

Policy plan 2021-2025

JANUARY 2021

A SAFE HOME FOR EVERY CHILD



Content

Vision, Mission, Core Values	3
Niketan's purpose	3
Retrospect	4
Focus next 5 years	9
Cluster 1: Locally proactive and intensive, but applicable nationally	9
Cluster 2: Niketan's knowledge and experience, made accessible to everyone	11
Cluster 3: Strengthening and professionalisation of Niketan as an organisation	15
Theory of Change	16



Vision

We strive for a promising Bangladeshi society where children and adolescents with intellectual and/or complex disabilities are accepted, educated, cared for, grow, and gain self-confidence.

Mission

Together with partners our mission is to improve the quality of life of children and adolescents with intellectual and/or complex disabilities in Bangladesh.

Core Values

In our work, we put the children at the **center** of everything we do and we strive to make them more independent and self-confident. Naturally, we treat them with **respect** and, together with them, we design the best approach - **honest and transparent** - to improve the quality of their lives. We are **innovative**, but also **realistic**, as solutions must fit within the context of Bangladesh. Niketan tries to connect the challenges and solutions for children with complex disabilities with stakeholders at the local and national level, in order to achieve **sustainable improvement**.

Niketan's Purpose: needed now more than ever

Bangladesh has achieved an annual economic growth of 8% which has led the country to transition into becoming a 'middle-income country'. This positively impacted the most vulnerable children that Niketan has been committed to for the past 20 years. The Covid-19 pandemic brought an abrupt end to this positive development.

All schools, including our centers, were closed. Many families were left without an income from one day to the next, struggling to make ends meet with what little reserves they had and government aid being extremely limited. In a country so often hit by natural disasters, such as hurricanes and floods, the pandemic is weighing on the most vulnerable, who already have few resources to deal with such shocks.

The global COVID-19 crisis is worsening [these] inequalities and expose the deep fault lines of exclusion that already exist. Without an inclusive approach to recovery, one which considers the disproportionate impact that COVID has on persons with disabilities, this population is at risk of being left behind. While COVID-19 has created a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented scale, it also presents an opportunity to reimagine disability inclusion. [World Bank[1]]

The consequences of the pandemic for a country such as Bangladesh are still difficult to estimate, but much of the previous progress will be reversed, with increasing insecurity for the children and families that Niketan supports.

[1]

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/12/01/a-more-accessible-and-sustainable-world-a-disability-inclusive-response-to-covid-19>

pandemic an opportunity to improve future interventions.

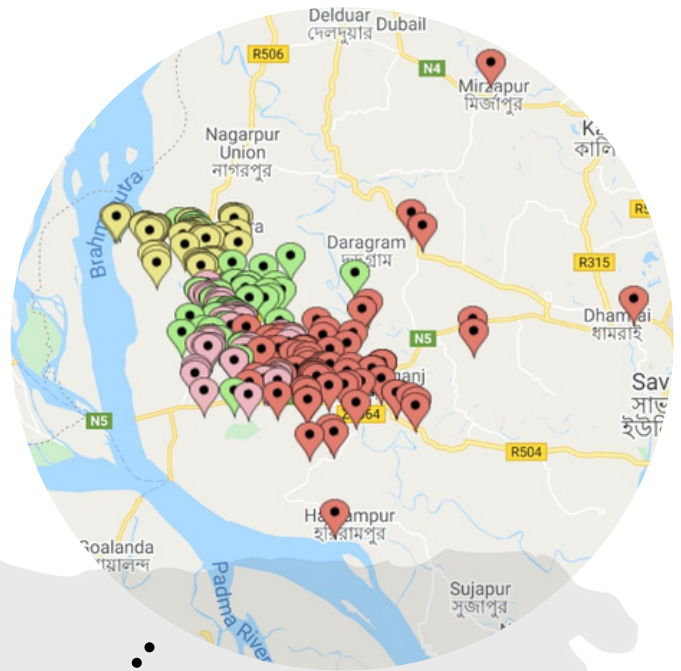
Retrospect

Previous Niketan policy plans have shown that many of our objectives have been achieved, while unplanned issues were addressed when the need arose and/or action was relevant. We have successfully completed some objectives, while others are still work in progress. In the policy plan for 2015 - 2020 and previous ones, we have referred to this as interconnected 'tracks' in our strategy, which we now rename into 'clusters' from which we can further expand our plans.

A previous first track focused on consolidating and strengthening existing Niketan projects.

