



Niketan 2020

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www.niketan.nl

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Introduction

Bangladesh is facing numerous challenges. These stem from a combination of historical, political, social, geographical and climatic factors. In spite of this, the country makes slow but steady progress in economic and social development. For example in the area of life expectancy at birth, but also in enhancing school participation and reducing drop-out rates, big steps have been made. Despite an annual GDP growth rate of about 6%, the country is still on the 142nd place (of 188) in the Human Development Index. A quarter of the population lives in poverty (47 million people), of which 27 million in extreme poverty.

In August 2015 the United Nations launched "2030: Agenda for sustainable development" with the theme "Leaving no one behind". This theme underlines that no one should be left behind on the road to development and that everyone has the right to security and development. This certainly applies to the disabled, often in combination with poverty.

The Mission of Niketan is: "to provide integrated care for children and youngsters with multiple complex impairments". Our ultimate goal is to provide a safe social environment and maximum development opportunities matching the capabilities of the child.

The term for the Niketan "Policy plan 2013-2015" has recently ended. In this period, we have gone through huge changes in development cooperation. Also Niketan itself has over the years developed and grown. It is time to adapt our strategy and policy. The 2016-2020 Plan is no less ambitious than the previous plan. We aim to respond to the current situation, both in the Netherlands and in Bangladesh. On the one hand, we will need to focus more on the needs of children with multiple disabilities, and at the same time provide room for innovation.

We want to strengthen volunteer involvement and engagement of stakeholders in Bangladesh, and focus more on sustainability and transparency. At the same time we want to build a more solid financial basis in the years to come to be able to continue providing support to

people with multiple intellectual disabilities. Also we want to share our experience and expertise, gained over the last 20 years, with the Bangladeshi Government and Non Governmental Organizations active in this field.

In this plan we will describe the changing context in which we operate and deliver our support. Next we will focus on our mission and strategic goals. Finally, we describe a series of activities that we want to undertake in the coming years.





The changing environment

The UN Convention on "the rights of people with disabilities" was signed in 2007 by Netherlands, and on 14 June 2016 ratified by its Parliament. In the meantime several other developments become visible:

In Netherlands:

- ✓ Less financing of the Government for development cooperation; increasing competition for less and less funding, with more and more focus on trade, economics and social entrepreneurship and less attention to social development.

- ✓ There is an increasing interest in alternative financing through public-private partnership and social entrepreneurship, which in practice not easily reaches poor and vulnerable target groups.

- ✓ Dutch foundations active in the field of disability care in developing countries, seem increasingly focused on advocacy, influencing Governments and cooperation with partner organizations. Niketan already works with a partner organization, DRRA, but is also directly engaged in all aspects of care that is required.

In Bangladesh:

- ✓ Increasing interest in people with disabilities. Non-Governmental, but also Governmental interest in policy and administration and the use of resources to improve the quality of care of the disabled increases.

- ✓ Local authorities show more interest in persons with a disability but underestimate the numbers and range of support required. Initially they focus on physical access to government buildings, schools, but gradually a shift towards other aspects of social inclusion is required.

- ✓ Despite this growing interest there is little sign that more resources are being made available by Government. Further efforts are required to develop alternative funding mechanisms.

✓ It is still unclear whether this interest will focus more on social and community based support services for people with disabilities instead of the medical, more institutional, often residential care for which insufficient resources seem to be available in Bangladesh.

Internationally there is also increasing interest of international development institutions, such as the World Bank, the World Health Organization, and the United Nations. The WHO/World Bank report "World Report on Disability", published in 2011, gives a comprehensive description of the current situation of care of the disabled at a global level and gives guidance for further research and policy in developing countries. A shift from institutional to community based support and cooperation between Government and NGO's at national and local levels is a central theme in the future.

Niketan distinguishes itself from other NGOs in Bangladesh by its emphasis on content, knowledge transfer and provision of direct integral care to hundreds of children. Where other organizations seem to focus on increasing the numbers reached, Niketan aims to work from a holistic view on quality of care and the social environment of the child, ensuring the best possible development of the child. Niketan wants to share its practical knowledge and experience with partners in Bangladesh, and in that way contribute to scaling up quality care of the disabled in Bangladesh. The second aspect in which Niketan distinguishes itself, is that while most other NGOs focus mainly on physical, visual and auditory impairments Niketan focusses on complex intellectual disabilities.





Strategy and goals

Niketan has from its start focused on the individual child and his/her family and surrounding; working from a holistic vision, putting the individual child first. Over the past 20 years, a large number of projects were developed in collaboration with experienced Bengali colleagues and Dutch volunteers.

