



YEAR IN REVIEW 2024



**TOWARDS THE
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS OF DISABILITY
INCLUSIVE GROWTH**





YEAR IN REVIEW 2024



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Message from **Chairman**



Ardashir Kabir
Chairman
Bangladesh Business
& Disability Network (BBDN)

President
Bangladesh Employers'
Federation

Looking back at 2024, I feel immense gratitude and pride for what the Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN) has accomplished. This year has been a remarkable chapter in our journey, marked by significant milestones that have strengthened our mission to advance disability inclusion in workplaces and communities across Bangladesh.

One of our key accomplishments in 2024 was increasing engagement from the private sector. A highlight of this effort was our partnership with BRAC Bank under their Aporajeyo Ami initiative, which showcased how businesses can actively contribute to inclusive employment by creating meaningful opportunities for individuals with disabilities and adopting accessible practices.

We were also proud to organize two impactful job fairs in Dhaka and Chattogram, which brought together over 1,400 job seekers with disabilities and leading employers. These events were not just platforms for recruitment; they were statements of commitment to breaking barriers, challenging stereotypes, and demonstrating the immense value persons with disabilities bring to the workforce. Additionally, we

hosted the EmpowerAbility: Powering Every Ability national conference, which brought together 300+ leaders from government, business, and civil society to advance the disability inclusion agenda. The conference featured insightful discussions, inspiring success stories, and commitments from various organizations, reinforcing the importance of collaborative efforts to build an inclusive society.

BBDN's growth as a Network has been extraordinary as well this year. Our expanding network of members and partners reflects the trust placed in our mission and our ability to amplify our reach and impact. This growth inspires us to continue advocating for inclusion across policies, practices, and partnerships at every level.

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to all valued BBDN Members, collaborators and partners who have supported us to realize our shared objectives, including ILO, GIZ, UNPRPD, BRAC Bank, and Save the Children Bangladesh. Additionally, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to our colleagues at BBDN for their dedication and hard work throughout 2024. Your efforts have been the foundation of our success, turning challenges into achievements that benefit us all.

As we look ahead to 2025, we remain steadfast in our commitment to expand our initiatives, deepen our impact, and ensure that persons with disabilities are not just included but empowered to thrive. Together, we will continue to build a more inclusive and equitable society.

I extend my best wishes for a successful and impactful year ahead and invite everyone to join us in collaborating with BBDN.



Message from CEO



Murteza Rafi Khan
Chief Executive Officer
Bangladesh Business &
Disability Network (BBDN)

2024 was a year of significant change for Bangladesh through the historic events of July and August, with renewed hopes and aspirations of building a better nation as we look ahead. We observed an increase in the number of persons with acquired disabilities as a result of these events, which presents a moment to reflect on how best to develop a more robust system for disability inclusion. It is pivotal at these key junctures for likeminded organizations to band together to make lasting change for all citizens.

To that end, I am pleased that BRAC Bank has come forward to collaborate with BBDN as lead advocacy partner under the Bank's flagship CSR campaign called "Aporajeyo Ami", which is a testament to the growing commitment of forward thinking private sector entities on catalyzing greater action. An advocacy event titled EmpowerAbility was held in December 2024, which was organized in cooperation with longstanding BBDN partners ILO and GIZ. The event brought the business community together with the disability movement and public sector to foster an exchange of ideas, showcase successful models of inclusion and generate further commitment to take collective action. Looking ahead to 2025, a skills development

program will be rolled out in addition to building the internal disability confidence of the Bank.

The stars seemed to further align in 2024 through another key milestone as BBDN signed an MOU with the Small & Medium Enterprises Foundation. The aim of this collaboration is to co-create a more enabling environment for entrepreneurs with disabilities to thrive, by gaining access to business readiness programs in addition to financing that can support entrepreneurship. The first phase of the collaboration will see joint initiatives undertaken as partners of the ILO ProGRESS project, which facilitates skills development to generate waged and self-employment opportunities.

BBDN also continued to take forward its collaboration with GIZ under the Employment Injury Scheme Pilot that is ongoing in the RMG sector, by rolling out training at factory level on Return to Work and Occupational Diseases. The project also aims to address the readiness of the private sector as the country ratifies ILO conventions 187 and 155, which will require enhancements to the existing national occupational health and safety systems. Furthermore, BBDN closed out the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities project, by conducting 2 job fairs in Dhaka and Chattogram, in collaboration with local organizations of persons with disabilities.

I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to all valued network members, partners, funders, colleagues, respected Trustees & Advisory Council members, for all their support to realize an impactful 2024. We have some truly exciting prospects to deepen and widen our collective impact as we look forward to 2025 and beyond, which can only be achieved through joint efforts.



