**Workshop Report on Special and Inclusive Education of Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh –**

On 1st June 2025, a workshop on current situation of special and inclusive education and actions needed for its development was organized by BERDO (BLIND EDUCATION AND REHABILITATION DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION) at BERDO conference hall. BERDO Chairperson Advocate Musharraf Hossain chaired the function. The Director General of Social Welfare Directorate /Department and additional secretary of Bangladesh Md Saidur Rahman Khan was graced the function as Chief Guest. In addition, Bangladesh Country Director of Sightsavers Ms. Amrita Rozina Roazario , Advocacy & Communication Officer of Sight savers Mr. Ayon Debanath, Technical Expert (Inclusive Education) of Sight savers Bangladesh Ms. Marzia , BERDO Executive Director Md. Saidul Huq, Vice Chairperson of BERDO Md. Jahangir Alam. In addition, members of BERDO Executive Committee, BERDO general body members including Md Ershad Ali, and BERDO Deputy Director Md Shahidullah, Md. Salim Uddin, Ms Maksuda Akter and other BERDO Officials and many distinguished guests were among other present in this function as special guest.

At the outset, an introduction session was held to get introduced each other.

After that, BERDO Executive Director briefly highlighted about BERDO, its background history, goals, objectives and achievement along with on-going activities and programs.

In his introductory speech, BERDO Executive Director Md. Saidul Huq highlighted the background of BERDO establishment, its mission, goals and remarkable achievement of BERDO. He said that the Journey of BERDO has been almost 34 years and it was established a Residential Blind School to promote private level special education facility in Bangladesh and plan is on to establish a separate Residential School for Blind girls at Dhaka city. He also added that BERDO worked for job placement of PWDs (Persons with Disabilities), to this end, a separate cell has been stabilized titled “Job Placement Cell”, and until that day, 300 visually impaired person have landed jobs. He also highlighted the contribution of BERDO in inclusive education as well but he emphasized that private –public partnership would bring better outcome in this respect. He also added that a separate directorate can be established and committee should be organized with representatives from Public and private sectors and a revised organigram is needed for BSED (Bachelor of Secondary Education).

After brief introductory speech, BERDO Vice Chairperson Md. Jahangir Alam started presenting the Key Note paper. In his detailed keynote presentation, he said that nobody having disabilities should not be left out of education. In 1992, government of Bangladesh established a Blind school at Barisal district and after that; another four schools for Speech and Hearing impaired Children (PHT Centre) were established at four divisions of Bangladesh and those schools were still in running. He continued that at that time there were and are fifteen specialized institutions that comprised of five Blind Schools, eight Speech and hearing schools and 2 autistic schools and Children with disabilities must be mainstreamed through special schools. He said another decision was taken by government in `1974 that implied that Children with Disabilities should be brought under inclusive education, in addition to involving them in special education. To achieve the goal, government established 47 institutions at 47 districts with provision of Hostel and other special opportunities. He added that now in Bangladesh three educational system are in place for visually impaired children. The number one is Special Education; number two is integrated education, and number three is inclusive education. Later on, 64 integrated schools was established at 64 districts for Children and 6 for girl exclusively. However, the initiatives had not been able to bring expected result due to lack of manpower shortage at those institution and other reasons. Anyway, the most worrying fact is that yet no integrated educational institutions have been established for speech and hearing impaired children in Bangladesh. Furthermore, there have been no new structures built during last three decades to support education of children with disabilities. He cited few examples of such bad conditions of buildings, boundary walls, no sufficient security system etc. etc. He also said that there are shortage of teaching staff. There are only 10 persons out of 29 teachers, officials and staff. Similarly, there are the same situation in other institutions in other districts like Rajshahi, Khulna and Chittagong. Almost all are in bad condition with no boundary walls and security provisions. He also said that there is need to address all those problems to create enabling educational environment at all educational institutions including fulfilling teachers’ shortage. He also put more emphasis and made few recommendation like modernization of special educational institutions, develop skills of teachers, formulate management policies for special and inclusive education institutions, Upgradation of curriculum, fulfil work force shortage, special actions for girls with disabilities, and modernization of technical trade training institutions, make available of sufficient learning materials, ensure 100% enrolment of children with disabilities aged 6 to 10 years at catchment areas. He also recommended for setting up a special cell at Ministry of Social Welfare to oversee and harness all special and inclusive educational institutions. He also put few other recommendations to make special and inclusive education more effective. He also put more impotence for developing creating effective leadership to advance / carry out movement to ensure special and inclusive education in Bangladesh.

