordination, capacity building, advocacy and other school and community based activities. Another aim of the project is to combat discrimination against children with disabilities and their peers who are excluded from the education system and promoting their rights to be equally included in education system and their protection, participation and development be ensured.

To achieve this, the project is focusing on promoting inclusive education in the formal education system. The project is working to make accountable local government, sensitize community, parents, teachers and ultimately the whole society for Inclusive Education.

The project is employing an integrated approach combining experience from child protection, education and child rights governance and work with stakeholders at different levels to address immediate, underlying and structural causes of discrimination. The project is working at central level to focus on advocacy for required policy change and for an inclusive education system that welcomes children with disabilities and other excluded children and for increased funding for education of children with disabilities.

Intervention of the Project

The goal of HOPE project is to reduce discrimination against children with disabilities in the education system and improve quality of education for all children through inclusive education approaches with the objective of

1. In targeted communities, children with disabilities and their peers in the same age group have increased learning outcomes and wellbeing.
2. Collaboration with government on Teachers Capacity Building and Education monitoring & Information system and
3. Local governments and communities take responsibilities to realize CWDs' rights to education and child protection.

To achieve the project's objectives, one of the main focuses of the project is to engage local government and community to promote inclusiveness at the community towards Inclusive Education. In this regards the project is working with three specific interventions as working with Union Parishad⁵, working with Child Forum and parents.

Working with Union Parishad

HOPE project is working with 6 Union Parishad as key stakeholder of Local Government. With the frame work of Rights based Approach ⁶HOPE project is working to make the Union Parishad more accountable to ensure the rights of children especially the educational rights of children. To sensitize Local Government ⁷in promoting inclusive education the project has signed MoU with Union Parishad and made joint action plan for Inclusive education. The project is working to build capacity of Union Parishad as a responsive duty bearer for Inclusive Education through training, orientation, workshop and day to day support.

⁵ Union Parishad is the lowest and nearest stage of local government structure of Bangladesh.

⁶ Right Based Approach (RBA) is a conceptual framework which based on fundamental human rights principle.

⁷ In this article Union Parishad is called as Local government.

Formation of Child Forum

HOPE Project has formed 18 Child Forum composed with 540 Children including girls, boys, children with disabilities and out of school children to participate in the local government planning, budgeting and monitoring the budget expenditure and service delivery. The child forum members are holding regular monthly meeting having with a long term planning to make themselves an active citizen for promoting child rights especially the quality education for every children. They are advocating with Local government, School Management Committee, Parents as well as community for supporting to ensure rights of children especially rights to education through making accountable duty bearers and active community participation. The Child Forum members are working as active citizen to promote Inclusive Education at their community. The project is providing capacity building support as training, orientation, exposure visit and workshop to develop their leadership, communication and advocacy skill.

Working with parents group

HOPE project has formed 180 parents group at 6 Union Parishad of 3 districts. Each parents group is composed with average number of 15 parents and total numbers of parents are 2700. Each parents group are participating by monthly meeting at their communities with the facilitation of community volunteer. In the meeting they discussed about the issues of social stigma towards inclusion education especially the barriers for children with disabilities to schooling. They also discussing about the role of parents to promote inclusive education and the supporting ways to continue the education of children especially for the children with disabilities. The project has provided training to the community volunteer to facilitate the parents meeting with using different communication materials. The project has provided orientation to 180 parents from the parents group to take responsibilities to arrange meeting as well as their role to disseminate inclusive education message at the communities.

Initiatives taken by Union Parishad and Community

With the support of HOPE Project the Union Parishad and community are working for ensuring inclusive education at the school as well as communities through providing support to the schools in various activities such as identification of out of school children, enrolment campaign, manage Union Protibondi Sheba Kendra⁸ establish and management, make school accessible, increased accountability of local government, inspired children and youth, raising awareness among parents, ensure community participation in local government decision making process, increase budget allocation from Union Parishad, working for inclusive Union, child fair and day observation.

Identify out of school children

Through community mapping and home visit local government officials, school management committee, parents, teachers, Children Forum members are identifying children with disabilities who were deprived proper care to be ready to go to school.

CBR Centre establish and management

With the technical support of HOPE Project, 06 Union Parishad have set up 6 CBR centre at their complex. Union Parishad composed a management committee to overall

⁸ Community based rehabilitation (CBR) centre. It is managing by Union Parishad to provide services to the children with disabilities to make the children for school readiness.

management of the CBR centre. With the support of Union Parishad HOPE project recruited 12 Community Based Rehabilitation Person (CBR-P), where 6 are female and 6 are male. The project provided 20 days basic training to the 12 CBR-P from CDD (a specialized organization working for person with disabilities in Bangladesh) on primary therapy and rehabilitation services.