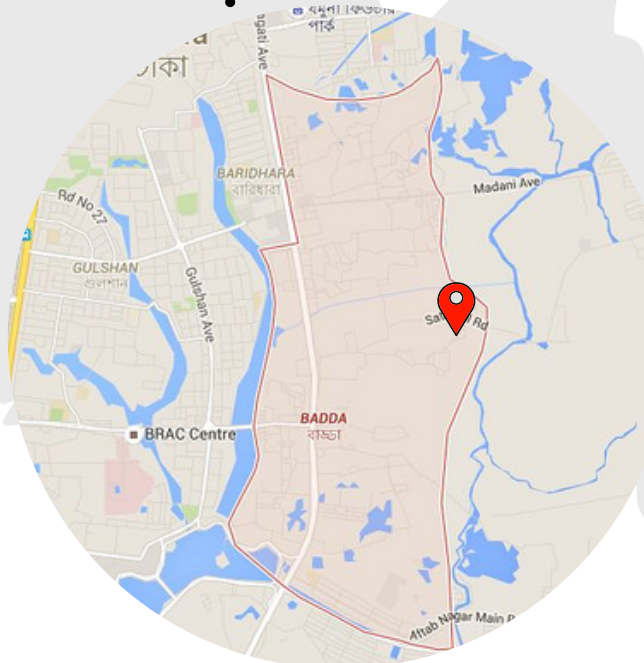
Niketan has been working locally with the Bangladeshi NGO DRRA ('Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association') in the Manikganj District for over 20 years. We have also been working with the same organization for more than 5 years in Badda, a poverty-stricken slum in Dhaka.

In both these areas, Niketan develops activities based on the concrete needs of the children with intellectual and/or complex disabilities. Over the years, Niketan has reached and helped more than a thousand children with complex physical and intellectual disabilities, and are knowledgeable about every individual child and his or her family.



Manikganj

Dhaka



Our projects focused on our target groups in all its dimensions. This of course included the children themselves through care, education, and guidance, but also their parents and caregivers. Further, the focus also includes other stakeholders within the Upazillas and Union Parishads[2], such as health centers, pharmacists, schools, and other community based organizations as well as local businesses. In this way Niketan influences many factors that help determine the happiness and quality of life of the children. With indirectly engaged stakeholders like local authorities, sometimes only raising awareness and offering a different perspective, but sometimes also beyond this when we try to help them change and be more inclusive.

During previous periods Niketan also developed new assistive devices for children with disabilities, such as the development of a unique and tested prone standing frame. These were produced in the woodworking workshop of the DRRA center 'Afroza's Place' in Manikganj supervised by instructors.



This had the additional benefit of a group of adolescents with a disability learning new skills while becoming more independent and able to provide for their own needs. Several of these young people have since then found a place in the furniture industry or even set up their own business.

As part of the program 'The Right to Decide', developed in collaboration with Dutch organisations and companies, 20 young people with a disability successfully passed their exams using the 'My Way to Work' training program and some of them found work through the skills they learnt.

Rather than investing in project cars or buildings, Niketan placed the emphasis on care and teaching of new and useful disciplines for the Bangladesh context. For example through our 'veranda schools', a more decentralized way of introducing children and their parents to our programs and helping them to integrate into society. Through our cooperation with mainstream primary schools, we have succeeded in integrating children with disabilities into regular schools. Together with DRRA we supported teachers, pupils, and head teachers, so that more children with disabilities could be included in regular education and increase their chances in mainstream society.

We have also developed other activities. It turns out that as soon as parents notice that their child needs extra care, they go to pharmacists for medicine. Many medicines are available in Bangladesh without a prescription and without the pharmacists understanding what is actually needed for children with a specific disability. Niketan has therefore developed information sessions targeting pharmacists about children with an intellectual and/or complex disabilities and what they need.

[2] Bangladesh has 492 Upazilla's (also called District, and formally called Thana). There are 4.562 'Union Parishad', the smallest local administrative unit in Bangladesh.

During our multi-year monitoring visits, it also became clear that as our children got older, there was a great need for social emotional learning and education about Reproductive Health and sexuality. That is why Niketan, in consultation with counselors and in collaboration with the Rutgers Foundation, has developed the education program on sexuality issues 'It's My Body', specifically aimed at adolescents with an intellectual disability. After some initial reluctance, parents and caregivers are now very enthusiastic and an improvement in the safety of our youngsters is noticeable. Niketan is now regularly consulted being recognized as a knowledge and experience partner in (inter)national programs.

