



Annual report 2025





General data

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Chamber of Commerce	
ANBI status	since 1 January 2008
CBF quality mark	since 1 August 2017
Date of incorporation	6 August 1998
Registered office	Pijnacker

Colophon

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Content

22025 at a Glance	5
Foreword	6
Our Vision and Approach	8
SDG Goals	8
Insights into Well-being and Safety	10
Bangladesh	12
Project Area	12
Collaboration with DRRA	12
Care and Education	14
Informal Care	24
Volunteers	26
Nutrition	28
Assistive Devices and Medication	28
Lifelong Learning	30
Residential Care	34
Context and Society	36
Knowledge Transfer	40
Governance and Supervision	44
Fundraising & Building Support	46
Good Governance, Risks and Compliance	46
Financial Overview 2025	50
Policy Plan 2026–2030	51
Niketan Received Support From ...	52



Love, care, appropriate education, information provision, apprenticeship pathways and the promotion of behavioral change are essential elements of our approach, to give children and young people with disabilities a full place in society.

Our approach gives children a better self-image, creates a connection between child and environment and brings about a more involved government.

In 2025 we put a smile on the faces of 532 children with disabilities and their families, and supported them in taking a step toward a better future.

We would like to thank our corporate and private donors, and volunteers for their support in 2025.








Legal form: In the Netherlands: foundation with a board. Partner organization in Bangladesh: NGO with an executive committee.

Origin: Private initiative (Antoinette Termoshuizen)

Registration: Chamber of Commerce : 27173896
ANBI status (public benefit organization) : 807284427
CBF Recognized Charitable Organization

Distinguishing characteristics: Specific target group: children and young people with complex disabilities in Bangladesh. Knowledge organization in the field of providing holistic care for people with complex disabilities in Bangladesh.

- Programs:**
-  **Early intervention** : Offer parents support and advice when they think there could be problems in their young child's development.
 -  **Education** : Provide a challenging learning environment that is based on opportunities and takes the disability into account.
 -  **Paramedical care**: Provide care aimed at improving the functioning of the body, providing aids and adaptations.
 -  **Socialization**: Actively promote and encourage the participation of children and young people with disabilities in society.
 -  **Nutrition**: Raise parents' awareness of healthy eating and the prevention of underweight and nutrition-related complications.

Project-based: The projects are operationally managed by the NGO DRRA and are directed, supported and knowledge is provided from the Netherlands by the Niketan foundation.

Fundraising:	Total	Cost B&A
	2020 : € 248.681	2020 : 2,5 %
	2021 : € 221.797	2021 : 4,3 %
	2022 : € 202.814	2022 : 6 %
	2023 : € 179.787	2023 : 6,6 %
	2024 : € 171.421	2024 : 6,8 %
	2025 : € 157.966	2025 : 7,6 %

Operational costs: Project costs € 154.975 in 2025, capacity building and implementation costs € 15.985 in 2025

Financial audit: BAKKER accountants & adviseurs, Hendrik Ido Ambaccht

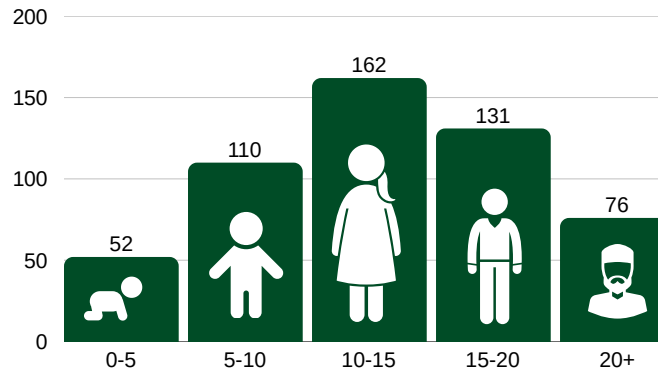
Term: As long as foreign support is needed in Bangladesh to permanently embed care for people with complex disabilities in government and society.

Membership of sector organizations: Partin, a sector organization for small charities in the field of international cooperation and development, and Goede Doelen Nederland, a sector organization for registered charities based in the Netherlands

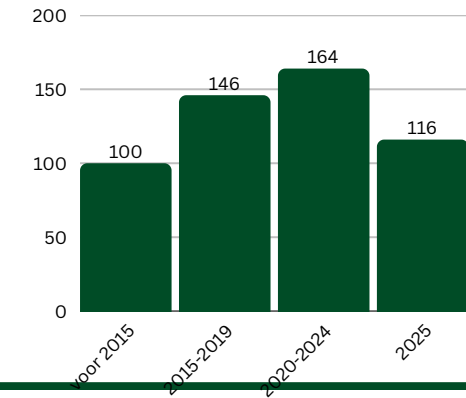
Social relevance: Helping people with intellectual and multiple disabilities in Bangladesh is often seen as too complex by international NGOs. Private organizations and national NGOs are often better able to provide this target group with access to aid and hold the government and international aid organizations accountable for this. Because, as in all countries, it is ultimately a task of the government, together with various other parties, to ensure a safe environment for vulnerable children.



Age children



Support since:



195

villages / communities

2025 AT A GLANCE

532

Children and young people received support.

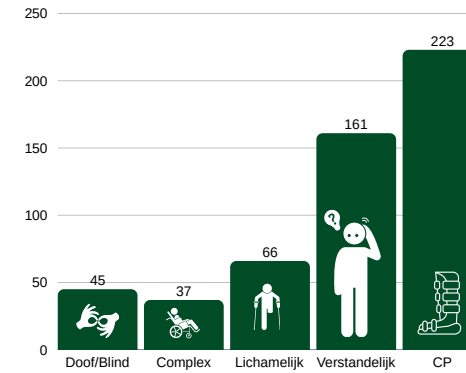


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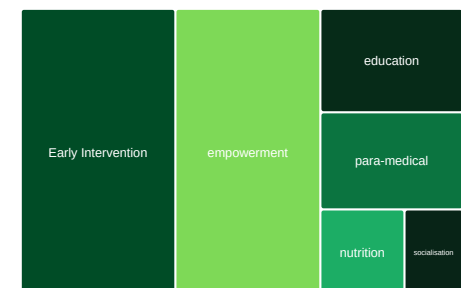


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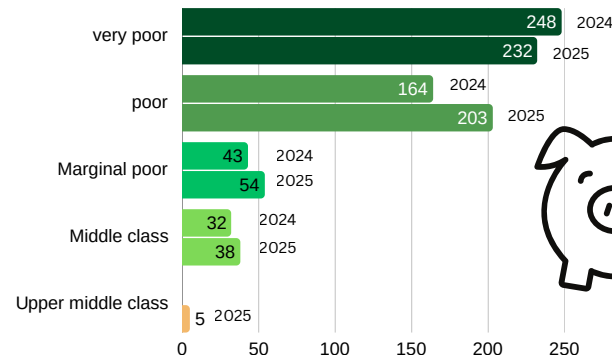
Disabilities



Cost per program part per child



Children growing up in poverty



116

children welcomed in the program



10

children left the program

Foreword

Afroza is a young woman from Bangladesh with cerebral palsy. She was able to avoid an arranged marriage by becoming the family's breadwinner. Tawa is a three-year-old girl with a severe physical disability who is learning to move forward step by step. Md. Yunus opens his veranda to children with disabilities in his village, along with their parents and volunteers, creating a place for learning and playing.

These are not isolated stories, but powerful examples of entire communities coming together to build an inclusive and harmonious future. In a world often dominated by news of violence and division, these stories offer hope for the future of humanity.

We must also acknowledge the challenges of our increasingly turbulent world. Governments are cutting back on development aid, while wars and political unrest are driving up the costs of basic necessities in developing countries. Bangladesh recently elected a new government, and we will have to wait and see how it will lead the country.

The children in our projects in Bangladesh often experience the consequences of these global and local challenges, either directly or indirectly. Yet, thanks to the unwavering support of our donors, funders, volunteers and partner foundations, we are able to continue our important work.

While we recognize that our efforts alone are not enough, that is no reason to give up. Niketan recently published a report on the pressing issue of gender-based violence against girls with disabilities – an area where we aim to expand our support and collaboration with like-minded organizations. We remain committed to expanding our knowledge platform, so that information about disabilities is freely accessible to everyone who needs it.

The children in our project areas are at the heart of everything we do. We recently developed a new strategic plan focused on creating self-sufficient communities where no one is left behind.

I feel truly blessed and honored to be part of Niketan and its large family of thousands of children, carers, parents, donors and volunteers. I hope you will find inspiration in the stories of Afroza, Tawa, Md. Yunus and many other remarkable people you will discover on the following pages.



Mahamuda Rahman, Voorzitter

Talashi and her daughter Batashi (3) both have intellectual disabilities. They live in the remote and hard-to-reach village of Shoto Shampur, where Niketan started a new veranda school this year. The family lives with Talashi's parents, who are now elderly. Talashi can barely take care of herself; she regularly runs away and is sometimes gone from home for days before returning. Batashi is not her first child: her firstborn, also a child with a disability, has passed away. Batashi's father has left the family and only visits sporadically to leave some money.

Batashi is a very anxious girl. She is afraid of strangers, cries a lot and her speech is barely developed. Yet we are seeing slow but steady progress. At the veranda school, she is becoming more open toward other children, sometimes joins in group games and occasionally finds the courage to say something.

Niketan supports vulnerable families like Talashi's and Batashi's. Especially in remote villages, we often see that children with disabilities grow up with parents who also have disabilities. In these communities, parents face immense pressure to marry off their son or daughter, even though they know this is not a solution. It is believed that marriage can remove the stigma of a disability or even "cure" it, and is therefore seen as a parental duty. Because of this persistent



Our vision and approach

We strive for a society in Bangladesh where children and young people with complex disabilities can fully participate and develop to their full potential. This means they receive the care and education they need and build self-confidence and independence.

Our approach

Niketan places the child and the family at the center of all its activities. We provide education, nutritious meals and paramedical care, always tailored to the individual needs and developmental pace of each child. In doing so, we support parents, teachers and carers to better understand children and support them in a targeted manner.

In addition to direct support, Niketan invests in raising awareness and improving care for children and young people with disabilities, as well as in structural changes in the region. Our approach focuses on sustainable solutions and strengthening local leadership. In collaboration with children, families, schools, civil society organizations and local authorities, we increase our collective impact. At the same time, we actively work toward reducing dependence on external support, ensuring that care and support remain locally embedded in the long term.

With 28 years of accumulated knowledge and experience, Niketan has a strong substantive foundation. We aim to share this expertise in a sustainable and transparent manner, so that it also contributes to inclusive developments beyond our organization.

In this context, we have developed for instance the website [Stories for Inclusion](#) and the open-source knowledge platform [Shokkhom](#). The training courses and instructional videos on this platform are not only of great value to external partners, but also form an essential part of our working methods. By empowering parents and organizations and connecting them with one another, we ensure that Niketan's experience remains widely accessible and makes a lasting contribution to an inclusive society.

Niketan influences the following sustainable development goals:

- 1** Families of children with disabilities have access to basic services and economic resources.
- 3** Children with disabilities have access to healthcare and rehabilitation. There is love and attention.
- 4** Children with disabilities can learn together with other children in school in their own community.
- 5** Boys and girls with disabilities have equal rights and opportunities.
- 8** Young people with disabilities have access to vocational education.
- 10** Children and young people with disabilities have equal opportunities and are involved in all aspects of society.
- 17** We collaborate with partners and organizations to make our results for children with disabilities sustainable.