Facilitate participatory Annual Development Plan of Union Parishad

HOPE Project has facilitated 6 Union Parishad of Dhaka, Kishoreganj and Sirajganj district to develop their Annual Development Plan (ADP) for FY-2017-18 with participatory process. The project is working with Union Parishad to make them sensible to increase governance process at their budgeting process through ward Shova, ⁹budget consultation with different stakes and open budget session. Beside these the project also working with community to raising awareness on ADP developing process as well as budgeting process of Union Parishad.

Enrolment Campaign

With the support of HOPE Project, Union Parishad and community organized several enrolment campaigns at its working areas. They have taken impressive initiatives as part of the campaign. The initiatives were:

- Several groups have been formed headed by Union Parishad officials and participation with Child Forum Members, community leaders organized meeting with parents and community for enrolment of Children with Disabilities and out of school children.
- Organized Parents meeting at the community level to motivate parents to enrol their children at school.
- Organized enrolment discussions at Mosque and letter have been issued to religious leaders to take action for enrolment by Union Parishad.
- Organized joint meeting with school management committee & and parents.
- Organized rally and making for child enrolment at growth centres.
- Assisted to Children with disabilities to enrol at school through providing assistive device by Union Parishad.
- Door to door visit and initiate on the spot enrolment.
- Monitored casement area after enrolment whether any children have left out from enrolment.

Initiate School Accessibility Planning

With the facilitation of HOPE Project, School Management Committee formed School Accessibility Plan at 45 government primary schools with the participation of Local Government representatives, Parents, teachers, Children and local elite.

Sensitized Local Government

HOPE project is working with 6 Union Parishad as key stake of Local Government with the frame work of right based approach. The project is working to make the Union Parishad more accountable to ensure the rights of children especially the educational rights of children.

⁹ Every Union Parishad is divided into 9 ward and the voter of the ward is the member of the ward. The yearly and half yearly meeting of the ward is called Ward Shova.

Facilitate Child Forum as active citizen

HOPE Project has formed 18 Child Forum with 540 Children including girls, boys, and children with disabilities and out of school children to participate in the local Government planning, budgeting and monitoring the budget expenditure and service delivery.

Raising awareness among the parents

HOPE Project is supporting community to develop their awareness on child rights specially rights on education. Doing so the project has provided training on "The role of parents to promote child rights" at the communities. Total number of 180 parents group who have children with disabilities and out of school children have been received the training. The 180 parents groups are providing motivational support on child rights especially the rights of education from the project.

Organize Child Fair

With the support of HOPE Project, Union Parishad and School Management Committee have organized 6 Child Fair at 6 union parishad. It was a day long fair where children, teachers, parents, government officials, local elite, youth group members have participated at the fair. Numbers of government primary schools, Child Forum and different cultural organization have participated at the fair with offering different learning materials and messages to attract people on education. Different events like display, cultural competition, drama show, art exhibition, prize giving ceremony at the fair made the environment very joyful to the participants. There are also organized inclusive games for the children where all types of children have participated.

Day Observation

Union Parishad and School Management Committee are observing various days related to children rights of education. HOPE project is providing technical support to the Union Parishad and School Management Committee to celebrate the day. They have celebrated various days including Child Rights Week, International Day of Person with Disabilities and International Literacy Day through rally, discussion session, essay and art competition among the children and inclusive game. Union Parishad and community mobilized the resources to celebrate the day. Children, parents, school teachers, local government officials and representatives from development organization have participated at the celebration events.

Key success of the project

HOPE project has engaged the local government and community through its project intervention and activities so the so there will be created an enabling environment for inclusive education at the community. There are various

Child Forum provided support to enroll 1679 out of school children at schools. They are collecting demands form children and placing at the Local Government representatives through dialogue session. They create demand for make schools and road accessible for children especially children with disabilities and create enabling environment at school and community for children. Lima, one of the child forum member said." I do not want be a chairman or member of local government, I want Local Government will take necessary action to ensure rights of children especially rights of children with disabilities. This is my vision, this is also our vision."

significant results have been happened to promote inclusive education through engagement of local government and community.

1. Increased enrolment of out of school children including children with disabilities.

Through the engagement of Union Parishad and community, there has been significant changed to enrolment status especially out of school children and children with disabilities. Union Parishad, School Management Committee and Child Forum identified 1264 children with disabilities at 6 unions who were deprived proper care to be ready to go to school. There was huge social stigma and barriers towards the children with disabilities. Among the 1264 children with disabilities 301 children were school going. But the parents, school, local government as well as community were not aware about their schooling. Now 1264 children with disabilities are getting services with the support of community as well as local government and 301 children with disabilities have been enrolled in school that were out of school.

2. Increase access to community based rehabilitation services

The Union Parishad have provided rooms for CBR centre and exposing the utilities cost to run the CBR centres. They are organizing different campaign and communication with community to disseminating the information of the service providing to children with disabilities to make readiness the children for schooling. Now, total number 1264 children with disabilities are getting service from CBR centre with the support of parents, local government, child forum members and local elites.

