



EVERY CHILD COUNTS

POLICY PLAN NIKETAN MARCH 2026



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photo frontpage

Talashi and her daughter Batashi (3) both have an intellectual disability.



Vision

We strive for an inclusive Bangladeshi society in which families with children and young people with complex disabilities are accepted, gain self-confidence and have prospects for the future.

Mission

Together with partners, we aim to improve the quality of life of children and young people with complex disabilities in the community in Bangladesh, based on their developmental potential and not solely on their chronological age.

Core values

In our work, we focus on children and young people, and their families, and we strive to empower them and boost their self-confidence.

Naturally, we treat them with respect and work with them in an open and honest manner to determine the best approach to improving their quality of life. Where possible, we prepare them for leaving our program with a wealth of skills, self-confidence and supportive networks. We are innovative, but also realistic, because the solutions must fit within the context of Bangladesh. Niketan tries to connect the challenges and solutions for children and young people with complex disabilities with other stakeholders at the local and national level in order to achieve sustainable improvement.

Objectives

- a. Providing financial support to projects for people with complex disabilities in Bangladesh.
- b. Providing information and transferring knowledge and expertise about complex disabilities.
- c. And all activities that contribute to this directly or indirectly.

Partnerships

Niketan has been working with NGO Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association (DRRA) since 1998. DRRA is the partner/implementer of a large number of Niketan projects. Niketan is co-owner, facilitator (financial resources and knowledge), supporter (monitoring, evaluation, strategic planning) and quality controller of the projects.

In its projects aimed at disseminating knowledge, Niketan also works with other partners. For example, in 2026-2027, it will collaborate with NGO JAAGO to promote greater inclusion in elementary schools.

Context in which we work (and the risks)

Despite SDG goal 4, equal access to education for children with intellectual or complex disabilities continues to lag behind worldwide. During the [Global Disability Summit 2025](#), it was agreed that at least 15% of national development programs should focus on this group, but countries such as the Netherlands and Bangladesh are showing little action. In Bangladesh, the current interim government and the upcoming elections are leading to a standstill in policy and implementation, as a result of which people with disabilities are increasingly excluded from education, care and work^[1]. In recent years, Dutch politicians have shown less and less involvement in development cooperation, which also has direct consequences for vulnerable groups in Bangladesh. This decline in involvement exacerbates the social and economic disadvantage of these children and their families, and undermines the global promise to leave no one behind, making targeted policy interventions urgently necessary.

In addition, living in extreme poverty makes it particularly difficult for families in Bangladesh to care for a child with a complex disability. Limited access to education, healthcare and social support increases the vulnerability of these children and their families.

It is against this backdrop that we have developed our policy for the next five years. Despite the current challenges, such as reduced involvement in development cooperation, limited inclusion of children with disabilities and increasing poverty, we will focus on making our efforts more sustainable, with the aim of enabling a responsible and effective exit strategy in the long term.

Brief review of previous policy plan

During the implementation of the 2020-2025 policy plan, the first few years coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Niketan managed to quickly organize all activities in a decentralized manner and offer online lessons. In addition, we provided financial support to parents and helped them set up income-generating activities. The COVID-19 pandemic made it clear to us how important it is to approach families as a whole: parents can only take good care of their children if they do not have to worry about their financial situation. Thanks to this approach, we won the [Impact Challenge Award](#) in 2021.

We wrote various [learning briefs](#), conducted an [external study](#) of our community care program, and conducted a [study](#) on the well-being of girls and young women with disabilities.

^[1] News article in Daily star Don't abandon kids with special needs , 15 september 2025

We published an [article](#) about our Stories for Inclusion project in the Asian Journal of Inclusive Education (AJIE) and launched the [Stories for Inclusion website](#) and the [Shokkhom](#) knowledge platform. We collaborated with various organizations in an SRHR program funded by Dutch organization for internationalization in education Nuffic and celebrated our [25th anniversary](#).

A review of the various clusters:

Cluster 1: Proactive and intensive locally, but applicable nationally

The integrated approach for children and young people in Manikganj and Badda, which focuses on both the development of the individual child and the promotion of a more inclusive living environment, has proven successful. This is evident from, among other things, the external evaluation of our community care program in 2023, as well as the increasing interest of schools and organizations in our Stories for Inclusion project.