“In 2025, I spent three months in Bangladesh, my father’s homeland, to get to know my family and the culture better and to advocate for girls and young women who are often less visible.

After a month of language classes in Dhaka, I spent two months volunteering at Afroza’s Place in Baniajuri. My assignment was to conduct research on the well-being, experiences of violence and needs of girls and young women with disabilities – a topic about which there had already been cause for concern, but on which little independent research had been done.

The conversations with the girls were moving and at times emotionally challenging, and they highlighted their resilience. I have great admiration for both the girls and young women and the staff at Niketan/DRRA, who dedicate themselves to this work six days a week.

Due to political unrest, I was unable to extend my stay, but I look back on this period with gratitude and pride”. - Naomi Faasse

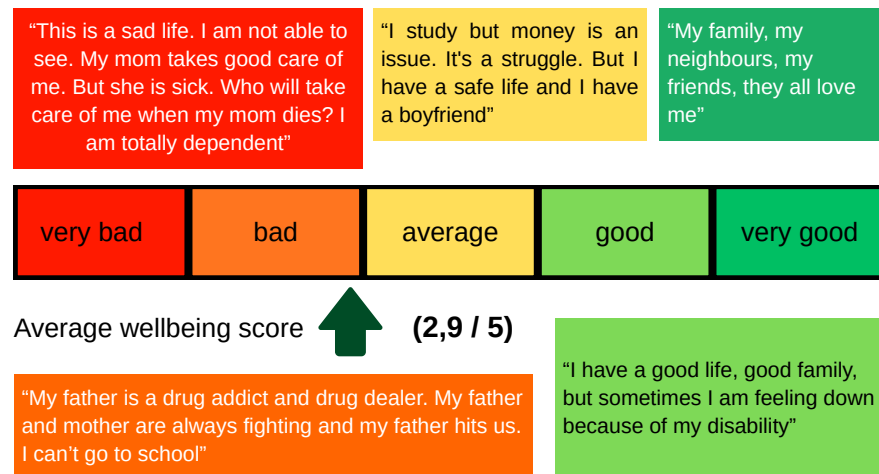
‘Their stories make clear how important it is that they are seen and heard.’



Insights into well-being and safety

In 2025, we conducted a small-scale qualitative study in Manikganj, Bangladesh, to gain insight into the well-being and safety of girls and young women with disabilities. The conversations with 40 participants and their confidential advisors highlighted not only how vulnerable their position is, but also identified opportunities for targeted support.

The average well-being score (2.9 out of 5) shows that quality of life is not a given. Positive experiences are strongly linked to autonomy, social relationships and a safe living environment. At the same time, violence was cited by the majority of participants as a decisive negative factor. These findings confirm that protection and social support are inextricably linked to well-being.



The research has an impact on our program choices in our new policy plan. We are strengthening our commitment to education and employment as keys to independence and self-esteem. In addition, we are paying more attention to safety, including by exploring the provision of safe housing, raising awareness about (verbal) abuse within communities, and tightening our internal procedures for dealing with abuse. We are also exploring partnerships with organizations that can provide legal support.

This research forms an important foundation for the further development of inclusive and protective programs that focus on the voices and experiences of girls and young women with disabilities.

"My father is a drug addict and a drug dealer. My parents fight a lot, and my father hits my mother and me. My mother also hits me because I don't do the housework properly. I can't go to school. Once, my father let one of his customers touch my breasts for money. I told my mother about it afterward, and she said she had seen it. That was it. The neighbors call me names; they say 'pagol, protibundi'. Sometimes I yell back. I don't tell anyone about this. I feel angry". – 15 years old, intellectually disabled





Niketan in Bangladesh

Bangladesh

Bangladesh has made significant economic progress over the past decade, but the consequences of political instability remain palpable. Stagnant investment, inflation and unemployment are increasing the pressure on households, especially in urban and semi-urban areas. At the same time, the education and health sectors are under pressure due to their dependence on foreign aid during the political transition.

The recent elections led to a change in power, with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party securing a clear victory. This outcome marks a major political turning point and reflects the broad societal desire for reforms, more transparent governance and the restoration of economic stability. At the same time, the new government faces the challenge of overcoming political divisions and strengthening trust in public institutions.

In this context, the position of people with disabilities remains vulnerable. Although legislation and policies are aimed at inclusion and protection, their implementation is limited, and many people with disabilities still have insufficient access to healthcare, education, employment and social services. Structural barriers, limited resources and a lack of understanding and negative attitudes in society are obstacles to full social participation. Prejudice, stigmatization and a lack of awareness often make it especially difficult for people with disabilities to fully participate in daily life.

However, current political developments also offer opportunities to further embed social inclusion in national policy and public services. Targeted investments and careful implementation of existing legislation remain essential. In addition, strengthening inclusive care and support systems is necessary to sustainably achieve equal rights, dignity and participation for people with disabilities.

Project area

Bangladesh is divided into 64 districts. Niketan operates mainly in the rural district of Manikganj. Manikganj is divided into 7 upazilas (subdistricts), 65 union parishads and 1643 villages. Most of Niketan's activities take place in the upazilas Ghor and Daulatpur. The 489 children supported in Manikganj live across 175 villages in 34 union parishads. Since 2020, we have also supported 7 children in 6 villages in the district of Tangail. These are villages adjacent to the upazila Daulatpur.



A Union Parishad (UP) is the smallest administrative and local government unit in Bangladesh

Collaboration with DRRA

Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association (DRRA) is Niketan's primary executive partner and provides care to children with physical, intellectual or multiple disabilities in cities and villages across Bangladesh. Niketan supports the projects financially and substantively, monitors quality, and shares knowledge to foster staff professional development and ensure a child-centered approach.

DRRA also carries out projects for other donors, which expands its expertise and makes the organization more efficient. DRRA plays a key role in getting the government involved and strengthening disability care in Bangladesh.

Sonia (20) has an intellectual disability and comes from a highly vulnerable family in which her parents, two brothers and three sisters also have intellectual disabilities. The family lives in poverty in a house made of bamboo, cardboard and corrugated iron. Sonia attended special education at Niketan for many years. When she was 19, she was married off; the marriage ended after a month, and shortly thereafter she remarried, this time to a man who also has an intellectual disability. In August, she gave birth to a son.

Due to her difficult home situation, Sonia received income-generating support from Niketan. A cow was purchased, which is of great value to the family. The cow is officially registered in Sonia's name, but because she is caring for her baby, her father and brother have taken on the daily care of the animal. The local Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock provided practical training for this.

'In a family where poverty and disability come together, one cow brings new hope for the future.'



Care and education

Early intervention

Learning begins at birth, but children with disabilities often require additional support. That is why Niketan's early intervention program focuses on children aged 0 to 5. At our early intervention centers in Ghior and Baniajuri, we offer early stimulation, therapy and play-based learning to support holistic development and provide a solid foundation for education and social participation.

In 2025, 53 children received therapy and early stimulation (.. boys, .. girls). Parents, often mothers, are actively supported in accepting their child and stimulating their child's development, which boosts the self-confidence of both child and parent.

The centers are open six days a week and operate with small groups, ensuring individual attention.

Every week, we organize music and dance classes for children and parents. These joyful moments promote motor development, self-confidence and social connection. At the same time, they strengthen the bond between parent and child and demonstrate how important play and creativity are for development. During the classes, parents learn children's songs that can be repeated at home, while children learn dances and gestures and discover new words and movements through play.



“My son Junayed has Down syndrome and a congenital heart defect. He receives therapy and education through the early intervention program, which has been a tremendous help for his development. I'm taking a sewing and needlework course here to become self-sufficient. I'm now earning my own income and can contribute to my son's expenses. The school is also working to arrange medical care for his heart condition. I'm incredibly grateful for their care and ongoing support”. – Rojina Akter, mother

Children with complex care needs

Three days a week, 21 children with complex care needs come to the center. These are children with very complex disabilities who are completely dependent on their parents and often, in addition to their disability, have to deal with additional physical complaints or conditions. For example, some children have a heart defect or feeding problems, while others struggle with severe forms of epilepsy. In Bangladesh, their parents are unfortunately often seen by doctors as easy targets: their hope for improvement is exploited. As a result, children are regularly treated with unnecessary and excessive medication. At the center, parents find a sympathetic ear. Therapists work with them to determine what a child truly needs, offer practical support where possible, and help search for funding for costly surgeries. The activities focus on therapy, experiences and having fun.

In 2025, two teachers and the manager of our project completed their Bachelor's degrees in Special Education, ensuring that we comply with a guideline for special education established by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Amid the green fields of Bag Baniajuri stands a simple house made of corrugated iron. That is where Morium lives. At birth, she suffered from oxygen deprivation, with immediate consequences: a stiff body, startle responses to sounds and a slow start to her development. What other children did naturally, she had to learn with great effort. Her world was small, quiet and full of uncertainty.

Her parents turned to the early intervention center and slowly things began to change. Day after day, week after week, therapists worked with her. They taught her how to lift her head, how to sit, how to hold something. Her mother, Salma, was always by her side, encouraging her and continuing the exercises at home. Morium is now a child full of life; she crawls, she smiles, interacts with other children and learns. Her parents have big dreams: that she will one day be independent, that she can go to school, that she will lead a life full of dignity and joy.

'Thanks to Niketan, our daughter has a future; she has taught us that progress is possible, step by step.'

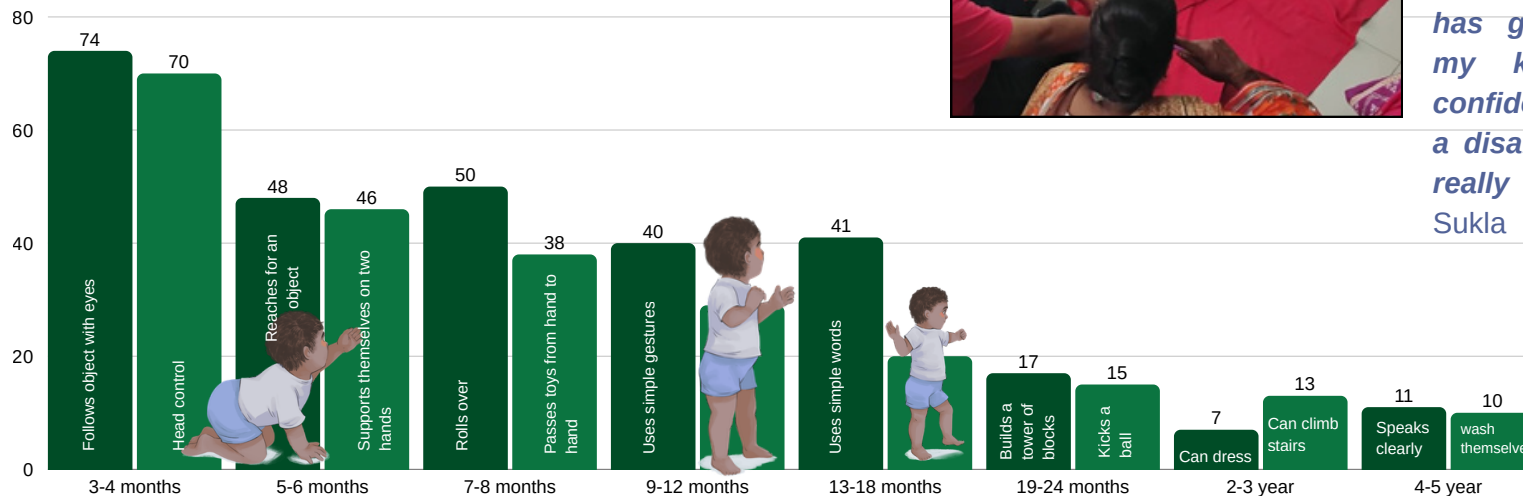


Children's developmental outcomes

To gain a better understanding of how the children are developing, we track their developmental milestones. For children in our early intervention and complex care programs, we track developmental milestones between the ages of 3 months and 5 years. This helps determine whether the children are “on track” in terms of their chronological age and development, or if there is a discrepancy. Teachers and therapists can also use these assessments to set learning goals and give parents a clear understanding of their son or daughter’s development.