Message from Members and Partners

Message from **Berger Paints Bangladesh**



Rupali Chowdhury

Managing Director
Berger Paints Bangladesh

As a founding member of BBDN and a strong advocate for inclusive workplaces, I am proud of the progress made in advancing disability inclusion within Bangladesh's business sector. Berger Paints has been committed to creating meaningful employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, and we will continue to do so—because an inclusive workforce is essential for both business success and sustainable economic growth. However, there is still significant ground to cover. I urge my fellow business leaders to take deliberate steps in ensuring accessibility, equitable hiring practices, and inclusive work environments. The private sector has a crucial role in enabling persons with disabilities to contribute meaningfully to our economy, and it is time for us to act with purpose and responsibility.

In the current socio-economic context, Bangladesh needs to prioritize disability inclusion more than ever. With a growing population and increasing economic challenges, we cannot afford to leave anyone behind. Persons with disabilities represent a significant portion of our society, and their full participation in the workforce is not just a moral imperative but also an economic necessity. By tapping into this often-

overlooked talent pool, we can drive innovation, productivity, and competitiveness while creating a more equitable society.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my fellow leaders in the business sector who have already taken steps toward inclusion. Your efforts are commendable, and they set a powerful example for others to follow. However, we must recognize that this is a journey, and there is still much more to do. True transformation requires a collaborative effort involving the government, private sector, UN agencies, civil society, and the media. Each stakeholder has a unique role to play, and together, we can create an ecosystem that supports and empowers persons with disabilities.

The media, in particular, has a tremendous capacity to drive change. By raising awareness, challenging stereotypes, and highlighting success stories, the media can shape public perception and inspire action. Let us leverage this powerful tool to amplify the message of inclusion and ensure that it remains a priority on the national agenda.

As we look ahead to 2025 and beyond, let us strengthen our commitment to building workplaces where persons with disabilities are recognized, valued, and empowered to excel. I encourage more organizations to take action and be part of this important transformation. Together, we can create a Bangladesh where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to our nation's progress. The road ahead is long, but with collective effort and unwavering determination, we can make a lasting difference.

Message from **Le Méridien Dhaka**



Constantinos S. Gavriel

General Manager
Le Méridien Dhaka

With a strong commitment to supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion, Le Méridien Dhaka is proud to be the first hotel in Bangladesh to hire people with disabilities in affiliation with the Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN). In a society where individuals are often deprived of opportunities due to lack of awareness, we, as part of the Marriott International, are dedicated to empowering talented individuals who deserve equal access to success.

Our journey began in 2023 through a workshop with BBDN, where we were inspired to make a meaningful impact. Following this, we organized a recruitment session and onboarded three outstanding performers from more than twenty candidates. Recently, we celebrated their one-year work anniversary. Initially, we were unsure how to integrate them smoothly with our associates and guests, but it happened effortlessly. They were welcomed wholeheartedly and have become integral members of our team.

Building on this success, we have doubled our commitment in 2024 by hiring three more associates, strengthening our diverse workforce. Our long-term goal is to expand this initiative further.

At Le Méridien Dhaka, we embrace Marriott's core value of "putting people first" by fostering an inclusive workplace. Beyond hiring, we are committed to initiatives that support gender equality, empower underrepresented communities, and create opportunities for all. Through continuous learning, advocacy, and collaboration, we strive to make a lasting difference in both our industry and society.

By welcoming associates from all backgrounds, we ensure that everyone can bring their authentic selves to our hotel, reinforcing our dedication to inclusivity, respect, and excellence.

About Us



A Glimpse of BBDN's Advisory Council Members and Management Team.

The Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN) was established as a non-profit trust by the Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF) in 2016, with support from the International Labour Organization (ILO). In 2023, it was registered as an NGO under the NGO Affairs Bureau of Bangladesh. BBDN is committed to fostering a more disability-inclusive labor market in the country. It is a member-based network comprising employers and employers' associations, in partnership with disability-focused organizations, NGOs,

organizations of people with disabilities (OPDs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and development partners. Through these collaborative efforts, BBDN aims to promote disability-inclusive practices in the world of work and skills development, ensuring equal opportunities and economic empowerment for individuals with disabilities. BBDN seeks to drive positive social change and create a transformative impact on Bangladesh's labor market bringing together key stakeholders.



Current Scenario and the Challenges We Are Addressing

According to the World Health Organization's latest estimates, approximately 16% of the world's population, or about 1.3 billion people, live with disabilities, making them the world's largest minority.¹ The International Labour Organization reports that of the 470 million working-age persons with disabilities worldwide, unemployment is disproportionately high, reaching up to 80% in some developing countries.² Furthermore, 90% of the people who need assistive technology still lack access to it, creating significant barriers to workplace participation.³ Employers often assume that persons with disabilities are unable to work.