“Niketan’s model could contribute to new insights into community care, home care and rehabilitation in a country where the national government is increasingly investing in rehabilitation services in the form of building infrastructure, i.e. institutions. But it seems to ignore the importance of community services for those who are poor and live far away from the services offered in urban areas.” – Huib Cornielje



Collaboration with schools, anti-violence committees, focus group discussions and outdoor cinemas have also proven to be powerful tools for lobbying at the local level and contribute to the creation of a more inclusive society.

We have not yet succeeded in developing a comprehensive digital child monitoring system. However, a monitoring tool has been set up in Excel, in which children’s milestones are systematically tracked. This tool provides insight into the degree of development and makes it possible to identify any disharmonious development profiles. This gives teachers and physical therapists concrete tools to offer targeted activities and support. We will continue to investigate whether there is a suitable digital child monitoring system that we can adopt.

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

Despite a few hiccups, we have succeeded in creating a functioning digital [knowledge platform](#). However, because building and adding content to the Shokkhom platform took more time than expected, a fully developed plan for ownership is not yet in place. For the time being, Niketan has taken on the responsibility of developing new modules. Various training modules have been developed, focusing on gross motor skills for young children, puberty for young people and inclusive education for teachers.



To reduce discrimination and stigmatization, we have launched the '[Stories for Inclusion](#)' project in collaboration with Biblionef, starting with the children's book 'My name is Runa'. The project has now been rolled out in Ghana, Uganda and Bangladesh, including in 6,190 schools through BRAC. The children's book 'My name is Runa' is now also available as an [audiobook](#).

Cluster 3: Professionalization and strengthening of Niketan as an organization

Niketan has hired a paid fundraiser to help us approach endowment funds and write project proposals. However, we have not been able to recruit volunteers for our communication activities. In contrast, the goal of making the organization more sustainable and less financially dependent has been partially achieved. For example, Niketan has completely phased out its collaboration for the center in Badda in recent years, and its partner DRRA has successfully transferred the financing to private parties in Bangladesh.





CHAIMA IS NOW VISIBLY HAPPIER

Chaima (14) is a social and friendly girl with spastic paralysis, hearing problems and a developmental delay. She lives on a char (sandbar in the river) and has been attending special education in Ghior for 5 years.

Her father earns his money as a rickshaw driver and her mother earns some extra income with her work for BanglaMa. Since Chaima has been in school, both she and her family have been progressing gradually. Chaima has become less shy and has made friends at school. She enjoys role-playing games, drawing and coloring. Like a real adolescent, she gossips and dances with her classmates at school. She loves doing puzzles and takes pride in being able to write short words. Because of problems with her oral motor skills, she sometimes drools and is shy to talk, but there is improvement, and at home and at school she communicates with supportive signs.

Thanks to several courses at her school, her mother learned sign language and there are fewer frustrations at home. Through family development training, the family is better able to set priorities and save money. There are worries too; Chaima's mother worries about her future, because who wants to marry her daughter?

Policy 2026-2030

The policy for the next five years builds on the experiences of the past 25 years and focuses on achieving sustainable, structural changes. We emphasize social sustainability and are committed to providing ongoing support to children and young people with disabilities and their families, with a focus on safety, recognition and development opportunities.

The board has identified six key points of social sustainability on which we want to focus in the coming years. These key points are:

1. A more inclusive society – a society in which children and young people with disabilities are included and in which they feel safe and have equal opportunities to develop.
2. Independently functioning, recognized parent groups and youth groups.
3. An independently functioning, recognized network of volunteers.
4. Initiating new partnerships so that communities have strong ties with their local government to demand appropriate care for people with disabilities.
5. Disseminating Niketan's experience sustainably.
6. Making Niketan financially sustainable.

An inclusive society is one in which children and young people with disabilities participate fully, feel safe and have equal opportunities to develop.