This involves 75 children ranging in age from a few months to 15 years.

Compared to last year, we have seen progress in various areas of development in a large group of children. A smaller group of children is developing reasonably in line with their chronological age. We expect these children to transition to our special education program and, in time, potentially to mainstream education. Given the complexity of their disabilities, a large target group will ultimately transition to our care-development group or to care and support in the home setting.



First aid training for children

To better respond to incidents such as a fall or an epileptic seizure, our staff completed a two-day ‘first aid for children’ training course in collaboration with the Swedish organization First Aid Centre. They learned to assess situations, perform CPR, handle choking, drowning, wounds and poisoning, and received special training on epilepsy. The training enhances the safety of our children, strengthens our team’s expertise and, due to the enthusiasm it generated, is repeated regularly and may also be offered to volunteers.



“Throughout my career, I have taken various training courses on working with children with disabilities. However, the training in First Aid and CPR was the first of its kind in my professional development and truly life-changing. I learned how to act quickly and effectively in emergency situations, which has greatly increased both my knowledge and self-confidence. As a woman with a disability, this training has really empowered me”. – Sukla

On November 10, our center in Baniajuri welcomed a distinguished delegation led by Divisional Commissioner Sharaf Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, along with the district commissioner, the magistrate of Manikgonj and an Upazila Nirbahi Officer (a high-ranking local authority official responsible for implementing government policy in a subdistrict).

During their visit, they looked around the classrooms and expressed their great appreciation for the work of DRRA and the tireless dedication of the mothers, whom they described as the true heroes behind the children's development. The visit was concluded festively with cake. Subsequently, the Upazila Nirbahi Officer made a formal request for financial support for the center. This resulted in a one-off donation of €850, which convincingly demonstrates the confidence in and recognition of our work.

**'The mothers are the true
heroes behind the
children's development.'**



Special education

Special education in Baniajuri and Ghior consists of various classes, depending on the children's level and disability. For example, there is a structure class for children with autism and several preparatory classes for children with mild intellectual and/or physical disabilities, who may eventually transition to mainstream education. The lessons are organized around themes. In each class, activities related to the theme are offered that are tailored to the children's experiences and developmental level. In 2025, 70 children received special education.

In addition to education, we focus on developing essential life skills, such as social interaction, independence and responsibility.

“I'm happy and at ease when I play and learn with my friends. This year I moved up to a higher grade. At first I missed my old friends, but I'm very happy with my new friends, Yeasin, Tamanna and Ariyan”. – Rifadul Islam.

We reinforce these skills through activities such as monthly group cooking and cleaning days. During the cleaning days, children and parents learn about the importance of hygiene and the specific health risks for children with complex disabilities. At the same time, the children practice working together, communicating, dividing tasks and following instructions. This helps them gain insight into their own strengths and areas for improvement.

We also regularly organize relaxing and festive activities. For example, we wrap up the winter with a cake festival, where parents and children share homemade cakes. The children discover different flavors, smells, textures and colors, creating a rich sensory experience and generating a lot of enthusiasm among both children and parents.

The annual Eid celebrations are also an important moment of connection. Together, we prepare traditional dishes, and the children put on cultural performances. During the shared meal, they share personal experiences, which fosters openness, joy and a sense of togetherness. For children who cannot celebrate Eid at home, these are especially precious memories.

Community schools



In Narchi and Doulatpur, two community schools provide inclusive education to 25 children with disabilities. With the full support of the local community, these children, who often felt misunderstood in mainstream education, are given a safe place where they feel at home and can develop.

The dedicated teachers create a stimulating learning environment where children feel seen and valued. This has resulted in measurable learning gains. In addition, the positive and interactive atmosphere significantly contributes to the children's self-confidence and sense of belonging.

The impact of the schools extends beyond education alone. Within the villages, respect and care for children with disabilities are growing, which contributes to a more inclusive community.

Ushmi (7) is a girl with Down syndrome who is surrounded by the unconditional love of her parents. When they noticed that Ushmi was developing more slowly than other children, they set out determinedly to find the right care and support. They found it at the Amorjoti Special School, where they were immediately touched by the warm, child-friendly and safe atmosphere.

A special friendship soon blossomed with her classmate Aiman. When together, they are almost inseparable. With beaming faces, shared giggles and pure childlike joy, they move through the school and the playground. Their favorite moment of the day is playing together on the big trampoline. At first, Ushmi mostly watched Aiman and imitated his social skills, but through play her self-confidence grew. Now she greets others confidently, politely asks permission before entering the classroom and plays enthusiastically with Aiman and her other classmates.

Ushmi is also making great strides in school. She can count from 1 to 10 and has discovered a love for dance that completely captivates her. Her parents watch her development with emotion and deep pride. They are grateful for the care and dedication of the school and look to the future with hope and confidence.

'Through play, her self-confidence gradually grew.'



What makes our children happy

In 2025, we asked the children to draw what makes them happy. Many children drew their mother or other family members. For most children, the attention they receive from them is their most important source of happiness. Playing with friends was also frequently mentioned.

We asked the older children what they want to be when they grow up. This revealed that the boys mainly want to become police officers or teachers, while the girls dream of a future as dancers or mothers.



Children's development

To gain a better understanding of the development of children in special education, we track the milestones of children aged 5 to 8. This allows us to determine whether their development aligns with their chronological age or if there is a discrepancy. We have chosen a developmental age of up to 8 years, because children who have mastered the skills of an 8-year-old can often transition to mainstream education. In addition, teachers and therapists use these assessments to set learning goals and give parents a clear understanding of their child's progress.

A number of skills of **96** children with a chronological age ranging from 5 to 21 years.



skills	5-6 year		6-7 year		8 year	
Creates a simple drawing	51		Draws a person with 8 body parts	31	Draws a person with 16 body parts	3
Can write a 3-letter word	43		Can write their name	45	Can read a simple sentence	23
Understands numbers	54		Can count backward by 3 numbers	24	Can count in pairs	23
Can focus on a task	68		Understands others' feelings	62	Enjoys being around friends	86
Can jump with both feet	69		Can tell time	28	Knows the days of the week	28

We see that many children have made progress, particularly in developmental goals appropriate for a developmental age of 5-6 years.

Sanfia Akter (8) lives with her parents and older brother in Doulatpur in the Manikganj district. Sanfia has Down syndrome. At her birth, the family noticed something was different. She didn't cry and her body felt very limp. Because there was little knowledge about developmental issues, at the time her parents didn't seek medical help. Her development was slow: she didn't sit up or crawl until she was about two, started walking when she was four and didn't speak for a long time.

Things changed when Sanfia fell ill and her parents took her to the hospital in Doulatpur. There, she was referred to the DRRRA therapy center. After an evaluation, it was determined that she did not need physical therapy, but would benefit more from special education. In 2024, she was therefore admitted to the Doulatpur community school.

Since then, Sanfia has made clear progress. She can now write and say a few words, is making friends and is developing her social skills. She enjoys going to school and continues to make progress step by step. A lot has changed for her family as well. Her mother joined BanglaMa and began earning an income through basket weaving. With training and financial support, they were even able to buy a cow, which gave their family more stability.

'Step by step, Sanfia is finding her place in the world — and building her future.'



Supporting families

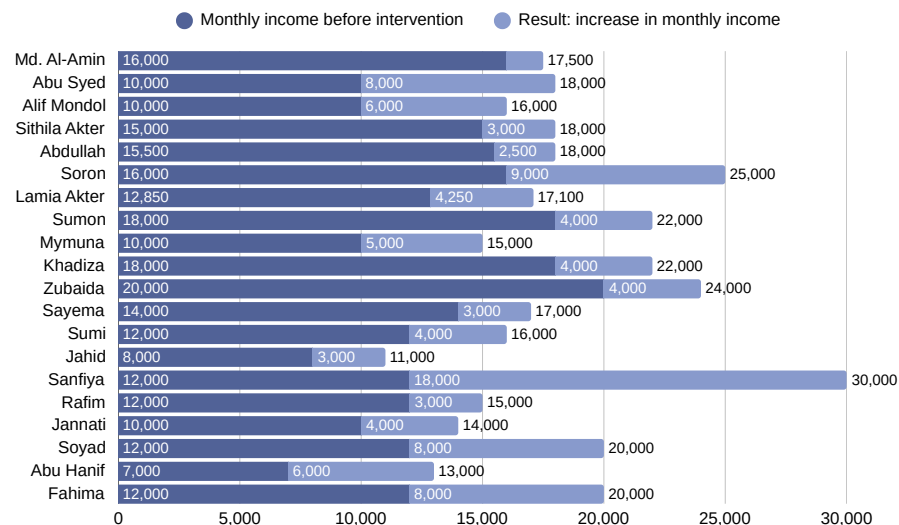
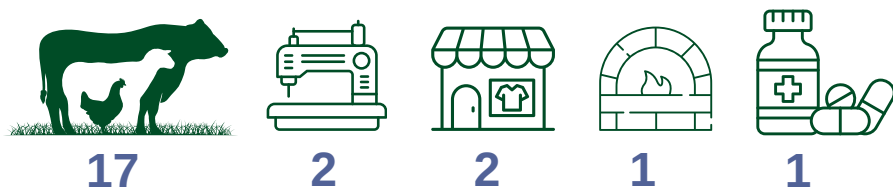
In 2024, we offered an intensive training program to twenty BanglaMa sets of parents living in poverty or extreme poverty. During the training, these parents, who were often unable to provide two meals a day, learned to express their dreams and goals and take control of their own lives. Each set of parents received financial support of 12,000 tk (€85) in 2024 and 2025.

To further strengthen the parents' economic independence, we organized training sessions in collaboration with the Ministry of Livestock, where they learned essential skills such as animal health, nutrition, breeding techniques and marketing. The training expanded the parents' knowledge and entrepreneurial skills and strengthened cooperation with local authorities.

Result: The families were able to increase their income and now experience less financial stress, enabling them to better care for their families. The training and support also brought about a profound change in the mothers' attitudes and self-image. Their stories and feedback show that the interventions have led to: increased knowledge and decision-making skills, greater self-confidence and motivation, improved well-being, mutual inspiration and support, and a culture of sharing and learning.

This positive development demonstrates that targeted support and empowerment can make a lasting difference in the lives of vulnerable families.

The parents invested in:



BanglaMa



The partnership between 2Mothers and the Bangladeshi company Beni Bonoon has given BanglaMa wings. This group of 50 dedicated mothers produces beautiful jute products that are sold worldwide. What began as an initiative to generate extra income has grown into a powerful network of women who are developing their talents, building self-confidence and strengthening their community.

Thanks to a steady influx of orders from Beni Bonoon, their sense of ownership, pride and financial independence has grown. With support from 2Mothers and Beni Bonoon, BanglaMa continues to develop into an inspiring example of how women are working together to build a strong local economy and a hopeful future in rural areas.