In Bangladesh, the situation is complex and often underreported. Various surveys reveal significant variation in

Personal Conditions (disease, impairment, gender, etc.)



Environmental barriers (soft barriers include social attitude, stigma, discriminations, informational accessibility; hard barriers include built environment, transportation, services)



Disability

the prevalence of disability, largely due to differences in data collection methodologies. Key findings from various surveys are summarized in the following sections.



Disability Categories in Bangladesh



Autism or
autism
spectrum
disorders



Physical disability



Mental
illness
leading to
disability



Visual disability



Speech disability



Intellectual disability



Hearing disability



Deaf-blindness



Cerebral palsy



Down syndrome



Multiple disability



Other
disability

1. World Health Organization. (2022). Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities.

2. International Labour Organization. (2007). Facts on disability in the world of work.

3. World Health Organization & United Nations Children's Fund. (2022). Global report on assistive technology. WHO and UNICEF.



1. Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2016

This survey estimated that 7.96% adults in Bangladesh experience some form of functional difficulty. The prevalence was higher among females (8.88%) compared to males (7.00%).⁴

2. Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2022

The most recent HIES data estimated that 5.71% of adults in Bangladesh experience some form of functional difficulty. The prevalence was higher among females (5.92%) compared to males (5.50%).⁵

3. National Survey on Persons with Disabilities (NSPD) 2021

The NSPD 2021 estimated that 2.8% of the population in



Disability According to Different Surveys

HIES 2016

7.96%

HIES 2022

5.71%

NSPD 2021

2.80%

Bangladesh are living with disabilities. The prevalence was slightly higher among males (3.28%) compared to females (2.32%).⁶

4. Labour Force Survey 2022

The Labour Force Survey 2022 revealed that the number of persons with disabilities aged 15 and older varied significantly across rural and urban areas.⁷ It also revealed a significant gap between formal and informal sector employment for persons with disabilities.

Insights from National Survey on Persons with Disabilities (NSPD) 2021	%
Employment rate of persons with disabilities	33.78
Employment rate of males with disabilities	47.59
Employment rate of females with disabilities	12.80
Self-employment rate of persons with disabilities	54.42
Households as employer of persons with disabilities	18.14
NGO / private organization as employer of persons with disabilities	17.05
Others as employer of persons with disabilities	7.27

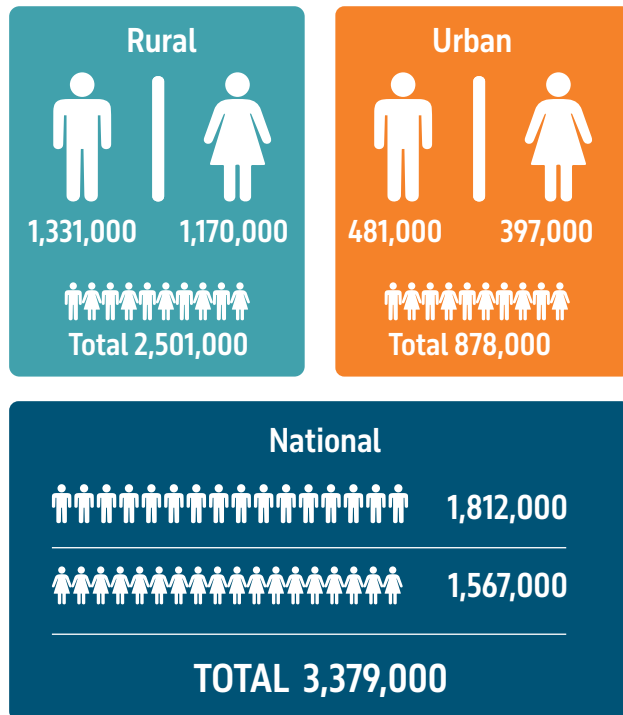
4. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. (2016). Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2016.

5. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. (2022). Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2022.

