



Australia Awards



Disability  
Inclusion &  
Australia Awards  
Bangladesh



**Australia Awards empowers future leaders, including those with disability, to drive change and contribute to development.**

## **Australia Awards**

Australia Awards Scholarships provide opportunities for people from developing countries to undertake study within priority development sectors at participating Australian universities and education institutions.

Australia Awards Scholarships and Short Courses aim to empower a network of talented individuals and future leaders, including those with disability, to drive change and contribute to development.

Australia Awards offers Scholarships on the basis of merit, transparency and equitable access for all, and supports recipients with disability to achieve their educational aspirations.

## **What is a disability?**

The term ‘disability’ is broadly defined as an impairment that may be physical, intellectual, sensory, neurological or psycho-social, or any combination of these. Not all disabilities are visible. People with disability may experience barriers that hinder them from fully and effectively participating in society on an equal basis with others.

People with disability in Bangladesh are encouraged to apply for Australia Awards Scholarships and Short Courses.

### **Applying for an Australia Awards Scholarship**

If you are a person with disability and are applying for an Australia Awards Scholarship, we encourage you to notify the Australia Awards office about your disability as early as possible. Early and full notification of a disability will not negatively affect the assessment of your eligibility and will enable Australia Awards to provide appropriate support throughout the application and placement process. Australia Awards promotes equity of access, participation and contribution for all.

The Australia Awards office in Bangladesh assists applicants with practical advice about Australia Awards application processes and also connects them with alumni who have travelled to Australia on an Australia Awards Scholarship.

## Support for people with disability

If you receive an Australia Awards Scholarship and notify the Australia Awards office that you are a person with disability, you will be provided with tailored support to enable you to live and study in Australia.

The support requirements of each person with disability are different and are assessed individually.

Australian universities have an obligation under Australian law to provide students with disability reasonable adjustments to support their academic endeavours. A ‘reasonable adjustment’ is a change that enables a student with disability to participate on the same basis as other students, such as additional training and/or access to assistive technology. Australia Awards provides reasonable adjustments to ensure that Australia Awards scholars with disability are appropriately mobilised and supported. This support is designed to provide Australia Awards Scholarship scholars with a fair and positive experience in Australia.

By applying for and completing an Australia Awards Scholarship, you can join a community of Australia Awards alumni—including people with disability—in contributing to development in Bangladesh.

**You will be provided with tailored support to enable you to live and study in Australia.**



## Hafiz Hassan

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Hafiz Hassan received an Australia Awards Scholarship to undertake a Master of Environmental Science at Monash University in Melbourne in 2017 - 2018. Hafiz faced more obstacles than most to reach such an achievement; his determination and resilience in the face of adversity are truly inspirational.

Hafiz has excelled in his studies since his youth. 'I had big dreams,' he says. But fate stood in the way of his ambitions.

In the late 1990s, Hafiz was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease called Ankylosing Spondylitis. This condition affected the mobility of all his ribs, along with his backbone. The condition was not serious at first but gradually started getting worse and

was at its worst around mid-2000. He was unable to stand straight and activities that required him to move his joints became painful.

'I went from being a mischievous young adult climbing trees to someone who could not even shower properly because it was so painful. I was feeling hopeless and helpless; I was rejected from many jobs. When I had to move to a wheelchair, I was scared that I would have to spend the rest of my life in one,' says Hafiz. 'This condition turned my life upside down.'

With his disease, finding employment was challenging for Hafiz. But he persevered and received an interview to join the Bangladesh Civil Service. Hafiz felt he needed to convince the civil service to hire him despite his

condition. ‘I asked them to give me a chance,’ he says. He was offered a job in the Agricultural Extension Department and was posted to the Rangamati district, 600 km away from his home.

While some superiors questioned Hafiz’s capabilities, his boss (MD Aktaruzzaman, the Upazila Agriculture Officer at the time) was supportive and recognised his potential. Hafiz was responsible for managing presentations and reports and guiding and training staff in different activities of the Department.

However, he still had bigger dreams. Hafiz aspired to travel abroad to pursue higher studies. ‘I never wanted to migrate,’ he says. ‘I am grateful to my country. But I needed a change.’

This was when Hafiz started applying for various scholarship programs, and when he first heard of Australia Awards Scholarships. Australia Awards Scholarships stood out to him because they are made available to such a wide range of applicants from different technical and professional backgrounds. Hafiz found the application process straightforward—‘Everything was clearly explained’, he says—and lodged his application after meeting the eligibility requirements.

After Hafiz was successful in his application, an official assessed his needs to provide him with tailored support to enable him to live and study in Australia. Hafiz was determined to be independent without assistance. The official explained that she wanted to know about his needs in order to have a better understanding of his requirements and how Australia Awards could support him. The official recommended a special table and a chair for him. At first, Hafiz did not believe it would help him. ‘Until I started using it, I didn’t even imagine how helpful that sort of thing can be,’ says Hafiz.

The support Hafiz received through Australia Awards also included assistance for his wife to come to Australia as his caregiver, a special wheelchair that supports his back, and other provisions to make the adjustment easier. He says that if it wasn’t for the support, it would have been difficult for him to transition and settle in a different country with a different culture.



His experience in Australia was nothing but positive, he says. 'In Australia, the system supports everyone. Even train and bus drivers come out to help people on wheelchairs to get into the train.'