3. Increase people participation at Local Government decision making process

The Union Parishad have developed their annual development planning with participatory process where community especially parents, teachers, local elites and children have participated and raised their demand to allocate more fund for inclusive education.

4. Inclusive Union planning

The project is facilitating Union Parishad and community to make the Union as inclusive union where all children, irrespective of gender, language, ability, religion, nationality or other characteristics will enjoy their rights especially the rights of education. The community and Union Parishad have been synthesized to remove the barriers to promote inclusive education through change the community attitude and social system with various awareness raising activities. The Union Parishad have made a plan to make the Union Parishad as Inclusive Union with the support of parents, teachers, local elites and different development organization.

5. Developed School Accessibility Plan

Union Parishad, Schools and community have identified the barriers to make school accessible to the children with disabilities as well as all of the school going children. They have first identified the barriers of accessibility and to remove the barriers they have developed accessibility planning for each school. After the planning they have made refurbishment works with the support of local government, community and government

department. Through the process they have made 45 schools accessible, colourful and enjoyable.

6. Increased support from Union Parishad

6 Union Parishads of HOPE Project working areas have made annual action plan to promote child rights especially educational rights of children. They have allocated more budget for inclusive education at their annual budget, providing necessary support to make school accessible through repair school going roads and other facilities which are needed for schools, repairer the road as it will be useable for children with disabilities, include more children with disabilities and their families at social safety net programs and organize community campaign/ awareness activities for inclusive education and rights of children with disabilities.

7. Parents become aware about Inclusive Education

Now the parents are providing support to their children for attending school with other school going children. The parents are disseminating the message of educational rights issues at different forum at the community as well as at the local government planning and decision making process. They are placing the educational rights issues at school, mosque, home as well as public places.

Engagement of local government and community to promote Inclusive Education and lesson learning of HOPE Project

There was enormous social stigma towards the rights of children with disabilities at the community. Parents of children with disabilities were feeling nervousness to provide the information of their children to get any services as well as education as the community seen it as a sign of parents especially mother. The service centres were not ready to provide services to the children with disabilities. The schools were not ready to enrol the children with disabilities in schools. The local government were avoiding the rights of the children and not ready to provide services to the children. So children with disabilities and their families were marginalized. So there are lots of barriers to promote inclusive education at the community. In this situation, HOPE Project is implementing its activities to promote inclusive education and identified some lesson learning.

- Without holistic approach promoting inclusive education at the community is not successful. Any project related to inclusive education should address the personal and social barriers as well as have to work with school, community, local government and parents with a holistic point of view.
- Engagement of local government and community are key factors to change has attitude towards the rights of children especially the educational rights of children with disabilities. Responsive Union Parishad is key duty bearer at the community to take responsibilities towards promote inclusive education. *Besides their active participation of community at the decision making process of Union Parishad can ensure the services of children especially the services to the children with disabilities and promote their educational rights.*
- Child to Child approach is very much effective approach to aware community and provides support to the peer to ensure education rights of children. Children Forum can play a significant role to promote inclusive education at the community through raising awareness among their peer, parents and provide support to the children.

Sustainability of the activities for promote inclusive education

Union Parishad is promoting participatory annual development planning where parents, teachers, children, local elites as well as marginalized community can participate at the decision making process at local development agenda. They have allocated more funds at their annual budget to support to ensure educational rights of children. They have allocated additional budget for children with disabilities and their family through different project and social safety net programs. HOPE project located 6 Union Parishad have allocated 35% of their annual budget for promoting inclusive education previously which was less than 15%. The Union Parishad has developed their yearly action plan to implement inclusive education related activities. They have also developed a sustainable planning to continue the inclusive education activities after complete the HOPE project tenure. They also advocating with government to get more support though the inclusive education model can be replicated at rest of the Union of the Upazila (sub district).

Summary

45 government primary schools are very much ready to welcoming all type of children especially the children with disabilities. The engagement of local government and community made the school accessible for the children. The school building and class room are now very much suitable for the children especially children with disabilities. Union Parishad and community provide support to school make it enjoyable for the children. The Union Parishad repaired the school going road and ply ground for make it accessible for children. The teacher's attitude towards the rights of education of children especially the children with disabilities has been changed and they are now very much supportive to ensure inclusive education.

Conclusion

HOPE project has developed an Inclusive Education Model which is very much holistic. The project is implementing to make impact at national level (Governments) and Local level (Local governments, education institutions, school staff, parents, communities and children). It has developed a Holistic Inclusive Education Model based on the Save the Children Inclusive Education stand points with a strong focusing on local government and community engagement to promote Inclusive Education. The approach is very much effective to promote inclusive education so the community and local government are very much aware about the educational rights of children especially children with disabilities.