Parents of children with disabilities from remote villages in Khatlon Province are concerned about their children's education conditions, but authorities say all are covered

Rozia Boboeva during a class with students. Photo: CABAR.asia

It is very difficult for children with disabilities to get to school due to poor roads in remote, mountainous regions. The lack of specialized classes and teachers is also a big problem. And getting to schools, especially for those who have to use wheelchairs, is even physically difficult.

Olambi Naimova, 10, lives in the Muminabad district in southern Tajikistan. She and her family live in the mountainous village of Tuto. Olambi's legs have been paralyzed since childhood, and the way from the village to school is one kilometer and it is a very rough road full of mud and stones. She cannot get to school alone, she is helped by older students and sometimes by her mother.

"I want good conditions, especially for my daughter Olambi. Our village is in the mountains, the road is steep and it is difficult for healthy children to walk on it. It is with great difficulty that I take my daughter to school in a wheelchair. It snows in winter and rains in spring, it is slippery, muddy, and very difficult to take my child to school," Olambi's mother Mizhgona Pirhonzoda added with concern.

She said that it is not always possible to take Olambi to school on time because of the difficult road from their village to the school.

"Before, the school had no special paths or ramp for wheelchair children, but this problem has been solved, they have already built this thing. The only problem is the bad road to the school itself," she says.
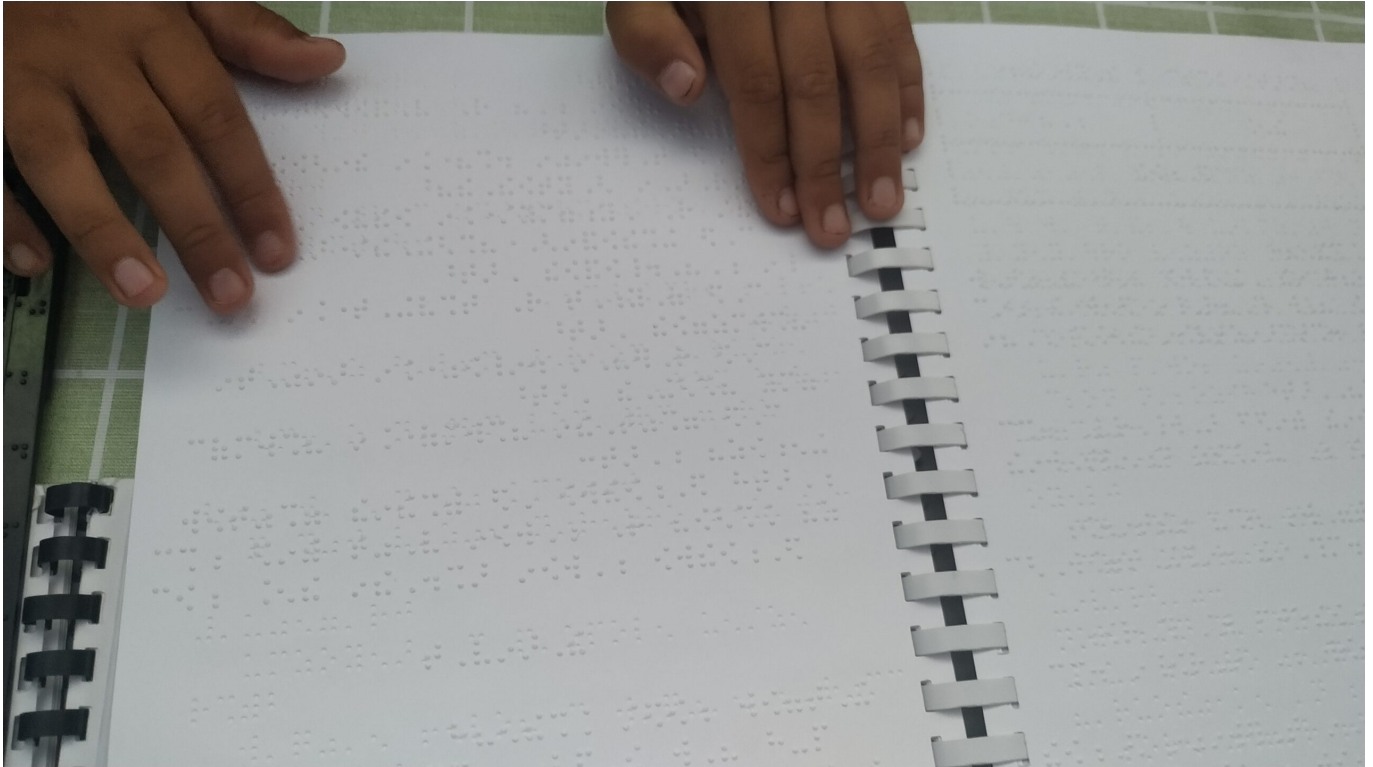
10-year-old Olambi can't go to school every day because of leg problems, she is worried about not attending classes regularly. But she dreams of becoming a surgeon in the future.