The recent developments, international and in Bangladesh itself require reflection and further focusing of this vision. This concerns not only care, development, education, but also vocational training and specialized employment, livelihood development and income generating activities. After the pioneering stage and stabilization of the projects, we now face the task to make our work sustainable and to ensure that the continuity of organization is guaranteed. In this strategy for the period 2016-2020 we will verify if our interventions are sustainable in the long term and if they ultimately can continue while financial support of Niketan would be replaced by a mix of financial resources, generated locally by public and private sector.

Mission and vision

Niketan provides a direct contribution to the structural improvement of the quality of life of children and young adults with complex mental or physical disabilities in Bangladesh at local and district level. Actual improvement of the quality of life of children with multiple disabilities is only possible through an approach that focuses on all aspects of their lives.

We strive for independence of the children and their families in the Bangladeshi context, for which financial support from Netherlands in the long term is no longer necessary. Through connecting with their own social networks and connections with local parties such as Governments, police and medical care, we strive for local initiative and leadership in the field of disability care. Not just ask/wait for the national

Government, but together with family, partner organizations and other local stakeholders start working for practical local solutions. Niketan is committed to share its knowledge and experience, and to contribute to improving the quality of life of larger groups of children and young people with disabilities. kinderen en jongeren met een beperking.

Strategy 2016 - 2020

The strategy of Niketan for the next 5 years therefore covers a three tracks. Consolidating ongoing activities is essential. Our goal is to ensure that the financing of these activities within a few years no longer exclusively depends on Niketan, but has a broader support base of stakeholders, local and national Government and other private funds in Bangladesh. We have considered to start new projects with the resources which become available. However, ultimately we came to the conclusion that we should use the resources to share our knowledge and experience with Governmental and Non-Governmental organizations in Bangladesh themselves.

Our strategy for the coming years consists of three tracks.





Track 1: Consolidate and strengthen existing Niketan projects

To continue providing optimal support and care to a limited group (480) children and young adults through a holistic care concept, remains the most important pillar of Niketan. These projects are also "the breeding ground of Niketan". The direct target group of this track are 480 children, their parents and their immediate surroundings, through residential care, day care facilities and community based care ("We Can"). This is where we see new challenges and where we develop innovative and affordable care and support concepts, which fit the context of Bangladesh. The strategy for this track focusses on consolidating these activities in the long term and when possible share them with partners in Bangladesh"; a "breeding ground for innovation, quality and capacity-development" in Bangladesh.

In the coming years Niketan will focus on the following activities:

- (a) Where necessary, improve existing facilities. After 10 years, the amenities at Manikganj require improvement. Also, the current kitchen requires upgrading if possible with simultaneous development of a restaurant room. There is also need for a guesthouse for volunteers, staff from Dhaka and other guests. This will be realized in the coming policy period. Also the current security situation in Bangladesh requires fencing of the premises.
- (b) Start with the development of a residential "Girls home". In Manikganj Niketan has a residential facility, where 2 "Care mothers" offer 24-hour care to a group of boys. For girls there are currently no facilities apart from day care and informal care. Niketan intends to investigate the feasibility and design of a "Girls Home" and search for the required funding for the next 5 years .

- (c) To develop and pilot a method to enhance awareness of sexual and reproductive health, appropriate to the target audience and in the Bangladeshi context. It became clear that it is necessary to provide attention to these aspects. Within the context of Bangladesh this is a challenging task, which requires a lot of sensitivity, creativity and expertise. Together with partners in Bangladesh (Chittagong) and Netherlands (Rutgers Foundation), we will cautiously develop this further in 2016. We will eventually be developed with supporting communication modules, which can be shared with other partners in Bangladesh.
- (d) Further developing our concept "Bridge to work". Initially this will take place by further development of the woodworking place, but we will look for further opportunities for the youngsters to acquire skills and experience ultimately leading to work and income in the future.
- (e) To provide a sustainable and affordable solution for incontinence of children and youngsters in all ages fits within the holistic care vision of Niketan. With the Dayapara project Niketan hopes to develop an affordable and sustainable solution for the children and young adults with incontinence. In 2015 the 'outside pants' of this diaper concept have been developed and tested. In 2016 we hope to produce and pilot an absorbent pad which will be put inside the diaper pants. Ultimately we aim to develop a concept which can be produced locally and used in our own, as well as in other centers.





- (f) Finalize and introduce the web-based child monitoring system in our centers. In 2015 the web-based child monitoring system further developed in close cooperation between Niketan and an IT company in Dhaka. The system allows us and our colleagues in Bangladesh, to monitor the development of all children, step by step, in the main development domains. This system will also be used to monitor the impact of our work and the work of our staff and other health care providers.

In the future Niketan will use these facilities as a breeding ground for innovation of the care in the context of Bangladesh and share it with colleagues in the country.