“My name is Safia and I’m deaf. I’m Sithila’s mother. She has cerebral palsy. Thanks to the training and financial support I received, I have shown – to my family and the community – that I’m capable of earning an income and contributing to the family budget. My daughter and I now experience less domestic violence and more acceptance. Within the parent groups, we share our stories and other mothers have encouraged me to take better care of my child. I try to do that every day now. They also encouraged me to take the ‘clothes making’ training, and with the money I received in 2025, I was able to buy a sewing machine. All this support has given me more self-confidence and provided me with a more stable income”.- Safia Begum

‘With the right support, a mother can change not only her own future, but also the future of her child.’



Informal care

Seventeen veranda schools make a difference every day in the lives of children with disabilities. A dedicated team provides inclusive therapy and education close to home for children and young people who need it most. In 2025, 197 children made use of these services – ranging from physical therapy to support in learning Activities of Daily Living (ADL) and stimulating preschool activities.

The veranda schools are more than just a care facility – they are places where people can meet, grow and connect. Children with and without disabilities participate together in group activities, fostering understanding, friendship and inclusion from an early age.

Parents and carers also play a key role. Together, we develop individual rehabilitation plans and provide practical guidance on how to carry out therapies at home. Our physical therapists are available to demonstrate exercises at home and provide personal support where necessary.



The veranda schools play a vital role in our inclusive community. They bridge the gap between professional care and the home environment, ensuring that every child with a disability has the opportunity to develop to their full potential – right in the heart of their familiar surroundings.

“I’m the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Bagutia Union Parishad, a remote municipality that is regularly affected by river erosion. For years, Bagutia Union has been deprived of both government and private services. I first heard about the veranda schools during a meeting at the Upazila level. I had my team go door-to-door to identify children with disabilities (107) and submitted the findings to DRRA. Now there is a veranda school and children with disabilities are receiving essential care and support. I’ve gained a better understanding of disabilities and inclusion. With support from the Union Parishad fund, we were able to provide various government services for people with disabilities this year”. - Md. Amjad Hossen

Practical home-based support

In addition to the 17 veranda schools, we also provide practical home-based support to 111 children. This includes children who attend mainstream education and require only physical therapy, children with complex disabilities who can no longer attend a school or veranda school and children who are temporarily unable to attend school due to family circumstances.

The support takes place in the familiar home environment and is tailored to the specific needs of the child and the family. This personalized, family-centered approach increases parental involvement, offers flexibility in scheduling, allows for continuous monitoring of progress and supports the development of practical life skills in daily life. In areas where children live close to one another, we organize five small-scale veranda schools each week, where they practice social and communication skills together, such as interacting, sharing and collaborating.

“My name is Md. Yunus Alli (64) and I’m a farmer by trade. Every Tuesday, the DRR team organizes activities on the veranda of my house. When they were looking for a place to set up the veranda school, I gladly offered my veranda – and today I’m proud of that decision. Children with disabilities now come here to learn and play. It brings me great joy to see them laughing and playing. It fills me with pride that there is a school for these children at my home. I feel honored to be part of something that brings happiness and inclusion to these children. I have also joined the committee for combating abuse of people with disabilities. I have great admiration for the work of the CBR team – they are friendly, dedicated and always willing to help. I firmly believe that this initiative must continue, and I hope they keep raising community awareness about the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities”.

‘Seeing the children laugh and play fills my heart with joy.’



Collaboration with Daulatpur hospital

Our activities at the Daulatpur hospital have significantly improved the health and rehabilitation of people with disabilities, especially children, over the past year. Through collaboration with local health services, 31 children and 26 adults received regular therapy and medical care, while 425 individuals were identified and assisted in obtaining an official disability card. In addition, 21 children received financial support for essential medication and 9 children were supported during hospital stays. With designated queues and free consultation tickets, access to hospital care for people with disabilities has been further improved, thereby strengthening the continuity of care and inclusive health practices in the region.

Volunteers

For over ten years, Niketan has been working with nearly 120 volunteers through its informal care program. They play a key role in raising awareness and acceptance of people with disabilities within the community. Through their efforts, persistent misconceptions are broken down and understanding of inclusion grows.

Volunteers – primarily high school and college students – spend one to two hours a week with a child with a disability. They play with the child, take some of the pressure off the family and support the parents. These regular visits contribute to better care for the child and reduce social isolation. Volunteers also identify potential instances of bullying, verbal abuse or exclusion, serving as vital eyes and ears within the community. Eleven volunteers support the community workers in running 17 veranda schools.

Additionally, 13 other volunteers are working toward a more inclusive society by reading from the book *My Name Is Runa* to 242 children in 22 villages and providing sex education (6) to young people with disabilities. Volunteers assist families in obtaining a VGD card (which gives vulnerable women and families access to food aid) and identity cards. They also help improve access to healthcare, including by accompanying people to hospitals and providing support for vaccination programs. Referring new children with disabilities to veranda schools is also an important part of their work.

“I couldn’t stand by and watch anymore. As a volunteer with DRRR and with Rafim Hossen, a boy with a disability, I saw how children laughed at him, called him “fool” and left him all alone. It broke my heart. I knew: this had to change. So I gathered the neighborhood kids and started working with them every Friday and Saturday. Through stories, conversations and games, I teach them what inclusion, respect and kindness really mean. And slowly, I’m seeing a difference: the bullying has stopped, Rafim is greeted, kids play with him and together they’re even reading Runa’s book. That’s the change I stand for”. - Tania

In February, the board of the Ineke Feitz Foundation visited Niketan’s informal care program. Our concrete assistance, holistic approach and community-based interventions for children with disabilities were greatly appreciated. A program of hope for children with complex disabilities and their parents. We thank the Ineke Feitz Foundation for their support for this.

Rihanna (13) has an intellectual disability and lives in Taloknagor. After her mother remarried and her father and grandmother passed away, she has been staying with her older sister. The family lives in poverty; her sister is unemployed and her husband doesn't want Rihanna to stay. As a result, her living situation is uncertain.

Rihanna often wanders around the village and easily goes along with others, which increases her vulnerability. Her sister is especially worried now that Rihanna is approaching puberty.

Every Friday, the family receives sex education lessons from volunteer Sweety. Both Rihanna and her sister have learned a lot from these lessons. The family hopes for a safe place where Rihanna can get the support and protection she needs.

**'My greatest hope is to find
a safe and loving home for
my little sister.'**



Nutrition

When children – and especially children with disabilities – do not get enough nutrients, it can seriously affect their physical and cognitive development. In addition, eating and drinking can be a major challenge for both child and parent, sometimes leading to frustration or refusal to eat.

We support parents by teaching them to recognize and understand signs early on, and provide practical tools to help them manage these situations. At the same time, we provide the children with a nutritious lunch, ensuring they receive the essential nutrients needed for their growth and development.



135 children received a nutritious lunch

Our experience shows that these lunches lead to increased energy, improved physical well-being and greater engagement in learning activities. In this way, we help prevent malnutrition and related health issues and promote equal opportunities for development.

To help children experience food as something positive and enjoyable, we organize festive activities such as fruit and cake festivals. Parents and children bring fruit or homemade savory and sweet cakes, which we taste together at school. During these moments, children not only learn the names and differences between various fruits and cakes, but they also enjoy a rich sensory experience: they see the colors, taste new flavors, smell different scents and feel various textures. These activities always make for a day full of enthusiasm, fun and pride – for both children and parents.

Rehabilitation aids and medication

Aids can be essential to the development of children with disabilities. When you can stand, you stimulate bone formation, growth, metabolism and circulation. It strengthens muscles, promotes breathing and improves digestion. Standing upright gives a different view of the world and allows a child to play at eye level with other children. Corner chairs are perfect for children who may need head, trunk and pelvic support to achieve a good sitting posture.

In 2025, the following aids were distributed to children.



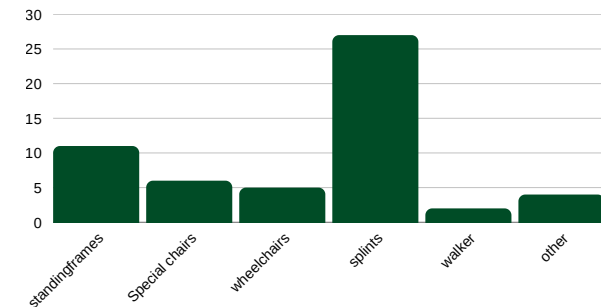
48

children received medication for epilepsy.



23

children received medication for reflux problems.



"The medication has changed her life. We no longer live in constant fear of sudden seizures. The medication has given my daughter the chance to lead a more normal life". - Md. Unus Ali, Ifty's father.

Towa's parents had tried everything: they visited various doctors, sought help from traditional healers and even traveled to a rehabilitation center in the city. Every taka they spent was a sacrifice. But nothing seemed to really work. The uncertainty weighed heavily on them. While other children were crawling, sitting and playing, Towa (3) was left behind. She couldn't sit up on her own, couldn't crawl, couldn't even hold toys properly – her little hands kept dropping everything. She barely made any sounds, as if the world around her were too far away. Until they heard about the early intervention center in Baniajuri. There, care would be affordable, and the staff were dedicated to the children. For the first time, they felt hope. Towa received therapy and rehabilitation aids: splints to keep her feet in a neutral position, a standing frame to strengthen her muscles. Slowly, she began to make progress. She learned to stand with support, started making sounds – even little words. And when someone spoke to her, she beamed, with a smile that said it all. Her teacher believes in her future: with ongoing therapy, the right aids and loving support, Towa will become even more independent. Maybe one day she'll learn to speak better, go to school and who knows, maybe even continue her studies. Her journey has only just begun.

**'Towa laughs, plays and learns.
That is all we ever wished for.'**



Lifelong learning

The Lifelong Learning program is designed for young people aged 13 and older with a range of cognitive abilities: from those with no intellectual disabilities (sometimes with a physical disability) to those with a minor or mild intellectual disability. Many of these young people have had negative or challenging experiences, which may have caused them to experience a lack of security, appreciation and emotional attachment. This can lead to a negative self-image, a lack of self-confidence and doubts about their self-worth.

“My brother and mother hit me every week. Yesterday my brother hit me again. They get angry at me. My mother says things like ‘if you die, I’ll be free’. Sometimes boys from the neighborhood chase me and grab me, then they touch my breasts. I told my mom and she said I had to stay inside from then on. I haven’t been allowed to go to school since I was 12. I always feel lonely and cry every day”. – 16-year-old girl, cerebral palsy

To help young people discover that they have more potential than they realize, and to help them feel valued, we have developed various training courses:



It’s My Body: a course on sex education and body awareness.



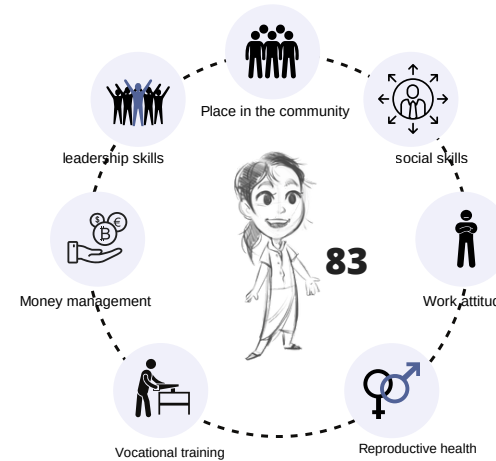
My Way to Work: a course focused on developing social skills and a positive work ethic.



On My Own: a course where young people learn to manage money and take on financial responsibility.



Leadership: a concluding course in which young people learn about their rights and are given tools to actively shape their own life path.



With this program, we aim to support young people in their personal development, strengthen their self-confidence and prepare them for a more independent and fulfilling life.