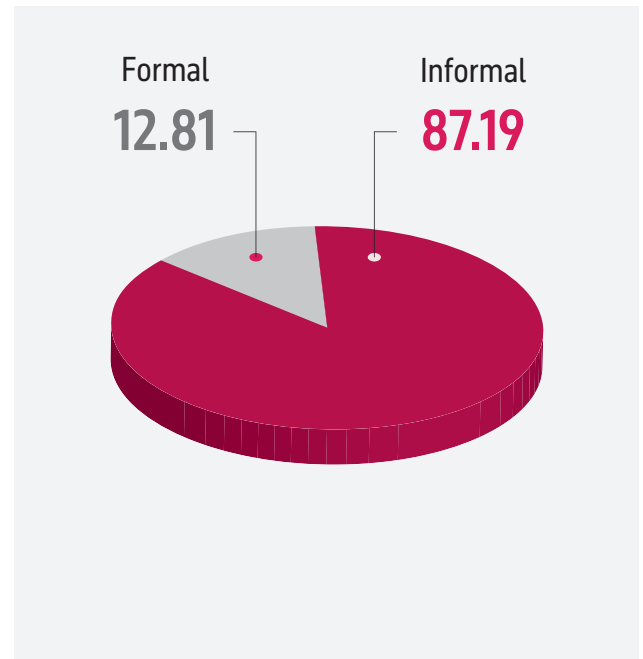
6. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. (2021). National Survey on Persons with Disabilities 2021.

7. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. (2022). Labour Force Survey 2022.

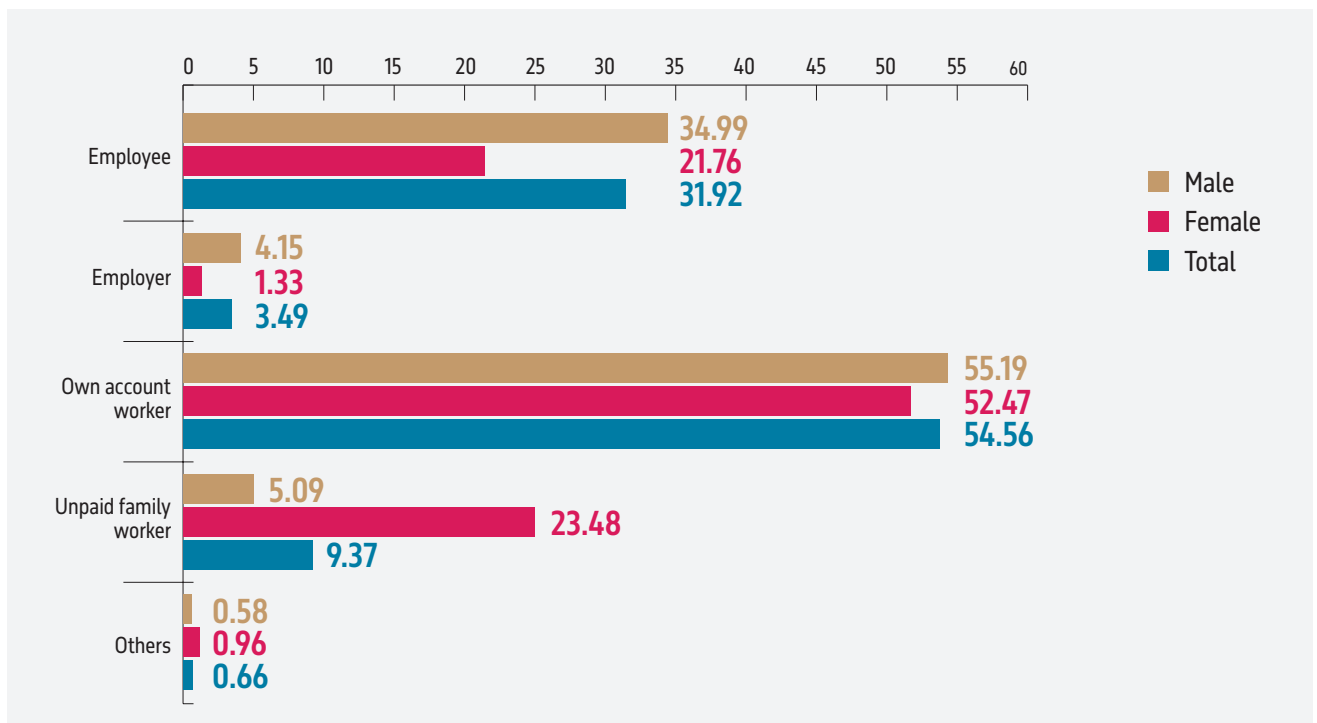
Number of persons with disabilities aged 15 and older



Employed persons with disability by informal and formal sector (In %)



Distribution of employed population with disability by status in employment and sex (In %)