Track 2 From “Care” to “Sharing knowledge and experience”

Niketan is approached by many other stakeholders (Government, NGOs) in Bangladesh to exchange ideas and experience in the sector in a broad sense. We would like to strategically share our experience with partners in order to enhance the impact and range of our work in Bangladesh. This track requires further development through additional research and consultation about different aspects of providing practical and sustainable support and care to children and youngsters with disabilities.

- (a) Description of the "Niketan model"; what makes our experience and approach so distinctive and interesting? How does our method itself relate to other initiatives in Bangladesh? What is the level of quality that we can and must pursue in a country like Bangladesh? How does this compare to the quality of life of children without disabilities? A realistic costing of the various services are developed in order to ensure that our proposed care is feasible in the reality of Bangladesh.

- (b) Identification of the most important partners in Bangladesh and consider how we can involve them in our efforts. Can we connect to current initiatives of policy development, or should we focus on our own agenda?
- (c) Develop a strategy to encourage local engagement and ownership, from government, private sector, communities and families.
- (d) Actively contribute to policy development (at local, regional and national level), by raising awareness of stakeholders and improve understanding of policy options through
- Active dissemination of knowledge and experience
 - Selective contributions to national conferences and workshops
 - Focus on sustainability and local leadership





Track 3. Create the conditions: Niketan as professional organization

With this third track we want to make sure that Niketan as an organization is able to adjust to its new strategy. There are challenges in various areas, such as:

Strengthen networking and communication

On the basis of this new strategy a communication plan be drawn up in the first quarter of 2016. This plan will give direction to strengthen the reputation of Niketan among the main stakeholders and partners in Bangladesh, Netherlands and international. In addition, it will support initiatives put the life of persons with disabilities at the agenda in Bangladesh. This communication plan will also give direction to the redevelopment of the website and guide our approach to use social media, newsletter, editorial publicity etc. "

Strengthen Niketan's financial base and continuity.

Over the past few years Niketan had an annual budget of around 250,000 euro, which was provided by individual donors, Trusts and other Dutch NGO's. We will develop a donor strategy which should contribute to a gradual increase in revenue by:

- (a) Expanding the number of permanent individual donors
- (b) A more focussed management of our relationship with investment funds taking account of their needs and requirements
- (c) Always including a financial paragraph in strategic and annual report and annual plans and reports.

Development of a “Volunteer policy”

Volunteers are a hugely important resource for Niketan, not only for the work in Bangladesh and Netherlands, but also to disseminate the reputation of Niketan to others. We need to strengthen and professionalize our relationship with volunteers in line with the strategic choices. The volunteer policy will provide guidance to :

- communication with volunteers, (annual Niketan afternoon and newsletter).
- rules before-and-after fieldwork, including a security and evacuation protocol.

Niketan Management Board

The Niketan Board works on a voluntary basis. In the absence of paid staff, the Board members have several operational tasks. In the coming period we will strive for an optimization of tasks based on professional background and capacity and interests of the members. In addition we will set up an Advisory Council in the 1^e quarter 2016, which will give (pro)active advise on important themes leading to careful decision-making.

Payment of staff

Niketan has always functioned without salaried staff. All work was done on a voluntary basis. The workload in the Board varies from full time to 0,5 day per week pro bono work. The question is whether this organizational structure, with Niketan’s increased budget and ambition, is sustainable in the long run. We are very aware of the advantages and disadvantages of paid staff. In the course of 2016 we will have to make a decision to guarantee sustainability of our support to youngsters and colleagues in Bangladesh..





Relationship Niketan - DRRA

The cooperation between Niketan and its key partner organization (Disability Research and Rehabilitation Association) DRRA dates back to 1998. Trust between the organizations is great; at the same time, we see diverging interests at times which can reduce the effectiveness of our cooperation. We will give much attention to this relationship, also in relation to other (local) stakeholders. DRRA will in the future be a trusted partner on track 1 'consolidating our shared task to support children with multiple disabilities', developing into a "breeding ground of sustainable and holistic support " in Manikganj and Amar Joti. On track 2, from "Care to sharing of knowledge and expertise" Niketan will closely cooperate with DRRA as well as with a wider range of partners in Bangladesh to enhance our reach and impact.

Joining "Charities Netherlands";

Niketan is considering to join "Goede Doelen Nederland (GDN)", which is a new organization developed out of a merger of different organizations which monitor transparency and governance of NGO's. Since Niketan has grown, we strongly believe that complying to its regulations will enhance the transparency of our organization, which in itself will contribute to our reputation and reliability for larger institutional donors. Joining GDN could mean that has to make some adjustments Niketan on a limited number of aspects of its governance structure and procedures.