



Education, Disability and Poverty



Ruma, Bangladesh

DISABILITY AND POVERTY THE FACTS

- Children with an intellectual or sensory disability are the least likely to attend school.¹
- 22% of the world's poorest people have a disability.²
- Children with a disabilities are less likely to start school than their peers without disabilities.³

SOURCES:

1-3 World Health Organisation and World Bank, World Report on Disability, WHO Press, Geneva, 2011, p.29

MY STORY: RUMA, BANGLADESH

“When the neighbours heard I was going to be enrolled they said, ‘What will this crippled girl do by going to school? She should not be admitted’. The teacher said, ‘She cannot come to school as she cannot walk.’”

After difficulties during birth, Ruma’s left leg is shorter than her right. This means walking and going school was always a struggle for her. However, despite these difficulties, Ruma attended an informal school by crawling and she made good progress. As a result of her early achievements, her teacher recommended she enrol in the main school. However, because of her disability, her neighbours and some teachers at the new school thought she shouldn’t be admitted.

THE CYCLE

Unfortunately, Ruma’s story is all too common. Many children with disabilities living in low and middle income countries are not going to school. This means it is even harder for persons with disabilities to break free from the cycle of poverty that so often goes hand in hand with living with a disability.

Ruma’s experience shows some of the difficulties persons living with disabilities face - problems with community attitudes, exclusion, accessibility, and the limitations of schools to cater for the needs of all students.

A CONSTANT STRUGGLE INSIDE THE CYCLE

“I was admitted in Saidpur College, but my father’s financial position was not good for covering expenses of college.” Ruma, Bangladesh.

There are many reasons why children living with disabilities in poverty often miss out on an education:

- Schools can be hard to access for wheelchair users or those with mobility restrictions.
- Teachers may not have the tools or training they need to help all their students learn.
- Families and communities may not understand the importance of learning life skills in an educational setting, or the valuable contribution all members can make to the social and economic strength of the community.

If persons with disabilities are denied education or the opportunity to learn new things that equip them for life within their community, it is this lack of opportunity that is really disabling because their potential is being limited.

School should be a place where all children participate and all students are treated equally. To make this happen, everyone needs to understand that school is a place where every child belongs.

TURNING LIVES AROUND - WE KNOW WHAT IT TAKES

Inclusion of persons with disabilities, across all development sectors, is important. Empowering persons with disabilities so they can receive a worthwhile education, access health and rehabilitation services, gain a livelihood and participate fully in society is essential to end the cycle of poverty and disability.

In 2015 the world committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Agenda is an action plan for people, planet and prosperity. The 2030 Agenda and the corresponding 17 goals, including Goal 4 on Education, must be implemented according to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

By addressing the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in low and middle income countries, we not only achieve the human rights of persons with disabilities, but everyone benefits from their contribution.

REAL CHANGE DOES HAPPEN

“I also started providing private tuition and teaching in a school. With the stipend money, salary and private tuition fees I was able to pay for my [college] admission and other costs.”

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Although the barriers Ruma faced in trying to get access to an education is all too common, it is not every story. While many children with disabilities don't receive an education, there are some like Ruma who do.

Ruma was not only able to go to school, but topped her class and is now at college and is teaching others. The combination of access to education opportunities, the right resources, and her own determination has made Ruma confident about her future.

But Ruma cannot do it alone. Providing quality education to everybody requires the right attitudes and commitment from individuals and families, communities, and Governments.



Ruma, Bangladesh

DISABILITY AND POVERTY THE FACTS

- Many children with disabilities living in a low or middle income country, are not going to primary school.
- Universal Primary Education can only be achieved if children with disabilities are included.

“I have seen that when I do something alone it is not easy to convince others, but if I do something in a group, the impact is much better. It is like one stick is easy to break but ten sticks are very hard to break.” Korn Leakhana, Cambodia.

END THE CYCLE.
OF POVERTY & DISABILITY

End the Cycle is an initiative of CBM

END THE CYCLE promotes the human rights and lived experience of persons with disabilities in low and middle income countries.



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