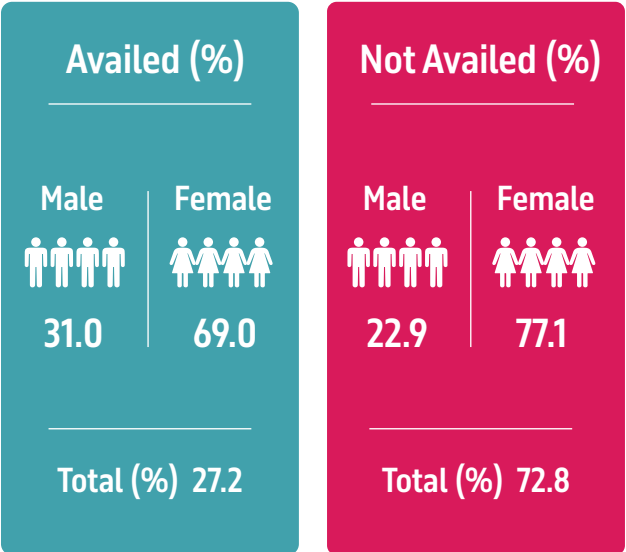


Subarna Nagarik Card Ownership

The Subarna Nagarik card is a crucial identification for persons with disabilities, providing access to government benefits and services. According to the Labour Force Survey 2022, only 27.2% of persons with disabilities aged 15 and older possess the card.⁸

Despite progress in data collection and policy development, significant gaps remain in accurately assessing disability prevalence in Bangladesh. Employment opportunities for persons with disabilities are hindered by persistent discrimination, lack of accommodations, and inaccessible workplaces. The dominance of informal employment further reflects structural barriers that restrict formal job access for individuals with disabilities.

Bangladesh's evolving approach to disability, now framed by the UNCRPD, emphasizes disability as a social construct shaped by attitudinal and environmental barriers. Addressing



these barriers requires targeted policy reform, inclusive infrastructure, and capacity-building to ensure equitable participation for persons with disabilities in all aspects of life.

8. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. (2022). Labour Force Survey 2022.



Government Initiatives to Protect Persons with Disabilities

It is very encouraging that Bangladesh government is positive about disability inclusion and has enacted several laws and policies to protect and improve the lives of people with disabilities. These measures have been instrumental in creating better livelihood opportunities for people with disabilities.

- **The Constitution of Bangladesh** secures the right to equality before law and equal protection under law for all and sets out the duty of the state to undertake. Persons with disabilities, like anyone else, are guaranteed the right to life and personal liberty, rights to safeguards, freedom of movement, association, assembly, profession and occupation, religion and expression.
- Bangladesh has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (**UNCRPD**) and has harmonized several local laws and policies to ensure alignment with UNCRPD.
- **The Rights & Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013** has provisions that not only ensure the rights of the disabled, but also calls for their full participation in social and state activities removing all forms of discrimination. It prescribes the formation of committees at different levels to oversee its implementation.
- **Neuro-Developmental Disability Trust Act 2013** has provisions to ensure full participation of people with neuro-developmental disabilities and addresses the right to gainful employment.

- **The National Advisory Committee** set up in 2014, headed by the Prime Minister aims to ensure implementation of legislation and policies related to persons with disabilities.
- **The Ministry of Social Welfare** is responsible for coordinating and implementing the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disability Act 2013 and the National Disability Policy and Action Plan through the National Coordination Committee on the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities and the National Executive Committee on the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities.
- **The Government of Bangladesh** incentivizes employers to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workforce. Businesses that employ at least 10% of their workforce or 25 employees from persons with disabilities are eligible for a tax rebate. The rebate amounts to either 5% of the total tax payable or 75% of the total salary paid to employees with disabilities, whichever is less.
- **The Government's Social Safety Net Programme**, guided by a life-cycle approach, provides targeted support to individuals with disabilities at different stages of life. This includes disability allowances, stipends for students with disabilities, and grants for schools educating children with disabilities.

Despite these measures, implementation gaps remain. BBDN continues to work with stakeholders to bridge these gaps and create more inclusive workplaces. Our focus remains on transforming policy commitments into practical actions that enable full participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce.



Why We Exist

The business and ethical rationale for becoming a disability confident company



Disability Confidence = Business Improvement



Workforce Productivity

Typically, more than 10% of a workforce is likely to have a disability.

Are we enabling them to be productive and contribute to our economy?



Accessing Talent

Talented people are often needlessly prevented from applying through standard recruitment processes.



Customers

There are over one billion people with disabilities worldwide. Their families are customers and potential customers.