Creating an inclusive society in which children and young people with (complex) disabilities participate fully and have equal opportunities remains our most important priority. We achieve this by providing care and education to our target group and their parents and families. We will document and visualize positive results to inspire other initiatives in and outside Bangladesh.

In the coming years, we will focus more strongly on the active involvement of parents. They will play a key role in shaping their children's future. This means that the responsibility will then no longer lie with Niketan or other organizations, but that parents and other parties will be encouraged to contribute decisively – financially, practically and strategically – and will be able to involve other stakeholders.

Our project serves as an example of inclusion and should therefore not be absorbed into large-scale programs that could undermine its exemplary role. The project's strength is in offering an inspiring practical example that can be replicated locally and scaled up. So sustainable continuation in the existing context is essential: the project will not be phased out, relocated or commercialized.

A possible additional provision is the establishment of a safe shelter in communities for girls with disabilities, similar to a women's shelter, provided that it is supported locally and can be set up in a financially sustainable manner. In addition, it is necessary to develop protocols to respond adequately to incidences of violence. Collaboration with organizations that can provide legal aid is also essential, so that victims have access to appropriate support and their rights can be protected effectively.

Sustainability is a prerequisite in our policy. We focus on continuity rather than temporary interventions or constantly starting new initiatives in other areas. A key part of our approach is raising awareness: by increasing knowledge and understanding within society, we create an environment in which children and young people with disabilities and their families have more opportunities.



Niketan also wants to invest in income-generating activities for parents and young people, so that families become more economically resilient and support is embedded sustainably.

The impact of our work can be increased through better monitoring of activities and through collaboration with other parties, such as religious leaders, hospitals and civil society organizations. Over the next five years, we want to work toward structural change by achieving greater participation of both governmental and non-governmental organizations within Bangladesh.

In this process, the community plays a central role in determining priorities and provisions. By strengthening self-advocacy, providing parenting training and actively involving the community, ownership is encouraged and the foundation is built for sustainable, locally supported solutions.

Independently functioning parent groups and youth groups

Parents can only play an active and structural role in their children's development when they have a solid and sustainable foundation. This foundation consists of knowledge, financial independence and mutual support.

Building on this foundation, joint action and personal initiative become possible, leading to lasting change and a stronger position for children and young people with disabilities and their families within the community.

We encourage the development of independently functioning parent and youth groups, centered around mutual support and personal initiative. To exchange knowledge and experiences, we connect these groups through the Shokkhom knowledge platform, social media and accessible communication tools such as WhatsApp. In addition, we support the establishment and strengthening of OPDs (Organizations of People with Disabilities), so that groups become better organized and have a collective voice in society.

An important focus of this policy is the promotion of income-generating activities. Families and young people are actively encouraged to make their own choices about how they want to strengthen their economic position, while we also investigate whether less stereotypical activities can be successful. Our role here is to listen carefully and facilitate: we offer financial support, knowledge and connections, while the final decisions are intentionally left to the families and groups themselves.

An independently functioning and recognized network of volunteers

Volunteers are increasingly becoming an indispensable link in our community care program. Their commitment plays an important role in the success of our activities and deserves structural recognition and support.

We strive for an independently functioning network of volunteers, organized through an independent volunteer organization. This increases the effectiveness, visibility, clarity of responsibilities and continuity of the work.

To strengthen their role, we offer training and education, and where possible, we hand over activities to volunteers. In doing so, we are building a solid foundation for volunteers to remain motivated and continue to contribute actively and competently to our common goals.



Initiating new partnerships so that communities have strong ties with their local government to demand appropriate care for people with disabilities

We want to strengthen communities (e.g. through focus group discussions and outdoor cinemas) so that they can work with their local government to advocate for appropriate care for people with disabilities. We focus primarily on local governments and building strong, sustainable relationships with relevant companies.

Through awareness raising and capacity building we strengthen communities so that they can eventually maintain partnerships independently. In the first year, we take the initiative, build relationships and increase capacity, after which we gradually transfer the partnerships to the communities and OPDs themselves. Successful results are shared through stories from various stakeholders to increase support and commitment.

By investing locally, supporting OPDs and making communities more independent, we build the foundation for sustainable structures that will effectively represent the interests of people with disabilities in the long term.