“My daughter can now count money and tells me if something is expensive. I have high hopes for her future”. – Antora's mother

Our training courses on sexual education, leadership, awareness and income-generating activities for young people with disabilities are essential to increase their safety within their communities. However, recent research on the well-being, experiences with violence and needs of girls and young women shows that we have not yet been able to effectively reach all young people. This is not due to the quality of the courses, but because many young people find it difficult to apply their knowledge about (sexual) harassment and violence in real-life situations. That is completely understandable and human.

We are becoming increasingly aware that sexual violence cannot be combated with education and policy alone. The underlying problem is a system that systematically fails girls with disabilities: families that prioritize honor over safety, communities that normalize abuse, and institutions that are inaccessible or ineffective without family support. We do not yet know how many boys are affected by sexual violence and we intend to conduct research into this. Niketan will consider how best to act on these new insights and remains committed to improving the situation of young people with disabilities.

Jihad Hossen (17) is a boy with cerebral palsy from Korjona. Since his parents' divorce, he has been living with his grandmother. For a long time, he felt lonely and sad, causing him to withdraw from the world around him. His life changed when he participated in the My Way to Work training. There, he found friends who understand him and developed practical skills. He learned to communicate and participate in social life. More importantly, Jihad gained self-confidence. He can now take care of himself independently and has realized his dream: his own shop!

He hopes to expand it in the future and become a true entrepreneur. Thanks to this training and the program's support, Jihad has gained new hope and a new outlook on the future.

'I hope to become a real entrepreneur one day.'



New modules

In concluding interviews, in which young people were asked what else they would like to learn, there was a frequent request for a module on marriage and starting a family. To gain a better understanding of the specific questions and needs of the young people, follow-up interviews were conducted. Based on these, the first draft version of a training module was developed in 2025, which addresses different forms of marriage and the rights of partners within marriage. Topics such as domestic violence and filing for divorce are also covered. This module is of great importance because, unfortunately, marriages involving young people with disabilities relatively often end early in divorce. By informing them and raising their awareness of their rights and responsibilities, we aim to contribute to sustainable relationships and personal resilience.

At the request of parents, Niketan has also developed a training module on sexuality, disability and marriage. In this training, parents gain insight into sexuality and normal sexual development. In addition, the module discusses the impact that a moderate intellectual or physical disability can have on sexual development.



In this training, parents learn which roles and responsibilities are important for a successful marriage and what consequences a forced marriage can have. The complete training module, including all assignments and games, has been translated into Bengali. Once a train-the-trainer program has been completed, the module will be ready for use.

Empowering young people

Young people with disabilities are among the most marginalized and poorest groups in the world. Their basic rights are often not met and full social acceptance remains out of reach for many. In-house research shows that employment is the key to self-reliance, independence, respect and a sense of purpose.

In 2025, we supported 10 young people, primarily young women, in finding employment. These young people were already known to DRRA/Niketan; they participated in our projects as children and later completed one or more training courses from our Right to Decide program. We selected young women who were eager to work and of whom we knew that employment would strengthen their position within their families. After the initial selection, we discussed with the young people and their parents on multiple occasions which income-generating activities would be the most realistic and feasible. In September, they received startup capital of 60,000 tk (€450) to start their activities.

“My name is Santo (17). I was born with a physical disability and grew up in extreme poverty. Because my father is sick, I’m responsible for my family’s income. In 2024, I received a cow. She is now pregnant and is currently staying with us at home because we haven’t been able to build a barn yet. Yet this one cow has changed everything. She gave us hope, dignity and the confidence that there is indeed a future for us”.

The support program and participation meetings in the youth groups not only enable young people to earn an income, but also contribute to their social dignity, self-reliance and future prospects. The program demonstrates that, with the right support and resources, young people can participate and grow both economically and socially.

Afroza (19) has cerebral palsy and completed all the Right to Decide training courses at Niketan. Her dream was to start her own cosmetics shop, but when her father had to close his grocery shop due to leukemia, she decided – with financial support from Niketan – to keep the shop running.

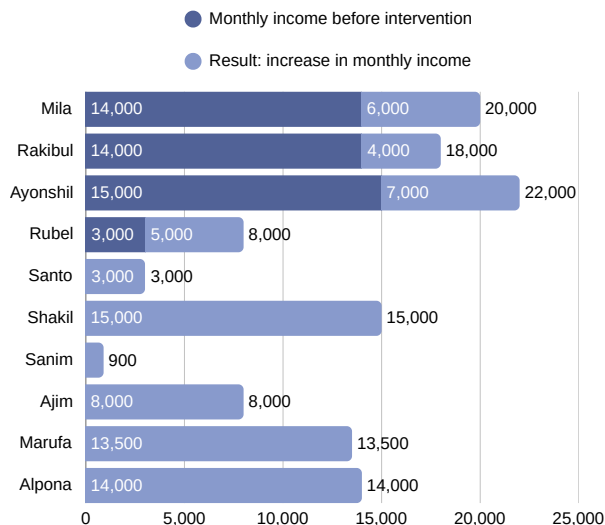
The shop is doing well: employees from nearby NGOs stop by daily for tea and groceries. Thanks to this support, Afroza expects to make a monthly profit of about 10,000 tk (€70), which will cover her father's treatment.

Since Afroza is now the sole breadwinner in the family, any plans for marriage have been postponed, which she is happy about. She is proud that she can support her family and that her independence has visibly grown.

**'I am proud to be able to support
and care for my family.'**



As it is too early to present the impact this has had in 2025, we are presenting the impact one year after providing support to 10 other young people in 2024. Each of these young people received 40,000 tk (approx. €300), which enabled them to increase their family income by an average of 7,640 tk per month.



Woodworking

In the woodworking group, eight young men work together to produce a variety of items. This allows them to work with minimal requirements for skills and knowledge, while learning to take on and share responsibility. The difficulty of the tasks is gradually increased, so that the young people can continue to develop based on their work competencies.

In addition to technical skills, the young people learn to collaborate, interact with colleagues and navigate hierarchical relationships; they actively participate and gain social recognition. Together, they create rehabilitation aids such as standing frames, special chairs and walkers. Depending on their work competencies and acquired skills, some young people may eventually transition to a job outside the organization.

Other vocational training programs



Sewing: 5 young women and 9 mothers learn skills such as measuring, marking, cutting, hemming and sewing. These are skills that many women are still interested in and that allow them to generate some income at home.



Agriculture: At the care farm, we grow organic vegetables and 10 boys learn to care for the livestock, which consists of sheep, ducks, chickens and two cows.

In addition to our own training programs, we organize three-day training sessions on livestock care in collaboration with the local Ministry of Livestock. These sessions are open to both parents and young people.

Residential care

The Afroza's Place residential care farm underwent a thorough renovation this year. Measures were taken to prevent further erosion, new water pipes were installed, outdated plumbing was replaced and the electrical system was improved. Damage caused by flooding was also professionally repaired. In addition, a new kitchen was built, offering better and safer working conditions for the cook, and a canteen was created where young people can eat and relax together.

Two young people have left the program and are living at home again; their behavior has changed enough to make living at home possible again. For another young person, Russel, however, things had not been going well at home for some time, and he has now found his place at Afroza's Place. Afroza's Place is a safe and familiar living environment for young adults with complex care needs. A place where they can live and learn, and where there is room for friendship, togetherness and security.

Imran (21) has been living at Afroza's Place for several years. He has spastic paralysis in all his limbs. In the Netherlands, he would likely be dependent on an electric wheelchair, adapted housing and on-call care. You certainly wouldn't see him walking down the street there. Not because he can't or won't, but because the system would discourage him from doing so.

At Afroza's Place, Imran moves around independently, at his own pace and in his own way. He walks, works daily in the woodworking group and rows across the river on his own to visit his mother.

His body doesn't always cooperate, but he works with his body. Where others see limitations, Imran sees possibilities. Without overprotection, he is given the space to discover what he can do on his own. Living with a disability is not easy in Bangladesh; resources are scarce and life is physically demanding. Yet Imran shows that trust, space and self-determination are sometimes more important than rehabilitation aids for a fulfilling life.

'It is not his disability that defines what he can do, but the space he is given to discover it for himself.'



Context and society

Our collaboration with the communities has gradually grown over the past few years and proven successful, because we have listened carefully to the needs of parents, children and the community itself. We work (or have worked) in a total of 38 communities. These are not the same locations every year: when our support is no longer needed, we conduct a survey in other communities and consult with local authorities to determine where our efforts are most needed.

Our work has led to greater awareness and involvement within the community and among local authorities. For example, we are now involved in budget meetings and are seeing concrete improvements, such as the admission of children with disabilities to elementary schools, better facilities in public transportation and health clinics, and a more inclusive approach by pharmacists. In addition, families with a child with a disability have been included in social safety net programs and receive additional support, such as trees, seeds, chickens and goats.

Collaboration with the Union Parishad (UP)

There are 15 UPs in Ghior and Daulatpur Thana. They are supported by committees consisting of elected representatives from the UPs. A UP is responsible for community participation and addresses issues related to education, health, family planning, social welfare and disaster management, as well as agriculture, fisheries and livestock farming. In 2025, 225 parents received a regular financial allowance and 80 children were issued the so-called Golden Citizen card, which can be used to apply for various benefits and subsidies.



“Since my encounter with DRRRA, I have made it my mission to support people with disabilities and make a difference together. I support them wherever I can. Every year, I organize the distribution of blankets, TCB cards (with this card, they can purchase essential goods such as rice, oil, sugar and other basic food products at greatly reduced prices) and Food-for-Work assistance to people with disabilities. I admire the important work that DRRRA does and am honored to be able to make a difference together with them”. - Md. Shirajul Islam

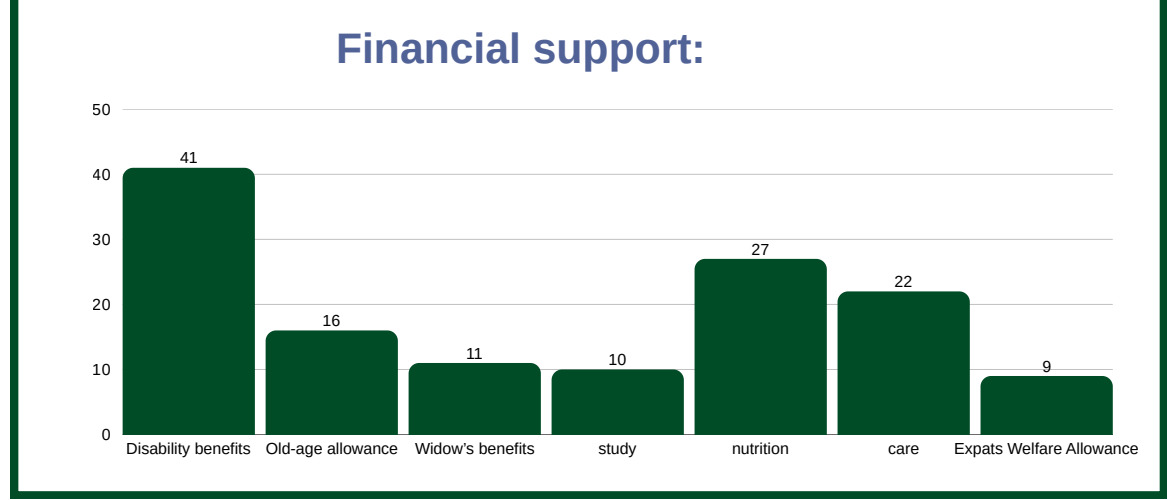
Partnerships with stakeholders

We have made significant progress in building partnerships with local authorities, non-governmental organizations and private-sector institutions. These partnerships have yielded tangible benefits for children with disabilities and their families. For example, families received support from the Social Welfare Department for various benefits and medical services, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported nine children with one parent working abroad. Through the Ministry of Women Affairs, several women received maternity benefits (9) or one-off financial assistance (29) for their families.