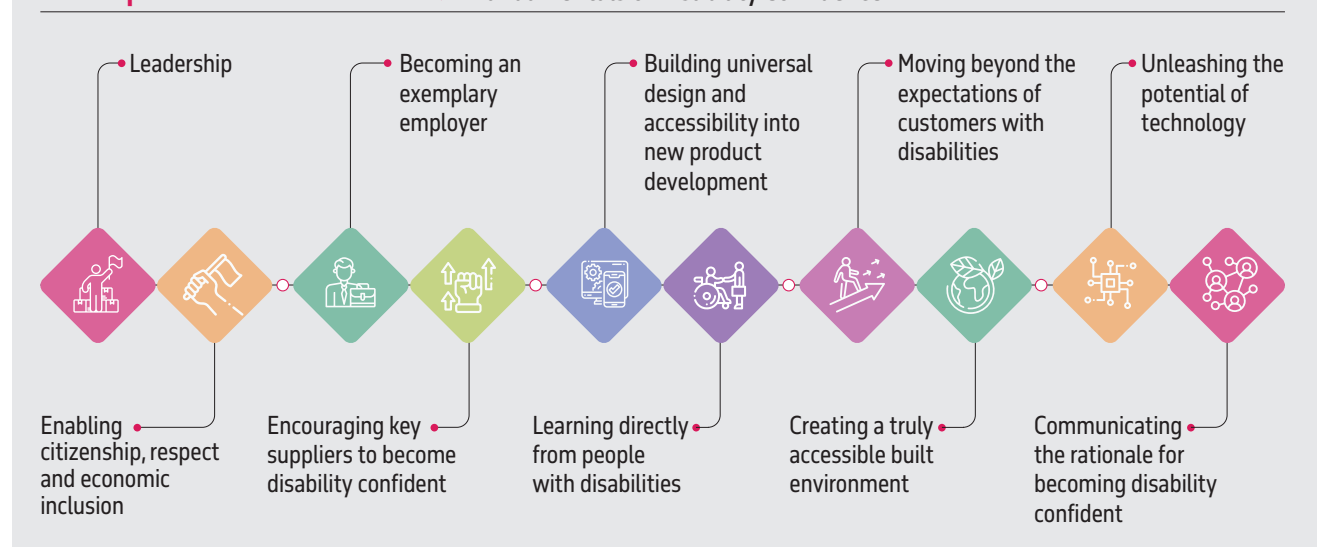
Reputation and Legislation

Build a positive reputation as a diverse and inclusive organization, practicing non-discrimination and meeting social goals.

Best Practice Will Help Your Organization in Many Ways

- Deliver cost-effective changes that empower every employee to contribute to their full potential.
- Reduce employee absence.
- Use technology to facilitate productivity.
- Attract the widest pool of talent.
- Ensure fair and consistent treatment of all applicants.
- Learn directly from colleagues with disabilities.
- Embed inclusive design into organizational thinking.
- Liberate the power of technology for customers.
- Learn directly from customers with disabilities.
- Enhance customer experience.
- Drive consistent best practice across the organization.
- Move beyond the legal and reputational risk associated with a 'compliance culture'.
- Start a new conversation with civil society.

A Blueprint for Best Practice | Fundamentals of Disability Confidence



A Disability-Confident Business is Able to

1. Unlock business improvement and innovation by creating a more accessible, efficient and disability confident workplace while enhancing employee engagement and wellbeing.
2. Enhance productivity and reduce absenteeism by becoming more efficient in delivering the tools, flexibility and accommodation that enable every employee to realize their full potential.
3. Build brand reputation as a responsible and sustainable business.
4. Develop more flexible and effective people management skills, learn how to enable everyone to realize their potential.
5. Shape more efficient and equitable labor markets, which enable every employer to more readily access an untapped reserve of talent who can contribute to success.
6. Respond intelligently and proactively to demographic, marketplace and regulatory shifts.
7. Raise the brand's commitment to improving disability-related performance, in order to become the employer of choice for people with disabilities.
8. Enhance the experience of every customer while driving innovation.
9. Best practice reduces reputational, legal and operational risks while enabling a truly inclusive workplace.

Source: Inclusive Futures tool-kit "The business and ethical rationale for disability confident corporate best practice"



Our Unique Strengths

1. New approach on disability and employment with a combination of strategic and practical interventions.
2. Employer-driven networks strongly supported by the private sector.
3. Rights-based approach with emphasis on the business case for employment.
4. Collaborative network approach with great momentum.
5. Passionate and like-minded group of organizations.
6. Platform bringing together a wide range of members and stakeholders such as employers, organizations of persons with disabilities, NGOs, employers' associations, development partners and TVET institutes while functioning as a vital bridge between supply and demand.
7. Resource members represent a substantial portion of capacity on disability and employment issues in Bangladesh.

