

Majority of children with disabilities are not enrolled in any formal education: Survey

January 24, 2023

The Daily Morning Voice Online Desk: More than half of children with disabilities in Bangladesh are not enrolled in any formal education, according to new national-level data revealed on Tuesday. The findings come from the recently-published National Survey on Persons with Disabilities (NSPD) 2021, conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) with technical support from UNICEF. The survey reveals that among children with disabilities (aged 5-17 years), only 65 per cent are enrolled in primary school and only 35 per cent are enrolled in secondary school. In total, 60 percent of children with disabilities aged 5-17 years are not in education, UNB reports.

The survey also found that children with disabilities who do attend formal education lag behind academically by over two years for their age on average. “The data from this national survey – the first of its kind by the BBS – highlights the challenges children with disabilities face growing up. The findings will support the Government to formulate policies and initiatives to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities in Bangladesh,” said Iftekhairul Karim, Project Director, BBS.

According to the survey, 1.7 percent of children in Bangladesh live with one of the twelve types of disability defined in the Persons with Disability Rights and Protection Act 2013, while 3.6 per cent of children face functional difficulty in at least one of the domains of seeing, hearing, walking, fine motor skills, communication, learning, playing or controlling behaviour. “The new data highlights just how many children with disabilities in Bangladesh are losing out on education. We need to do more for these children. We need to provide the support and services they need, and we need to create an inclusive environment where they can thrive,” said Sheldon Yett, UNICEF Representative to Bangladesh.

Data from the survey also shed light on the difficulties that children with disabilities face as adults. Only one third of persons with disabilities of working age are employed, with women with disabilities far more likely to be unemployed compared to men. And while 90 percent of persons with disabilities who are registered with the Government receive disability allowances, the vast majority of them – about 65 per cent – remain unregistered. Early identification and management of childhood disabilities are critical to maximizing the potential of children. It is also critical to create an inclusive environment where families and service-providers can support children with disabilities to participate actively in all spheres of life. UNICEF works with the government and partners in Bangladesh to champion the rights of children with disabilities to education, healthcare and future employment, and to remove social stigma and prejudice.