There were also a number of goals we had set that we haven't achieved yet.

For example, our online 'Child monitoring system', that follows the development of a child, has been further developed but at this moment functions only as a pen and paper system as it is not yet digitally available. Also our diaper project ('Dayapara'), initiated to meet a great need for a number of children and adolescents, while being environmentally friendly and cost-saving, is proving difficult to achieve in the short or middle term. Such a complex innovation with a complicated value chain has turned out to be too ambitious for a small organisation like Niketan. This activity has been put on hold pending further technological advancements or partners.

The previous second track focused on to 'share and unlock our knowledge and experiences from the last 20 years'.

Thematic curricula for children and adolescents have been developed, including audiovisual teaching materials and instructions for trainers. The program has been handed over to the now trained 'DRRA Master Trainers'. Some programs are available online for interested parties developed in partnership with the Bangladeshi company 'Enroute' (<https://sudoksho.com>). The programs have been used beyond our expectations both within and outside Bangladesh.

The modules have especially given us insight into the possibilities of offering parents and those directly involved practical information and approaches that can easily be used to better the quality of life of their children with intellectual and/or complex disabilities. In a large country like Bangladesh, where the distance between knowledge and supporting improved practice can sometimes be too great, it is still possible to reach children and their parents in this way.



Niketan is also regularly asked to share its knowledge and experiences of young people with a disability with other organisations. For example, an important step was taken by entering into a partnership with Biblionef (see Cluster 2: 'Stories for Inclusion'). In this context, the book 'My name is Runa' was developed and presented to the Ambassador of Bangladesh appointed to the Netherlands at the end of 2020.



"Thank you Niketan for your passion and commitment to the 'other' (differently abled) children in Bangladesh. They form a sizable chunk of people in silence. Indeed we all need to step up our actions in true spirit of inclusion".

- Riaz Hamidullah - Ambassador of Bangladesh in the Netherlands.

The previous third track focused more on Niketan as a professional, transparent and cost-effective NGO.

More than 90% of our funds benefited our target group, partly directly and partly by hiring paid employees through our partner organisations.

This way Niketan has ensured strengthened itself as a trustworthy volunteer organization. Already recognized as an ANBI in the Netherlands (a public benefit organization), we have additionally qualified as a 'category B' organization with the CBF. We are also a member of Goede Doelen Nederland, which challenges us to constantly improve the quality and impact of our organization.

In this regard, we have developed and adapted a series of policy documents and protocols such as the 'integrity policy' (including clauses for the protection of children), as well as a 'volunteer policy' and the Niketan board regulations. Further, we have taken measures to ensure transparency and control of the financial reporting and the independence of the board. All of this has contributed to the professionalization of Niketan as an organization.

Participating in the Transparency prize and the Impact Prize has also strengthened the effectiveness and improved the reputation of Niketan as a volunteer organization.



IMRAN IS NOW VISIBLY HAPPIER

My name is Salma Khatun, I am the mother of Imran. Quite soon after he was born, we noticed that he was not developing as much as my other children. We had been to many quacks and doctors and eventually we hear that he was "crazy". We were desperate and saw no future for him. In puberty Imran was unmanageable. Fortunately, we heard about Niketan's residential care. It is unbelievable how he has changed. He is now visibly happier, he shines everyday, he is much more socially skilled and helps in the household and on the farm. Who would have thought that he could independently take care of the chickens and goats and that could do the shopping on his own?!

It is great what he learns at Niketan. I hope that he can complete the final training on handling money. Then I would like to start a small greengrocers shop for him next to our house. But I don't know if Imran wants to go back home, he is really at home in Afroza's Place.

Focus next 5 years

The experience of the last 5 years, including the unique Covid year, are reasons to further consolidate and develop activities to sustain our impact on the quality of life and make it accessible to larger groups in Bangladesh, thus significantly increasing the scale of our action.