The Chief Guest and the Additional Secretary and Director General of Social Warfare Department Md. Saidur Rahmna khan, in his speech, highly appreciated BERDO,s long contribution for well-being of persons with disabilities in Bangladesh. He added that the people,s expectation from Government is much high. Even in the age of modernization, we have to discuss modernization of our education system. He agreed that yet schools of special educations have been failed to fulfil people’s expectation. He acknowledged that many special educational institutions are failing to provide good educational environment due to so many problems like shortage of teachers, shortage of skill teachers, dilapidated infrastructure and shortage of other Manpower. He added that different corrective measures are being taken to address the Challenges of ensuring effective education for students with disabilities. In this respect, he informed the meeting that a new committee would be organized to oversee all special education of Children with disabilities. He also added that teacher’s quality should be increased / upgraded to ensure quality education and the ministry is working on it. He added that Monitoring should be strengthen to all special and inclusive educational institutions to address all laps and gaps and problems and students should be allowed to put their feedbacks during monitoring visits and all must raise their voices to ensure their( Children / Students with disabilities) rights. He also added that new leadership must be development to take up future responsibilities in this sector. He hoped that with all these actions, all prevailing problems/ challenges would addressed within short time.

After that, Sightsavers country director Ms. Amrita Rozina Roazario spoke in the function as special guest. She highlighted her organizations activities and contribution in disability sector of Bangladesh. She said that Sightsavers has been working to ensure rights of persons with disabilities with particular focus to blind and visually impaired people in Bangladesh. She also added that Sightsavers helps improve access to eye health services for everyone and runs inclusive programmes for people with disabilities to ensure they have equal access to health care, education and employment opportunities. She also added that Sightsavers works with the Bangladesh government and partners across South Asia to provide inclusive eye health services and help ensure everyone can reach their potential. She added that stronger voice must be raised for advocacy and action plan and increased budget allocation.

She commented that Sightsavers would provide assistance to specialize & inclusive educational institutions in the best possible ways in future.

BERDO executive Committee Chairperson Advocate Musharraf Hossain said that the condition of education for Blind children are pitiable despite Braille education was started in 1957 at Barisal by Missonary & Rotary Club. He underscored the need to address the deplorable conditions of special and inclusive schools to create good learning environment at all schools. He added that all resource persons and house tutors as well must know about teaching Braille system of education. He suggested organizing a new cell at ministry to oversee all special and inclusive school activities. He also emphasise the importance of quality of teachers and creating enabling environment at all schools so that children with disabilities are motivated to enrol in those schools. He suggested that all problems can be addressed through strong monitoring and organizing a separate cell at ministry.

Mr Ayon Deba nath, Advocacy and Communication Coordinator of Sightsavers, put more emphasis on leadership development to carry out the movement and establish rights of PWDs (Persons with Disabilities) in Bangladesh in future, as there could be a leadership gap after 15 years. He Lauded activities of BERDO and outstanding works of Md. Saidul Huq. He put more emphasis on dialogues for sharing experiences of different actors and GO NGO collaboration.

Special guest Md. Ershad Ali, Teacher of Government Specialized Training School, said that education is inevitable element for empowerment and human development. He informed the function that yet there are many vacant posts at different special and inclusive educational institutions. He put more emphasis on increasing skill and quality of teachers of those schools. He added that those teachers should have training and skill on Mathematics and Science as well. He also stressed the need for involving more blind girls in education and with extended facilities like girls hostel.

Ms. Rohida Nasrin , Associate Coordinator of VIPs OPD, in her speech, put more emphasis on strengthening monitoring system to address all problems now hampering at education of CWDs ( Children with Disabilities).

 Ms Marzia, Technical Expert of Sightsavers, in her speech, put more emphasis on better coordination between teachers and guarding of Children with disabilities to increase number of Children with disabilities. She also added that we must put more attention to vocational education and quality of education to achieve optimum result.

Md. Shahidullah, BERDO Deputy Director, in his speech, highlighted different problems of Children with disabilities in enrolment at schools that provide inclusive education. He underscored the need for full enforcement of Disability law—2013 to address those problem and need to develop quality teachers.

Few Visually impaired Students of BERDO Residential Blind School spoke on the occasion. One Student Rizvi highlighted few barriers that hindered his study at previous school. He put more emphasis to create good learning environment to attract more student and prevent dropouts. One visually impaired student Rifat informed the workshop that he was uncertain about use of his hearing writer. He also suggested that House tutors should know Braille.

Later on, the Chairperson briefly summed up the deliberation and declared its conclusion with vote of thanks.