Our Impact



41

Members



700+

Job Placements



10

Spot Interviews



8

Job Fairs



Session on Disability



700+

corporate official

500+

TVET official

Occupational Diseases and Occupational Medicine Training



79

participants from

55

factories

Return to Work Training



215

participants from

100

factories

Non Visual Desktop Access (NVDA) Training

180+

participants (instructors + students)

OPD Capacity Building Training



150

persons with disabilities

from 20

OPDs



Sign Language Training

200+

participants (instructors + students)



Projects Over the Years

Timeline showcasing key projects and milestones since BBDN's inception.

Nov 2023 - Dec 2023

Mainstreaming Leave No One Behind in National Urban Policies and Programs (SDG 6 & 11) in South Asia

Funded by UN-Habitat



- The CEO Forum: Build the Nation through Accessible & Inclusive Employment Opportunities.
- Capacity Building Workshop: Design for All: Disability-Inclusive Urban Planning and Infrastructure Design.
- The Skills Match Initiatives.
- The Accessibility Assessment at National Housing Authority.



July 2022 - Dec 2023

Futuremakers Bangladesh- "Promoting Youth Employability"

Funded by Standard Chartered Bank Foundation



- 300+ officials from private sectors and 30 business representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and Industries being sensitized.
- 5 spot interviews and job placements for 80 candidates with disabilities.



Jun 2020 - Feb 2023

ILO Skill-21

Funded by The European Union (EU)



- Strategy on disability inclusion has been developed for seven TVET institutions.
- A dedicated focus on disability inclusion appointed for each institution.
- TVET instructors have been capacitated with a basic level of training in Sign language, NVDA, inclusive classroom management.
- Enrollment of students with disabilities has started at the institute level.
- MoU with OPD made functional.

Apr 2020 - Jun 2022

Inclusion Works Project

Funded by Foreign Commonwealth & Development (FCDO)



- 36 companies being disability confident under private sector engagement activity.
- 20+ job placements, 1 internship opportunity and one entrepreneur with disability participated in SME Fair.
- Signed MOUs with the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) and the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FICCI).



Nov 2019 - Dec 2021



GIZ- Employment Injury Protection Scheme for Workers in the Textile and Leather Industries



DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

Implemented by:
giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

- RTW national strategy.
- Training to 40 enterprises and around their 100 representatives.
- Produced research paper on identifying common Occupational Diseases (OD) in RMGs.
- Produced OD training curriculum.
- Law amendment proposal in favor of RTW accepted by the review committee.

Aug 2018 - Mar 2022

Innovation to Inclusion (i2i) Project



Funded by Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)

- 50+ job placements.
- 100 new private companies being disability confident under employer engagement activity.

Oct 2017 - Nov 2018

ILO-BSEP Project



Funded by Government of Canada

- 300+ job placements for persons with disabilities through 4 job fairs.
- 18 founder members are on board at BBDN Network.

Projects in 2024

Sept 2024 - ongoing

BRAC Bank-BBDN Aporajeyo Ami Program



Funded by BRAC Bank PLC and jointly led by BRAC Bank PLC and BBDN

- Initiatives focus on promoting disability inclusion, skills development, and entrepreneurship for persons with disabilities.
- Conducted disability confidence sensitization workshops for BRAC Bank employees.
- Organized a successful national conference in December 2024 titled "EmpowerAbility: Powering Every Ability".

June 2024 - Feb 2025

Research on Enhancing Productivity among Persons with Disabilities



Asian
Productivity
Organization

Funded by Asian Productivity Organization (APO)

- Assessed the status of persons with disabilities in APO member countries, identifying employment barriers and examining policies to improve productivity and workforce inclusion.

Nov 2023 - ongoing

Promoting Gender Responsive Enterprise Development and TVET System (ProGRESS)



International
Labour
Organization



Canada

Funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, the Government of Canada and led by ILO Country Office, Bangladesh

- Initiative focuses on skills development, waged employment, and entrepreneurship development.
- Aim to ensure training and employment for 500 persons with disabilities across ten locations including Chattogram, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, and other major cities.

July 2023 - ongoing

Social Protection for Workers in the Textile and Leather Sector (SOSI)



Implemented by:
giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Funded by the German Government and led by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

- Return to Work and Occupational Diseases training for 150 RMG factories.
- Comprehensive factory visits and policy advocacy initiatives.