Cluster 1: Locally proactive and intensive, but applicable nationally

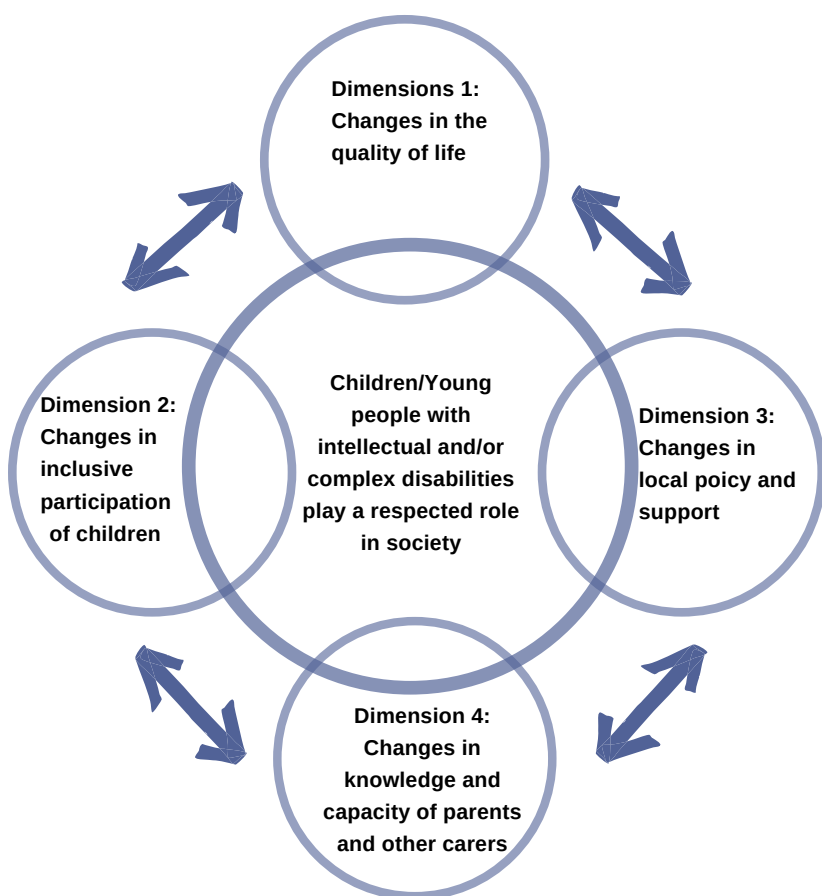
Niketan remains closely involved with the developments in Bangladesh and adapts its programs as much as possible to local needs and context.

An example of our flexibility is the timely action in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. In a short time, Niketan, in collaboration with DRRA and supported by Wilde Ganzen, set up a unique individual financial support program for 557 children. This allowed families to buy food and other essential products to survive the crisis. Further, thanks to donations from the Banyan Trust and many private donors, we started the IGA (Income Generating Activities) project for families of 146 children who, due to Covid-19, had lost their livelihoods. Our teachers and therapists have also devised ways to reach the children by conducting lessons and advising on physical and other exercises over telephone and clarifying this further with short videos. In this regard, we have also been able to temporarily expand our 'community' program with community-based veranda schools.

Niketan will continue to connect with other sectors, such as local government, (early, regular, and vocational) education, employment, physiotherapy, counselling, as well as pharmacies and community health centers. In addition to these community based activities we will continue to provide long term residential care to 15 young people with disabilities in Afroza's Place.

Niketan will continue to do this for the next 5 years, constantly trying to find new answers to the challenges posed as children and adolescents in our projects develop and mature.

Our commitment is graphically visualized below:



Our approach for the next 5 years can be summarized as follows:

- Integrated approach for a group of children and young people in Manikganj and Badda (currently around 500)
 1. Focus on the development of individual children based on their unique needs, and
 2. Development of a more inclusive living environment for children in which we connect all stakeholders, such as family, government, local community, school, workplaces, health facilities, and society at large.
- Complete the 'Child monitoring system' and if feasible, work together with DRRA to integrate this information system in the Niketan/DRRA Management Information System DHIS-2, so that we can monitor the interventions and progress of each child;
- Linking successful approaches such as SRHR training and 'The Right to Decide' with local and district government, lobbying for more inclusive governance;
- Safety of children in the broadest sense of the word supported by the local community, including (sexual) safety of girls and boys with disabilities, but also preventing child marriage, for example by means of education on sexuality and leadership training for adolescents (both girls and boys).



"The inclusivity is splashing off, the concept of veranda schools, where children are not hidden away, is very strong".