Hafiz's studies in Australia focused on the relationship between agriculture and the environment, climate change, and environmental pollution. Now that he's back home in Bangladesh, he hopes to share his knowledge and experience back home with a focus on contributing towards his country's agricultural development through training and knowledge sharing.

He says that his teachers were supportive and the learning experience in Australia was more engaging and practical than what he had been used to. He had also been able to develop his soft skills through online courses. Hafiz says his condition has improved too.

With the support of Australia Awards, Hafiz began receiving treatment for his condition in April 2017. Thanks to this medication, 'I can move a bit now,' he says. 'When I got the wheelchair, I was afraid I would spend the rest of my life in a wheelchair. Now I have even started to walk gradually and feel much better. Australia Awards changed my life.'

Hafiz is grateful for the connections he made both professionally and personally in Australia, 'I like to expand my network and meet new people. I made friends who helped me in numerous ways in and outside the university,' he says.

He also met other Australia Awards scholars with disability, ‘I met another scholar from Indonesia, she is blind from birth. We share our experiences. It is also a testimony of how Australia Awards supports people with different difficulties,’ he says.

Hafiz says his wife has been the biggest inspiration through everything he has endured. They also now have a daughter who celebrated her first birthday recently. ‘I have now gone from planning the rest of my life in a wheelchair to being able to play with my daughter,’ he beams.

With the hope of helping others to realise their own dreams and achieve great heights, Hafiz is offering advice to people in his network who are interested in applying for an Australia Awards Scholarship.

‘I cannot even imagine what would have happened if I did not take up the Australia Awards opportunity,’ says Hafiz. ‘All I have to say is, Australia Awards will truly change your life. Do not let your disability dishearten you from applying for an Australia Awards Scholarship.’

**You can join a network of scholars in Australia and make a difference with an Australia Awards Scholarship.**





## Nurunnahar Nupur

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Australia Awards scholar Nurunnahar Nupur from Bangladesh is undertaking a Master of Education with a focus on Special Education at Flinders University. She is the Managing Director / Founder of Positive Thinking in Bangladesh, a school for children with special needs. She has reduced walking tolerance, a physical disability she developed after being affected by polio when she was an infant. However, this has not stopped Nupur from reaching great heights.

‘It was my dream to come to Australia, and this has opened up many opportunities for me. I’m not only getting the chance to do my studies. I’m getting involved in a lot of things and I am very active. I’m participating

in more community activities and even social events. When I was in Bangladesh it was difficult for me to explore opportunities to this extent due to my physical limitations. Even public transport is difficult when you have a physical disability’.

She says accessibility in Australia has truly changed her life.

‘I even received a scooter from Australia Awards, which has made day-to-day activities more convenient. There are so many opportunities for everyone here, and people are culturally very accepting’ says Nupur.

Nupur says her family has always been supportive of her education and career however, moving to a foreign country would not have been possible

without the tailored support she received through Australia Awards.

‘My husband is very supportive with everything I do. And it’s great that he is here with me’ she adds.

Nupur is passionate about not just learning and enhancing her skills but also giving back to the community.

‘While I’m trying to learn from the Australian education and inclusion system – I’m trying to give something back as well. In my country I worked with a home-based program. After a few years I realised that only the mothers know how to take care of a child with special needs. Sometimes even the father does not join when the child is taken for therapy. I realised I need to do something about it. So, I started travelling to where these families were, and stayed with them for about a week and trained the entire family. I shared this idea in Australia as well, and they found it to be wonderful’, says Nupur.

As an Occupational Therapist and overseeing a special school, a Masters in Special Education she says will immensely benefit her career.

‘This will be a great strength in planning specific goals and direction of my organisation. It will also help me with the opportunity to create guidelines and effective curriculum for the Government of Bangladesh to run special schools. I will be able to present equal opportunity goals and guidelines to regular schools on how to handle children with special needs in their classrooms – a task I have already started to do.

Nupur adds ‘I have a clear vision, which will lead to greater contribution to the community through what I plan to do. The Australia Awards experience will help me strengthen my capabilities so I can contribute effectively through my passion to make a difference in the lives of children with special needs.’

**You can join a community of alumni contributing to Bangladesh’s development.**

## Australia's aid program

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that people with disability are included in, and equally benefit from, Australia's development assistance.

Beyond Australia Awards, Australia's broader aid program promotes improved quality of life for people with disability in Bangladesh.

The objective of Australia's work in disability-inclusive development is to improve quality of life for people with disability. The Australian Government aims to achieve this by:

- enhancing participation and empowerment of people with disability as contributors, leaders and decision-makers in community, government and the private sector
- reducing poverty among people with disability
- improving equality for people with disability in all areas of public life, including service provision, education and employment.

The Australian Government works with people with disability and representative organisations (Disabled Peoples Organisations) to achieve its objectives, recognising the vital role that people with disability play in promoting disability-inclusive development.

**Australia's aid program promotes improved quality of life for people with disability in Bangladesh.**

Apply for an Australia Awards Scholarship, receive tailored support in Australia, and join a community of alumni contributing to Bangladesh's development.

### For further information

Visit the Australia Awards – Bangladesh website at:

[www.australiaawardsbangladesh.org](http://www.australiaawardsbangladesh.org)

Contact the Australia Awards – Bangladesh office:

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Australia Awards Scholarship entitlements and conditions can be found in the Scholarships Policy Handbook, available at

<https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/australia-awards-scholarships-policy-handbook.aspx>