Disseminating Niketan's experience sustainably

Niketan has over 25 years of knowledge, experience and lessons learned. We want to disseminate this valuable expertise sustainably and transparently so that it also has an impact outside our organization. The training courses and instructional videos we have developed are not only significant outside our organization; they are also an essential part of our approach as they are used to train new parents, which continuously strengthens the continuity and quality of our support.

In addition, we will focus on further developing the Shokkhom open source knowledge platform. We will continue to invest in developing modules aimed at various target groups. We want to involve someone from within the local system who is willing to learn, share knowledge and network proactively. By strengthening and connecting parents and organizations, we ensure that Niketan's experience remains widely available and continues to contribute to inclusive development.

Making Niketan financially sustainable

Fundraising is a strategic pillar within our organization. Endowment funds in the Netherlands play a crucial role: they offer financial stability for long-term programs. Their involvement acts as a 'quality stamp' that reinforces our mission.

At the same time, we want to focus on expanding support from the business community. Through partnerships with socially engaged companies we create mutual value.

In addition, we must continue to invest in building and maintaining a loyal group of individual donors, both in the Netherlands and in Bangladesh. Their contributions – large or small – enable us to respond quickly to local needs, stay close to the target group and make our activities future-proof.

To ensure the continuity of our projects, it is essential that we are prepared for any sudden (financial) situations. A contingency plan must guarantee that, even in unexpected circumstances, care and support for our target group can continue for at least a year. We recognize that political instability makes collaboration with the national government uncertain, and that support from international NGOs is also unpredictable.

We want to work on the long-term sustainability of our organization with the goal that Niketan's support will no longer be needed in 10 years. To this end, we will research and implement various strategies, including:

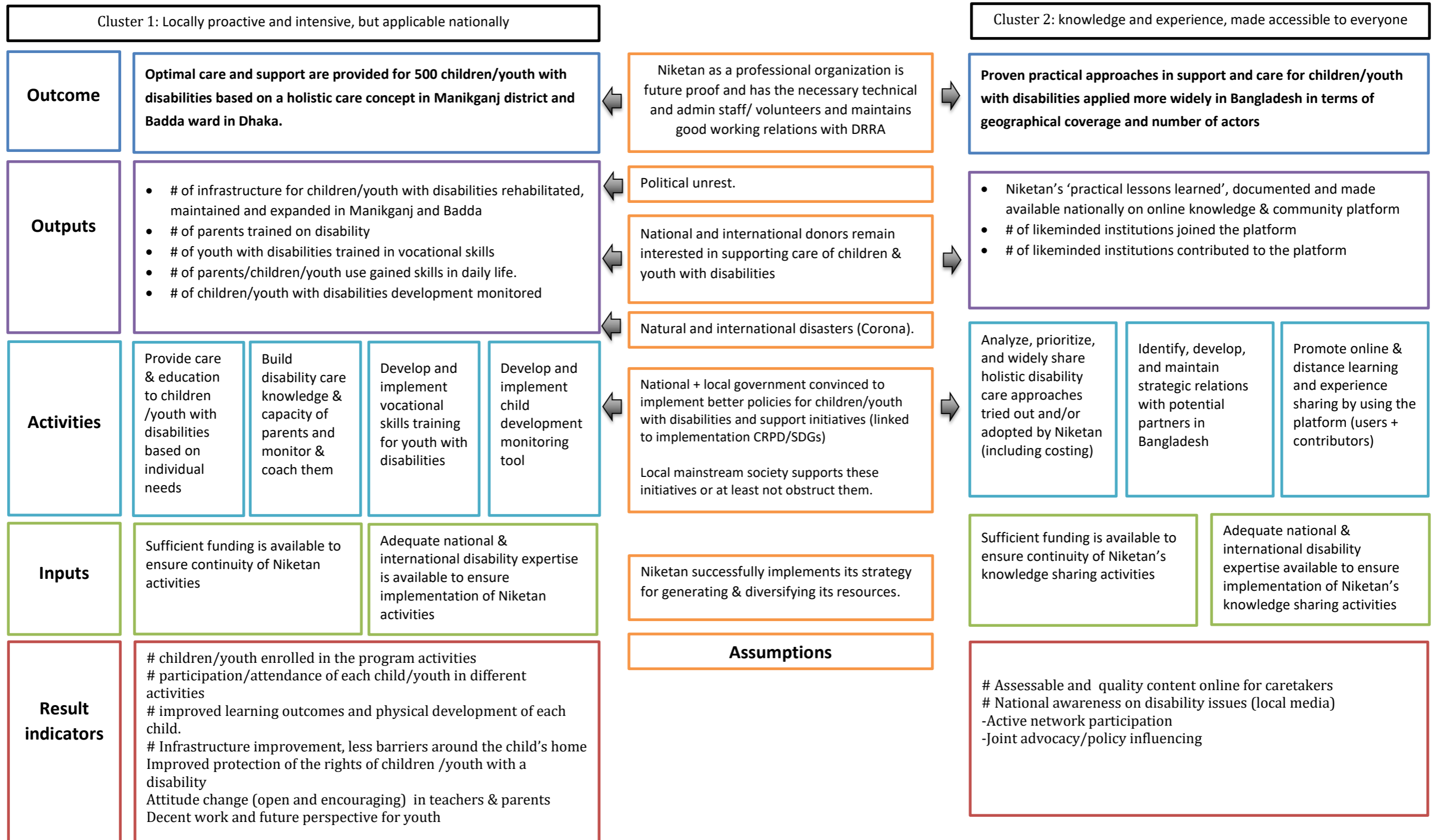
- Adjusting parental contributions based on income, so that families contribute according to their means.
- Generating our own income through the project itself.
- Investing in parent groups and volunteer networks that can take over tasks.
- Investing in networks with other organizations and national and international partners (nearby and elsewhere in Bangladesh) to strengthen knowledge, resources and support.
- Demanding greater involvement from local governments to ensure structural support.