- Kees de Jong, Director Wilde Ganzen



Cluster 2: Niketan's knowledge and experience, made accessible to everyone

There are no recent studies on the number of young people with a disability in Bangladesh, but based on the estimates in the Global Disability Report from the WHO and World Bank, it is assumed there are between 2 and 3 million children with intellectual and/or complex disabilities in the age group of 0-14 years. However, our activities not only reach children and youth by directly improving their lives, the work we do also contributes to the development of knowledge and experiences applicable in other parts of Bangladesh. In the coming years, we want to systematically build on this and make knowledge and good practices regarding children and youth with a disability accessible throughout Bangladesh.

In recent years Niketan has gained experience in developing training modules that are accessible open source on the internet. For example, practice tested modules on safe feeding and on the development of gross motor skills have been developed. The modules are intended for supervisors, but also for parents. The training material consists of a video, instructions for the trainer, and test questions to measure the learning outcomes of the participants. We work on the e-learning platform 'Sudoksho', developed by 'Enroute Center for Development' (<https://sudoksho.com>).

Niketan has also organized trainings for pharmacists to help them recognize various disabilities, to learn about the importance of referring clients to other relevant professionals, and the danger of the incorrect use of medication.



"I received training on disability identification and referral service from DRRA. After the training, I no longer give medication for epilepsy without a prescription. Now I can identify disabilities and refer to a DRRA / Niketan project or hospital".

- Nizam Uddin, Pharmacist in Mandarota Bazar.

Training courses about disabilities, communication, play, and inclusion were provided for primary schools teacher and for children in regular primary schools aimed at playing together and communicating (differently) with peers who have a disability. We now want to further unlock and more widely share our knowledge, and lessons learned in the coming years, partly through a website linked to the Sudoksho platform, and partly through other existing platforms used in relevant sectors.

The platform agenda/content is determined by what happens in the different programs, what we hear from users, and what we hear from our (semi) professional network in Bangladesh and beyond, with which we maintain an active relationship. In this way we make the experience accessible to all families and caregivers of children with intellectual and/or complex disabilities in Bangladesh. Certainly, with the experience of Covid-19, the need for remote support has increased. Dependent on financial options, Niketan will professionalize this platform in the coming 5 years, by working together with various partners and making it accessible to other parties who have relevant knowledge and experience or can use it in their work.

Our approach for the next 5 years can be summarized as follows:

- Finalize an action plan to achieve the creation of a functioning digital platform. This includes solid architecture with a description of how it is managed, how users are involved in further developing it, how it is financed and which owner(s) can guarantee continuity.
- Develop a course for (informal) tutors ("blended learning"; online and 'face to face'; top-down, bottom-up AND peer-to-peer learning)
- Develop separate modules (similar as the feeding module) for parents and grandparents, based on a good analysis and documentation of our experience regarding that topic, with a well thought out course structure, and the right balance between texts, visuals, and spoken word. Rather than an exam participants' feedback could measure the usefulness of such modules.

"Parents are very happy to watch the videos; they enjoy them very much. It is very useful for them to watch the videos rather than just listening to us. They usually say they have learnt something after watching a video and want to watch more videos. We understand that they also practice at home with their child what they have learnt. They have especially appreciated to learn how to feed their child".

- Manager LAMB foundation



- Lessons learned will involve local government, health centers, pharmacists, and schools from Cluster 1. These will be widely shared across the country using our own platform by collaborating with existing learning programs in the sector. For example, the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, in collaboration with the World Bank, developed the Horizontal Learning Program (HLP), which aims to strengthen the capacity of local governments, Upazillas, and UPs. By connecting to this, the dissemination of Niketan's experiences will happen through existing channels. Local governments interested in this will use this experience to make their governance more inclusive. The same is possible for initiatives aimed at health centers, schools and other stakeholders.
- 'Stories for Inclusion' - developed in collaboration with Biblionef – is a new initiative that aims to reduce disability discrimination and stigma through children's books .
- Knowledge platform for disabled care worldwide - on collaboration with *Wilde Ganzen* and the *Friendship Foundation*, to stimulate knowledge sharing between private initiatives.
- Continuing sharing of lessons learned and new knowledge of our education about Reproductive health and Sexuality program, also as a member of the "We Care" team of the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), funded by NUFFIC. Other partners in this project are the National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT) and the Directorate General of Family Planning, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh - Mother and Child Health Unit (MCH) and Field Service Delivery Unit (FSD).





I GAVE BACK A STRONG MESSAGE TO THE BOY NEXT DOOR!

My name is Nasrin Akter. I am 17 years old and I have Cerebral Palsy. My father died when I was very young and shortly after my mother remarried and left me with my grandmother. Her sons left her for me, so neither of us have our own homes now. We can survive by the grace of the local government.