Families received a VGF card for structural financial assistance

225



EID donation



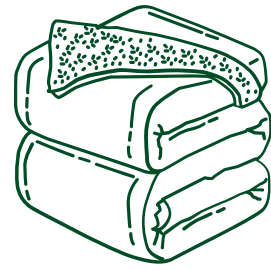
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Education:



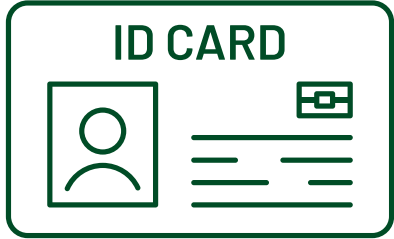
40

children received school fees




506

children received a blanket to protect them from the winter cold



80 children received an ID card

Transport:



1 family received a CNG

bathroom facilities:




5




1

Agriculture:

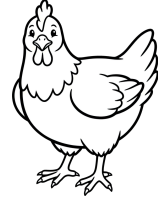
Consultation with a neurologist



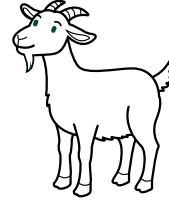
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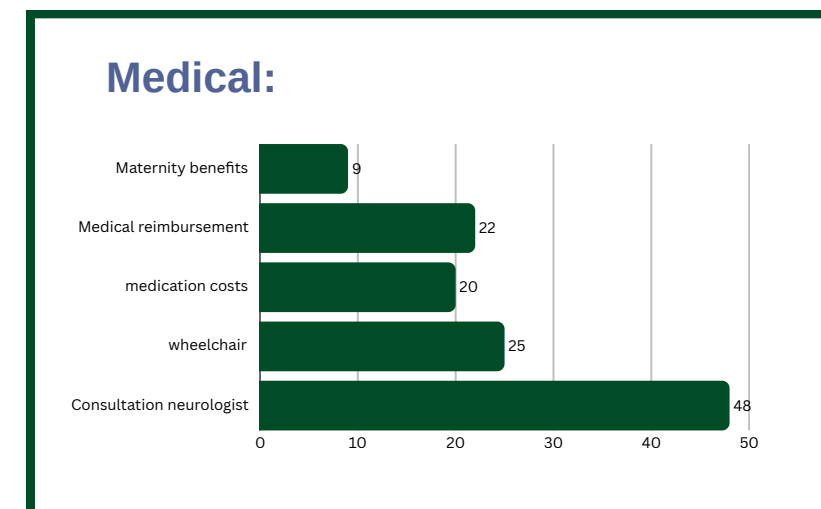
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25



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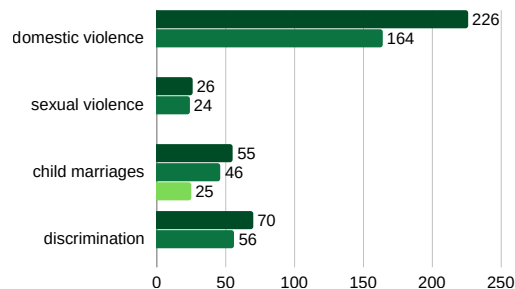


Focus group discussions

In 42 villages, interactive focus group discussions (FGDs) have been organized in recent years with an average of 30 participants. The meetings take place weekly (14), monthly (25) or quarterly (3) and focus on themes such as (gender) equality, inclusion of people with disabilities, child marriage and various forms of violence and humiliation.

FGDs are seen as an important tool to promote inclusion and reduce violence against people with disabilities. A simple monitoring tool has been implemented to track its impact. In villages where weekly FGDs are held, a positive effect is evident: social engagement increases and neighbors are more likely to confront each other about mistreatment or abuse. In villages where meetings are held less frequently, parents and young women feel less comfortable about sharing their experiences of discrimination or violence.

Furthermore, we see that most reports concerned domestic violence (226), of which 164 were followed up. Reports of sexual violence (26) received appropriate follow-up in 24 cases.



In addition, 55 child marriages were reported; action was taken in 46 cases and 25 child marriages were prevented. There were also 70 reports of discrimination against people with disabilities, 56 of which were followed up, for example through mediation in cases of unlawful land seizure.

Finally, the FGDs in Daulatpur are more active and engaged than those in Ghior.

Collaboration with mainstream primary education

Inclusive education requires a flexible educational system that adapts to the child and not the other way around. In the Netherlands, the idea that as many children as possible should be in mainstream education, with extra support where needed, has been the central focus for years. Bangladesh also has laws and policies that recognize the right to education for children with disabilities. But in both countries, there is a gap between policy and practice. The Netherlands struggles with organization and funding, Bangladesh primarily with resources and political stability. In both cases, well-trained teachers who are supported, collaboration between schools, and parental involvement are essential to giving children the right opportunities.

In April 2025, the [Global Disability Summit](#) took place, marking a powerful global step toward the inclusion of people with disabilities. For the first time, governments and development partners agreed that at least 15% of national development programs must explicitly target this group, which accounts for 15% of the world's population. Yet both the Netherlands and Bangladesh were absent from this summit.

The passivity of both the Netherlands and Bangladesh is concerning and undermines the international pledge to "leave no one behind".

In Bangladesh, Niketan supports 40 elementary schools in designing inclusive education. With the 'Disability Inclusive Teaching' module developed by Niketan, we offer school boards and teachers in Bangladesh practical training to expand their knowledge and skills, enabling them to support pupils with various support needs. In doing so, we encourage collaboration between special education and mainstream education. The 'Disability Inclusive Teaching' module is part of our [Stories for Inclusion](#) project. In 2026, we will work with 10 new schools.

Sadia (21) has dreamed of one thing ever since she was little: becoming a teacher. As a child, she play-acted 'school' with the neighborhood kids. That dream kept her going, because school was anything but fun. She was ignored or laughed at by her classmates. But today, Sadia stands in front of the class, not as a pupil, but as a volunteer. She visits twenty elementary schools in Ghior and tells Runa's story, a story about a girl with a disability who learns to be proud and strong. For Sadia, this story isn't just a lesson; it's her own life, captured in words. Through her sessions, 4,320 children have learned about inclusion. They now see what Sadia has known for years: that every child matters, with or without a disability. When children call her "Madam" she feels proud; not because of the title, but because she is one step closer to her dream. "I want to become a teacher," she says resolutely. "Because I know what it feels like to be different. I don't want any child to ever feel as alone as I did back then. As a teacher, I want to make schools more accessible and give every child the chance to learn, dream and grow. Niketan gave me a voice, and now I'm using that voice to help others.

**My dream is a classroom where
every child feels seen, valued
and welcome**



Knowledge transfer

To be able to reach more children and young people with disabilities in Bangladesh, we have been sharing our knowledge and entering into various partnerships since 2018.

Stories for Inclusion

In 2025, Niketan was selected as one of the social causes supported by the company MiWebb. MiWebb built the Stories for Inclusion website for Niketan and its partner Biblionef. This website makes it possible to share experiences from the project and to make the module created in 2024 available to interested parties.

With the help of a Biblionef volunteer, we created an audiobook of the Runa story in Dutch, English and Bengali. We did this because some children find reading difficult. For example, children with dyslexia, motor impairments, visual challenges or attention disorders.

In Ghior and Daulatpur, fifteen volunteers read aloud from the book My Name Is Runa every week. The project reaches children who do not have storybooks at home and helps them understand that children with and without disabilities share the same fears, dreams and emotions and want to have friends. In addition to the reading, the children act out the story, sing and dance, while parents and villagers watch and become aware of the consequences of bullying. In this way, the project promotes empathy, understanding and inclusion within the community.

In November, a Runa book competition was held, with 21 schools and 63 pupils participating. Each school was given three questions to answer, and the pupil with the best answers was awarded a prize. The mayor opened the competition and personally presented the prizes at the end. In December, an [article](#) about the project was published in the Asian Journal of Inclusive Education.

Results

In collaboration with DRRA and BRAC, the following results were achieved:



6.230
Schools



6.520
Teachers



223.173
students

"I'm an assistant teacher at Hijuliya Government Elementary School. Thanks to the training on using the Runa book, I've learned to better understand and support children with disabilities. Our school team is now actively working toward inclusion: pupils help one another, play together and show more empathy. Runa's story has proven to be a powerful tool to promote awareness and inclusion in the classroom". - Jubayer Rahman



In 2026, the Stories for Inclusion project will expand to Uganda and will be rolled out further in Bangladesh by our new partner, the NGO JAAGO.

“My name is Sultana Akter. I am 12 years old and live in the village of Taluknagor. A DRRA volunteer came to our village on a few Fridays and told us about Runa. The story My Name Is Runa touches me deeply.

Together, we turned the story into a play, in which I play the role of Runa. When the other children call me a fool in the play, I really feel the pain that Runa must have felt. That’s what makes it so moving to me.

I also shared the story and the book with my classmates. They were just as moved as I was. My classmates promised that they would never treat children with disabilities unfairly, but would support them instead. I’m proud that I was able to change their perspective on people with disabilities.

In the future, I would like to work with people with disabilities. I’m grateful to the people who have shown us and our community that children with disabilities are no different from us”.

‘By playing Runa, I learned that you should never exclude anyone.’



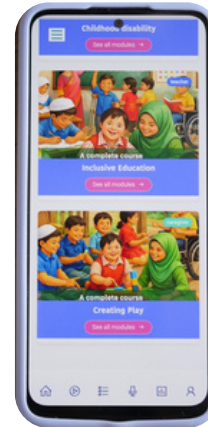
Shokkhom knowledge platform

To achieve sustainable impact and strengthen government ownership, Niketan is expanding its reach through the Shokkhom knowledge platform. This is done without compromising on quality, innovation or the focus on children with disabilities. Local stakeholders, including governments, health centers, schools and entrepreneurs, are actively engaged. They are provided with practical tools to make their sectors more inclusive. This ensures that not only children and parents are reached. Local actors are also encouraged to change their attitudes and take concrete steps toward inclusion.

In the first phase of the Shokkhom platform, a basic structure and app were developed, based on existing instructional videos and modules. In the current phase (phase 2), new materials are being developed based on the community's needs and input from local authority officials.

However, the further development of a knowledge platform proved to be much more complicated than anticipated initially. The collaboration with the developer of the knowledge platform did not go as planned, and there was significant miscommunication, which resulted in agreements not being honored and recurring delays in both the process and the final completion.

Despite these obstacles, Niketan has continued to develop new modules. For example, three scripts have been developed on the importance of play and the role of parents in their child's development, and one on creating simple, homemade play materials. After discussing these scripts extensively with staff in Bangladesh, they were translated into Bengali using clear, accessible language. The videos were recorded in November 2025 and will be published on the Shokkhom knowledge platform in early 2026.



The modules we have developed are used in Bangladesh by our partner organization DRR, as well as by the NGOs BRAC, CDD and Friendship, and the LAMB rehabilitation center. The Liliane Foundation also uses our instructional videos in various countries.

In 2026, we will develop four videos focused on sexual development for boys and work on a module aimed at making Union Parishads more inclusive.





Niketan in the Netherlands

Bestuur en toezicht

The board of Niketan consists of volunteers.



Mahamuda Rahman: President. In office since January 1, 2025 (eligible for re-election). Mahamuda is a senior communication consultant by 'Count me in'.