Teachers say she has a better chance than other children with disabilities living in rural areas because her parents and other relatives encourage her desire to learn.

Raikhona is the conventional name of a 35-year-old woman from the Vakhsh Valley. After divorcing her husband, she is alone raising her son, who has not seen since birth. He is 9 years old and has good learning abilities, but finds it difficult to attend school with other children.

According to Rayhona, her son has good hearing, if he hears something on TV, he learns quickly, but unfortunately he does not go to the village school because there are no conditions for education of the blind.

"My son has to learn in a special alphabet with Braille. I want my son to study, but there is no special class for the blind in our village," says Rayhona.

Special Braille textbook. Photo: CABAR.asia

Such children need special textbooks, she said, and there are no teachers to teach them either.

"In order for him to study, we have to take the child to the city of Bokhtar. It's very far away and we don't have such an opportunity," Raihona added.

In the entire Vakhsh Valley, there is only one class in Bokhtar City School No. 5, which provides special classes for children with disabilities. But the number of students in that class is only 10.

Many parents want to send their children to this school, but because of the long distance it is impossible, representatives of Bokhtar City School No. 5 told CABAR.asia.

"So that parents do not hide their children from society"

Khatlon Oblast has 2,293 school-age children with disabilities, according to official information.

Sarfaroz Yakubov, deputy head of the Khatlon Oblast Education Department, told CABAR.asia that 317 of those children are home-schooled, while the rest study in schools.

"These are children from 7 to 17 years old. For those who are home-schooled, teachers from educational institutions travel to their homes to teach them. Home schooling is monitored to ensure that it is done well. The rest of the children with disabilities study in schools, and for them, modern or new type schools have installed pathways and ramps," Yakubov added.

However, Rozia Boboeva, an invadid resident of Bokhtar, went through home education herself as a child and says it did not have good results. She believes that home education has many difficulties for children with disabilities.

"I have that experience myself, I went through it. I am blind and have faced many difficulties while studying. I know very well that in our society and in educational institutions of the region children with disabilities are accepted very reluctantly. I want such children not to be left out of education and parents not to hide them from society," Boboeva added.

Rozia Boboeva, photo: CABAR.asia

Rozia Boboeva spent three years ensuring that children with disabilities could attend school together with their healthy peers. This helps them better adapt to society.
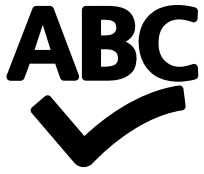
Sabohat Hakimzoda, head of the Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities, said they are aware of the difficulties in educating children in different regions of Tajikistan. Problems for this group of students are still seen in remote, hard-to-reach regions of Tajikistan.

"Only in Dushanbe, new schools in new schools have ramps and adaptations for children with disabilities, but in other regions there are almost no such facilities. In particular, there should be ramps, special passageways, separate room toilets, but, unfortunately, all this is missing," Hakimzoda said.

Tajikistan has more than 159,000 people with disabilities, 32,000 of whom are children, according to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

Parents of these children say that despite their disabilities, they try to ensure that their children can get an education. According to them, they are used to this difficult situation and rely only on their own strength and the help of relatives.

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