By investing in both a contingency plan and structural financial sustainability, we want to make the organization more independent in the long term and safeguard the quality of our services for the target group.



	Budget					
	2026		2027		2028	
Income						
Income from individuals	42.000		25.000		25.000	
Income from companies	10.000		10.000		10.000	
Income from other non-profit organizations	178.000		140.000		140.000	
Total income		230.000		175.000		175.000
Expenses						
<i>Track 1 Local projects targeting specific children</i>						
Durable Care and Education	175.000		155.000		140.000	
Monitoring	3.000		3.000		3.000	
<i>Total Track 1</i>		<i>178.000</i>		<i>158.000</i>		<i>143.000</i>
<i>Track 2 Focused on knowledge dissemination in Bangladesh</i>						
Stories for Inclusion	35.000		10.000		2.000	
Expansion of knowledge platform and instructional videos	27.000		14.000		10.000	
Child tracking system	10.000		5.000		5.000	
<i>Total Track 2</i>		<i>72.000</i>		<i>29.000</i>		<i>17.000</i>
<i>Total spent on objectives</i>		<i>250.000</i>		<i>187.000</i>		<i>160.000</i>
<i>Track 3 – Capacity building</i>						
Strengthening network Bangladesh	3.000		8.000		8.000	
<i>Total Track 3</i>		<i>3.000</i>		<i>8.000</i>		<i>8.000</i>
<i>Fundraising costs</i>						
Fundraising costs	5.000		5.000		5.000	
<i>Total Fundraising costs</i>		<i>5.000</i>		<i>5.000</i>		<i>5.000</i>
<i>Management and administration</i>						
Management and administration costs	13.000		13.000		13.000	
<i>Total Management and administration</i>		<i>13.000</i>		<i>13.000</i>		<i>13.000</i>
Total expenses		271.000		213.000		186.000
Balance of financial income and expenses		1.000		1.000		1.000
Balance of income and expenses		-40.000		-37.000		-10.000

By 2030 children and young people with disabilities in Niketan intervention areas in Bangladesh grow up and meaningfully participate in a safe environment





"Niketan teaches us that we have the right to be here and helps us to stand up for ourselves"

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ANBI
Algemeen Nut
Beogende Instelling