Antoinette Termoshuizen: General Secretary, contact person for Bangladesh and fundraising. In office since August 6, 1998 (eligible for re-election).



Saskia Caspari : Treasurer. In office since June 1, 2023 (not eligible for re-election). Saskia is part of the Structured Finance team at MUNT Hypotheken.



Joost Kurstjens: Second Treasurer. In office since September 1, 2019 (eligible for re-election). Joost is a retired internal auditor and has many years of experience in the finance department of the European Commission.



Marion Elzenaar: General board member, care coordinator, and child development tracking system. In office since April 1, 1999 (eligible for re-election). Marion is the Practical Learning Coordinator at Middin.



Els Heijnen-Maathuis: Contact person for cluster 2. In office since February 1, 2020 (eligible for re-election). Els is a senior education consultant with years of experience in several developing countries in Africa and Asia.



Rutger-Jan Schoen: General board member for policy development and quality assessment. Board member since February 1, 2014 (eligible for re-election). Rutger-Jan works as a strategic communications and change management consultant.

Niketan does not have a supervisory body as recommended in the Wijffels Good Governance Code, but does have an Advisory Board. Since August 2017, Niketan has been a charity recognized by the Netherlands Fundraising Regulator (CBF) (www.cbf.nl). This means that it meets all the requirements set for this and is audited annually. The recognition passport is available at www.cbf.nl/organisatie/niketan.

The General Secretary of the foundation undertakes all office activities. The Board provides direction for and supervises these activities, and supports their implementation. Board members provide their support without any form of payment. The average time commitment of board members is around ½ to 1 day a week. The General Secretary is involved with Niketan full-time.

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board provides solicited and unsolicited advice to the Board regarding Niketan's activities. The Board and Advisory Board meet once a year. The members of the Advisory Board contribute to Niketan without any form of payment. The Advisory Board consists of:



Felix Piguillet: retired, former President of Niketan and former regional manager for intellectual disability care at Ipse de Bruggen.



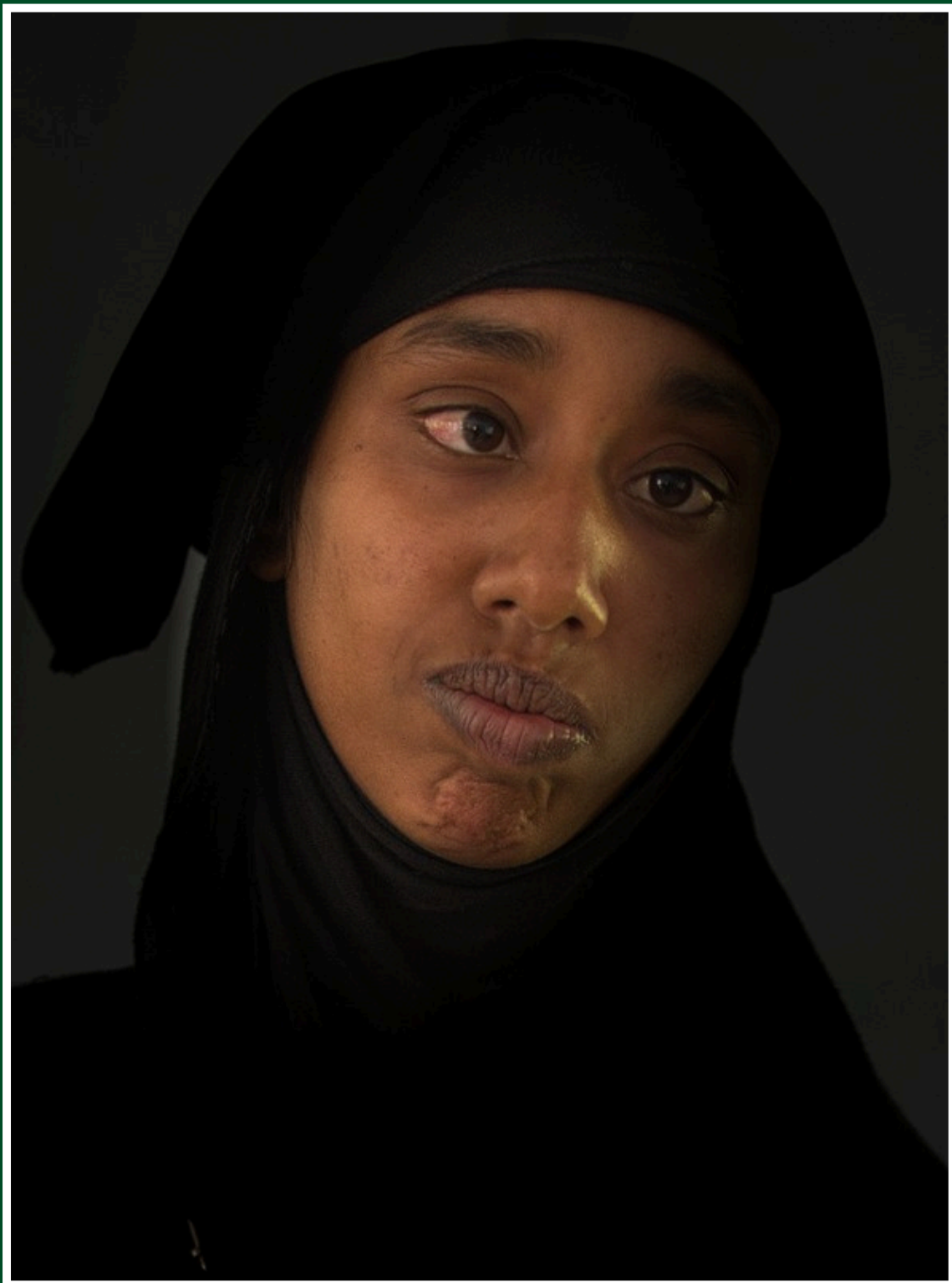
Runa Laila: interdisciplinary researcher and gender & development consultant at VU university in Amsterdam.



Ella de Voogd: retired, former senior policy advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

Sumi Akter (22) has known nothing but a life of constant struggle. Her father died young and her mother works as a day laborer. The world was harsh on Sumi. Village children pointed at her, called her crazy and made fun of her. Yet she had a dream: she wanted to go to school, learn and earn money to help her mother and grandmother. At the age of nine, she went to elementary school for the first time. But the classroom was not a safe place. Classmates pulled on her clothes, called her “crazy” and sometimes hit her. The teachers did not intervene. Sumi didn’t want to give up, but in the end she had to due to lack of money. At home she felt trapped. The days dragged on and she felt lonely and hopeless. Until Asma Akter, a volunteer from the village, knocked on her door. Asma told her about DRRRA, an organization that offers training on rights, health and leadership. Sumi hesitated: what could she, a girl with a disability, learn there? But Asma kept insisting: “Just come take a look.” And so Sumi went. For the first time she felt heard. People listened to her, without judging her. For the first time in her life, she doesn’t feel alone. Her dream of helping her mother and grandmother is also starting to take shape. She has been given goats and can now earn money.

**'I've learned to put myself first,
and for the first time, I truly
dare to dream.'**



Fundraising and increasing support

In 2025, we were featured in the mainstream news in Bangladesh on several occasions due to local donations and visits by dignitaries.

We organized an online Zakat campaign, reaching affluent Bengalis in Bangladesh and beyond.

We advertised in Dutch magazine 'Nalaten met Impact', shared our insights on [Community-Based Rehabilitation](#) with the Better Care Network and shared the My Name Is Runa audiobooks with the network of the Dutch Coalition on Disability and Development (DCDD). An [article](#) about our Stories for Inclusion project was published in the Asian Journal of Inclusive Education, Vol. 13, No. 1, December 2025.



In 2025, Niketan signed the Donor Pledge and was accredited by Dutch donor interest organization Stichting Donateursbelangen. This accreditation confirms our commitment to transparent, honest and donor-focused fundraising, which includes an easy process for canceling donations.

In 2025, three volunteers contributed to our results. This year, we would like to extend a special thank you to Naomi Faasse for interviewing girls with disabilities and writing the report 'Well-being, experiences of violence and needs of girls and young women with disabilities'. We are also very pleased that she will be managing Niketan's social media in 2026.

Good governance, risk and compliance

The projects in Bangladesh are implemented by our local partner organization DRRA. In close consultation with Niketan, the projects are defined, implemented and evaluated.

We are in daily contact with DRRA's managers and employees working on our projects. Their financial and substantive reports have always been good and board members visit the projects several times a year. During these visits, we work closely with DRRA's employees and management, personally monitoring the quality of the work of DRRA's employees by seeing it with our own eyes. The interests of the children in our projects are always the main focus.

In addition, Niketan consults with sponsors in the Netherlands and Bangladesh for funding. DRRA reports on progress and expenses incurred semi-annually. NGOs in Bangladesh are monitored by the NGO Affairs Bureau, an organization established by the government in 1990 to allow NGOs to operate more flexibly and help ensure the accountability of their activities. See also: [De projecten in Bangladesh worden uitgevoerd door onze lokale partnerorganisatie DRRA. In nauw overleg met Niketan worden de projecten gedefinieerd, uitgevoerd en geëvalueerd.](#)

DRRA's internal auditor also audits these local administrations. In addition, the NGO Affairs Bureau conducts specific audits and reviews. Niketan also checks the statements of project expenditures itself every six months. It compares these with the budgets submitted in advance and randomly checks whether the expenses were justified and actually incurred. In case of discrepancies, those involved must report on them in writing. DRRA, which also carries out projects for organizations other than Niketan, has the financial records for the various projects audited annually by a recognized independent external auditor. Niketan has access to these audit reports.

Nasreen, a young woman with severe spastic paralysis, lives with her elderly grandmother. Her parents left her there as a young girl. A few years ago, she was raped; thanks to her SRHR trainer, she was able to report it, and the village council ordered the perpetrator to pay compensation.

In the winter of 2024, another brutal rape took place. The village council convicted the perpetrator again, but also ruled that Nasreen had to marry him. Nasreen refused but was unable to defend herself verbally, and shortly thereafter she discovered she was pregnant. Given her health, the poverty in which they live and local norms, this created a complex and dangerous dilemma. Attempts to arrange an abortion were thwarted by bureaucracy and an inadequate legal system, forcing her to continue the pregnancy, which was fraught with complications.

On August 6, Noor, a healthy son, was born via cesarean section. Despite the pain and challenges, Nasreen does her best for her child every day. She has divorced her rapist and, with tremendous resilience, is trying to rebuild her life and that of Noor.

**'Despite everything, Nasreen
keeps fighting for her son's
future.'**



Organizational continuity

Niketan is run almost entirely by volunteers. The foundation's stability is therefore highly dependent on their quality and ongoing commitment. The 2026-2030 policy plan focuses on establishing an independently functioning network of volunteers in Bangladesh, with training and education, arranged through an independent volunteer organization.

Continuity of partner organizations

Niketan has been collaborating with DRRA, its main implementation partner for projects in Bangladesh, since 1998. The board regularly discusses the financial health of the organization and reviews available audits. A positive development is that DRRA is increasingly receiving support from Bangladeshi donors; the day center in Dhaka is completely funded locally.

Political and economic risks

Exchange rate risk : Niketan's revenues are generated in euros, while its payment obligations in Bangladesh are primarily in Bangladeshi taka (BDT). Exchange rate fluctuations therefore affect the ratio between revenue and expenditure. In 2025, the Bangladeshi taka lost ground against the euro: the exchange rate deteriorated from 125 to 144 BDT/EUR. If the exchange rate were to stabilize or reverse, euro costs would rise. The 2026 budget is based on 140 BDT/EUR.