In October 2020 I was brutally raped by my neighbour. He came into my house in the middle of the night and raped me. Through the SRHR-training 'Its my body' I understood what was happening, but I could not defend myself because of my disability. I had also learned that I had to speak to someone I trusted about it. I discussed it with my counsellor and together we went to the village leader and the police. They arranged a meeting in the village with the "women's protection commission" and convicted the boy. The verdict was a fine of 150,000 bdt (1,500 euros) and the boy publicly lost his face.

I am happy that I received this training and am not afraid it will happen again and the boy next door has learned his lesson too and will never do it again.

Cluster 3: Strengthening and professionalisation of Niketan as an organisation

Niketan has proven its right to exist over the last 20 years and can look forward to continued support from Dutch funds, while we can also count on the continued support from private donors and an increasing involvement of companies in Bangladesh.

The secretariat and administration have been provided for by the founder of Niketan since its inception and the Board has always fulfilled a strong executive role without remuneration. The founder/secretary is the driving force. Work needs to be done at the beginning of the next policy period to determine how these tasks could be taken over in the event of a (unexpected) withdrawal of the founder/secretary. The current financial reserves, built up in the past, offer the possibility to hire paid staff or this if necessary. The board is further strengthened and rejuvenated and consists partly of members with long experience in Bangladesh and other developing countries.

We also strive to attract volunteers, especially for the further development and implementation of our social media strategy, translations and other work in the clusters, which can support the Niketan professionalism.

Regarding continuity of care (Cluster 1), steps must be taken to guarantee sustainability, should support from the Netherlands disappear. This has already partially been achieved because of the close involvement of the local government, and the possibility that some schools are taken over by the Ministry of Education. In the coming policy period.



We will discuss with our partner DRRA how our support can be handed over to other parties, including the government and private organisations in Bangladesh. Additionally, Niketan will continue to intensify the lobbying activities, parallel to the activities in cluster 2, so that the government will assume its responsibility towards these vulnerable groups locally, at district level and nationally.

Theory of Change

Impact: A save home environment for children with a disability

Outcome	Optimal care and support are provided for a limited group of Children with Disabilities (CWD) and young adults on the basis of holistic care concept in Manikganj and Badda		Proven practical approaches in support and care for Children with Disabilities applied more widely in Bangladesh	
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">CWD infrastructure rehabilitated, maintained and expanded in Manikganj and BaddaParents trained on CWD careCWDs trained in vocational skillsCWD development adequately monitored		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Niketan's 'practical lessons learned', described and made available nationally on online platform ('Enroute')Relevant institutions invited to join platformCWD development adequately monitored	
Activities	Maintain, rehabilitate, expand relevant CWD care		Analyze, prioritize and make available approaches to be adopted Niketan model on holistic CWD care (including costing aspect)	
	Train and accompany parents of CWD in CWD care		Identify, develop and maintain relations with potential partners in Bangladesh	
	Develop and implement vocational skills training			
	Develop and implement child development monitoring tool'		Promote the use of online knowledge and experience platform (users + contributors)	
Inputs	Sufficient funding is available to ensure continuity of Niketan activities	Sufficient national and international CWD-expertise is available to ensure implementation of Niketan activities	Sufficient funding is available to ensure continuity of Niketan activities	Sufficient national and international CWD-expertise is available to ensure implementation of Niketan activities
Indicators	Niketan as a professional organization is future proof		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Niketan as an organization has the necessary technical and admin staff/volunteersNiketan has a vision, mission and strategy that adapt to a changing environment (both in Bangladesh and elsewhere)	
Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">National + local government convinced to implement better policies for CWDs and support initiativesLocal society supports these initiatives or does not obstruct them.Niketan successfully implements its strategy for making available national and international CWD expertise (volunteers)National and international expertise remain committed to provide their knowledge and skills (unpaid)Niketan maintains good working relations with DRRANiketan successfully implements its strategy for generating & diversifying its resourcesNational and international donors remain interested in supporting CWD-care			



**"Niketan teaches us to be proud and
stand up for ourselves"**

Statutory name
Contact person
Contact address
Telephone number
E-mail
website

Niketan
A. Termoshuizen
Itterbeek 7, 2641 TW Pijnacker
015-2159386
info@niketan.nl
www.niketan.nl

ANBI
Algemeen Nut
Beogende Instelling

CBF
ERKENND
GOED DOEL