Economic conditions : The Bangladeshi economy is experiencing slowed growth and high inflation. The ongoing depreciation of the taka is beneficial for Niketan in the short term (lower euro costs), but it increases poverty among the families Niketan supports. The Netherlands' reduced commitment to development cooperation also has consequences for vulnerable groups.

Risk of insufficient funds : Every year, there is a risk of insufficient funds being raised. Niketan takes multiple approaches to secure funding:

- Active engagement with endowment funds in the Netherlands, and the use of an external fundraiser to approach funds and draft project proposals.
- Broadening the funding base in accordance with the 2026-2030 policy plan: support from the business community, local fundraising by DRRA in Bangladesh, and income-generating activities by families and young people.

Investment risk : Its financial resources enable Niketan to meet its current obligations for approximately one and a half years. Given this short-term horizon, the board has decided not to invest in stocks, bonds or other financial instruments. The funds are held exclusively as readily accessible bank balances (current and savings accounts). This decision is based on the need to ensure the availability of funds for current project obligations and to avoid the risk of depreciation.

Political instability in Bangladesh : Since the fall of the Hasina government in August 2024, Bangladesh has been in a political transition. Cooperation with the national government is possible to a very limited extent. Niketan therefore focuses primarily on cooperation with local authorities, which has proven to be more effective and stable.




Employees Niketan / DRRA

7 Voluntary board members in the Netherlands

30 Paid project employees in Bangladesh

5 Flexible deployable volunteers in NL and Bangladesh

1 
Paid fundraiser

 **+/- 3.332**
Hours of volunteer work by board members.

2025 Financial overview

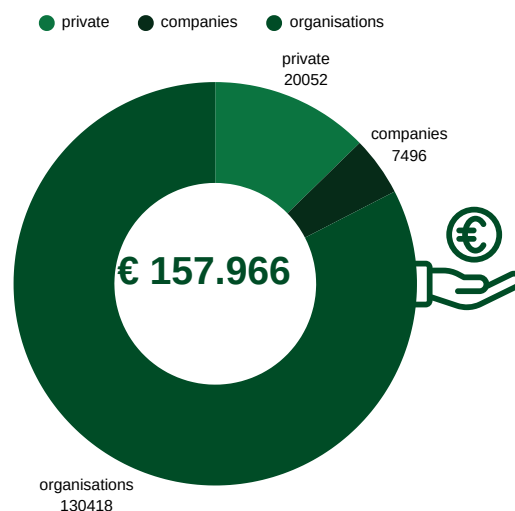
In 2025, fundraising totaled €158,000, which is significantly lower than budgeted (€253,000). This can primarily be attributed to projects being postponed to 2026, which in turn postponed the funding for those projects. The balance of revenue and expenditure is €-11,812, which is more negative than the budgeted deficit of €-2,600, as both revenue and expenditure were lower than anticipated. As of December 31, 2025, Niketan has €396,000 in liquid assets. Equity amounts to €326,000, thereby ensuring continuity for the coming periods.

Notes

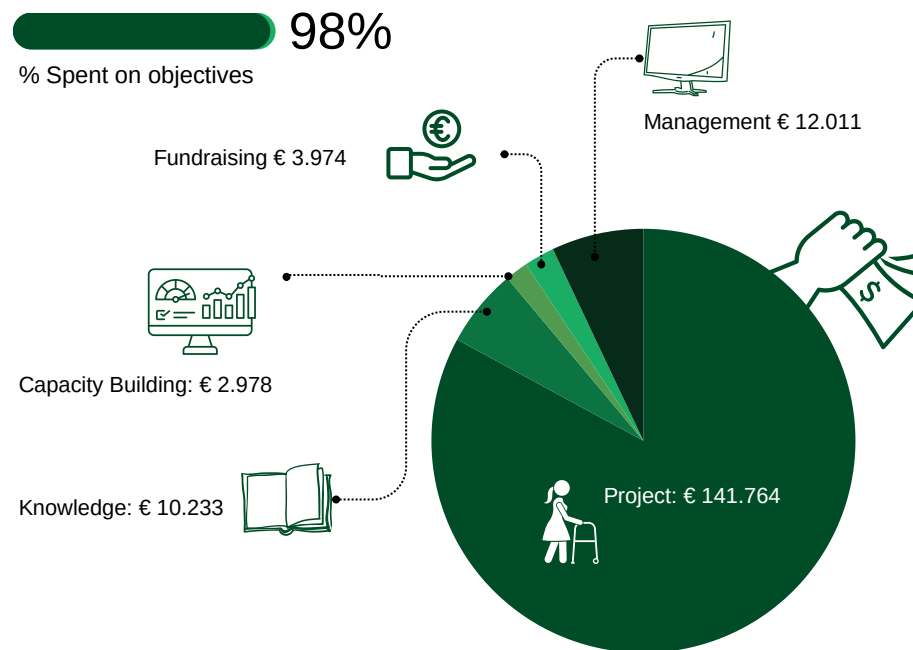
Revenue from fundraising is lower than budgeted, mainly because project activities and the associated funding have been postponed to 2026. At the same time, €60,000 in advance contributions for 2026 has already been received. Total expenditure is also lower than budgeted, which is partly due to the more favorable exchange rate and the postponement of investments (including the purchase of a bus for transporting children) to 2026.

The board has increased the designated reserves from half a year to one and a half years of project costs, in line with the scope of the letters of intent entered into with DRRA for 2026 and 2027. The continuity reserve amounts to 1.5 times the costs of management and administration. For the full balance sheet and notes, please refer to the financial statements.

Benefit



Spend

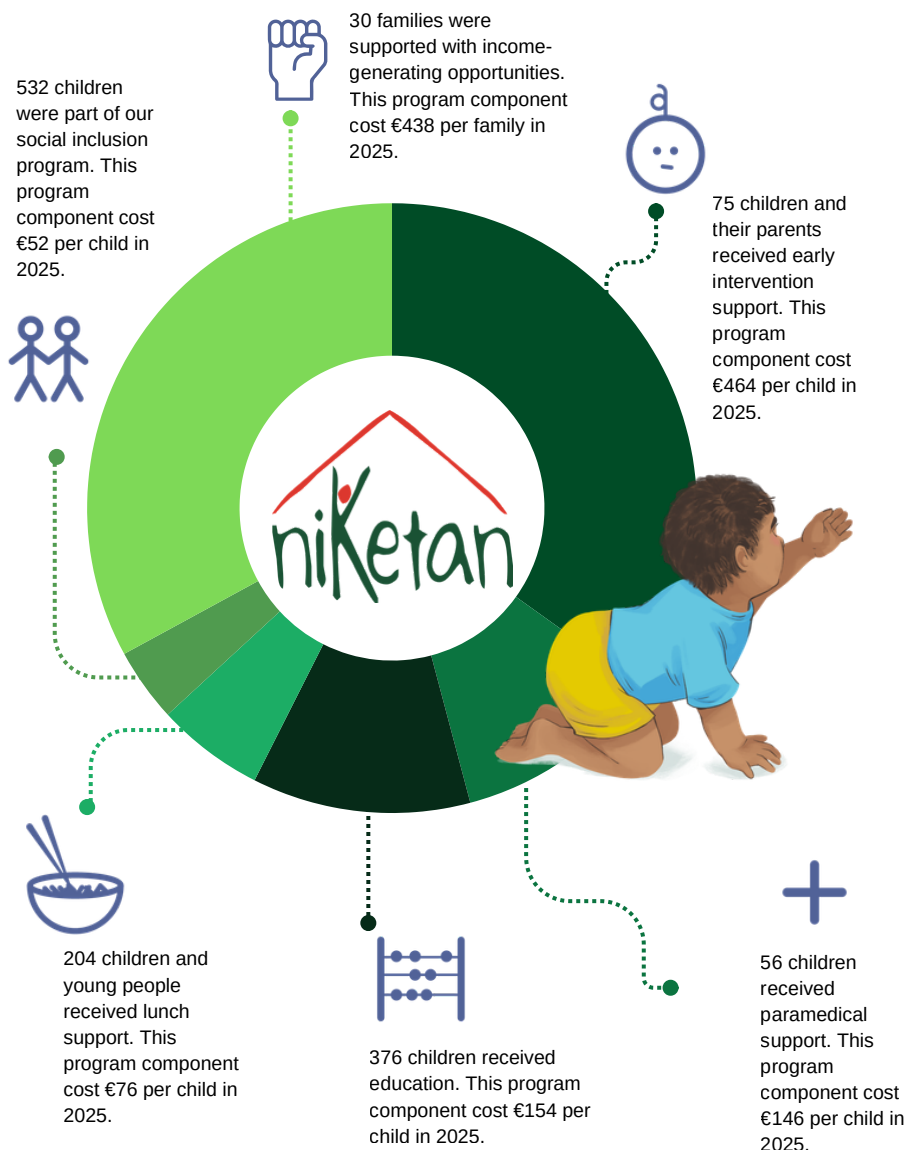


Program expenditure and cost ratio

The board actively strives to maintain a reasonable balance between program expenditure, fundraising costs, and costs for management and administration. The Netherlands Fundraising Regulator (CBF)'s guideline stipulates that, on average over a three-year period, at least 70% of expenditure must be allocated to the program objective.

Niketan more than meets this requirement: in 2025, 98.1% of the funds raised were allocated to the program objective (2024: 85.2%). Fundraising and management costs amounted to 2.5% and 7.6% of the funds raised, respectively. The board monitors these ratios in its periodic financial reports and budget reviews. For the long-term development of these key indicators, please refer to the financial statements.

Cost overview per child / family



2026-2030 Policy plan

With our new five-year policy plan, we are building on 25 years of experience. In the coming years, we will focus on achieving sustainable, structural changes for children and young people with disabilities and their families. Our vision is clear: Everyone counts. That is why we are committed to social sustainability, with a focus on safety, recognition and development opportunities.

We want children and young people with disabilities to be able to participate fully in society – today and in the future.

This has specific financial implications:

- **Financial sustainability:** In the long term, Niketan aims to reduce its dependence on external funding. Strategies include adjusting parental contributions, generating revenue through projects and investing in local networks.
- **Shift toward knowledge sharing (Track 2):** Niketan is increasingly investing in knowledge sharing through the Shokkhom platform and collaborative projects. The multi-year budget provides for a substantial investment in 2026.
- **Capacity building and collaboration:** The policy plan emphasizes collaboration with local actors: local authorities, religious leaders, hospitals and civil society organizations.

The multi-year budget shows that in the coming years, Niketan is committed to investing in sustainability and knowledge sharing, resulting in budgeted deficits covered by accumulated reserves. The budgeted revenues and expenditures are gradually decreasing, reflecting the strategy to reduce dependence on external funding and increase local responsibility.

Niketan received support from:

We would like to thank the following donors:



Anne & Geke Steenstra



Cascade



De Wisselbeker



Elise Spykman



EEND



H. Harstra



De Hoorn



Hidora



Ineke Feitz



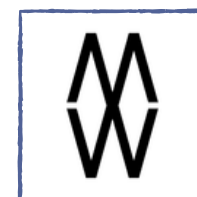
John Heddes



Jars of Clay



2Mothers



MiWebb



Rotary



Serra Foundation



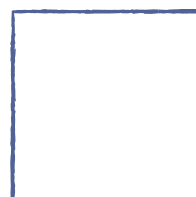
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Silent funds



We also thank the many loyal private donors and volunteers who support us year after year.