Jun 2023 - Nov 2024

United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD)



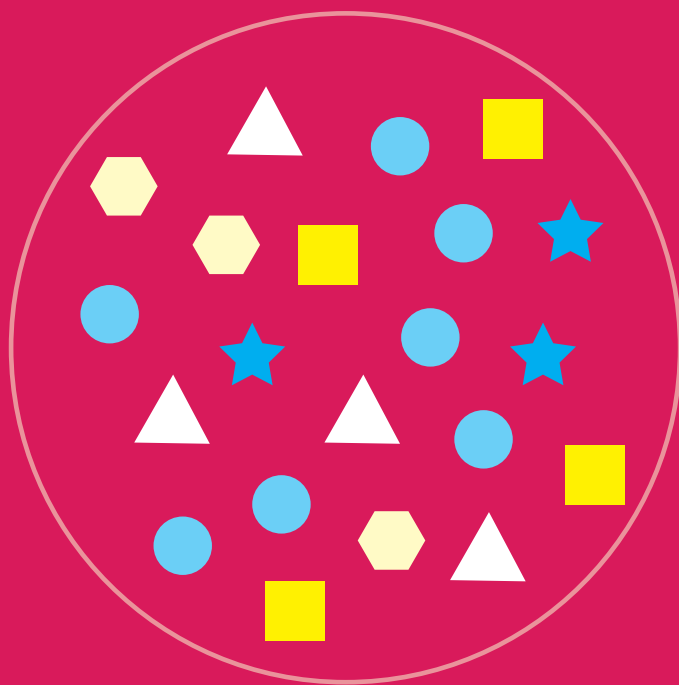
International
Labour
Organization



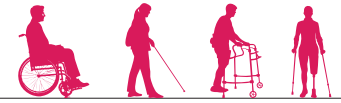
UNPRPD
Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Funded by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund which includes the Governments of Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the EU

- 2 job fairs were held in Dhaka and Chattogram.
- Capacity development initiatives were undertaken for Organizations of Persons with Disabilities.



INCLUSION SERVICES



Building Futures: Job Fair for Persons with Disabilities in Dhaka



Job seekers with disabilities are actively engaged in attending interviews with employers.

On February 19, 2024, the Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN), in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and funded by the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Multi-Partner Trust Fund (UNPRPD MPTF), hosted a groundbreaking National Job Fair for Persons with Disabilities at the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB Centre) in Dhaka. The event, themed “Leave No One Behind,” also saw partnership from UN Habitat.

The event brought together job seekers, employers, government officials, and civil society organizations to work towards a common goal: ensuring that persons with disabilities are not left behind in the country’s economic development.



Team who worked closely to organize the Job Fair.

Snapshot of the Job Fair

The day-long job fair began with an opening session featuring distinguished speakers such as Dr. Dipu Moni, former MP and Minister of Social Welfare; Salahuddin Kasem Khan, Chairman of BBDN's Advisory Council; Pedro Peter

Bellen and Syed Saad Hussain Gilani from the ILO; and Murteza Rafi Khan, CEO of BBDN. A sensitization session in the morning educated employers on respectful and inclusive interactions with candidates with disabilities, setting the tone for the day. Attendees



then explored employer booths and took part in interviews, facilitating direct engagement and recruitment opportunities. The event also included a powerful experience-sharing segment, where employers reflected on their participation and a visually impaired female employee shared her inspiring two-year professional journey. The fair concluded with remarks from Dr. Dipu Moni, who reaffirmed the importance of inclusive employment and applauded the collective efforts of all involved.



Salahuddin Kasem Khan, Chairman of BBDN's Advisory Council, delivering his speech.

Participants



Part of the candidates' registration at the job fair.

Job Seekers

1,026 candidates with disabilities registered for the fair, with 81.9% males and 17.9% females. Approximately, 250 candidates attended in person, representing a diverse range of educational backgrounds and skill sets.

Employers

30 distinguished local and international companies participated in the job fair. These include Ananta Apparels Limited, URMI Group, SHIN SHIN GROUP, TEAM Group, ACI Logistics Limited, Envoy Textiles Limited, Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited, Chittagong Grammar School, BRAC, M M Ispahani Ltd., PRAN-RFL, Access Bangladesh Foundation, Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center, Sheltech Group, RiseUp Labs, Save the Children, JAAGO Foundation, eShikhon.com, Prolancer Studio Limited, Cliqpack Ltd., Headless Technologies Limited, Shomvob



Candidates with disabilities exploring opportunities at an employer's booth.

Jobs, OS IT Solutions Ltd, Skill Jobs, WW Tech Ltd., DBL Digital Ltd., NEXTGEN INNOVATION LTD., and Standard Chartered Bank PLC. These companies demonstrated their commitment to disability inclusion by engaging directly with the job seekers, offering opportunities, and fostering an inclusive environment for individuals from all backgrounds.

Relevant Stakeholders: The event brought together the BBDN network members, employers, civil society organizations, government bodies, media, and development partners, all working towards the common goal of inclusivity.



Syed Saad Hussain Gilani, Chief Technical Advisor, ILO, delivering his speech.

Key Highlights



Murteza Rafi Khan, CEO of BBDN, delivering his speech.

- **Employer Participation:** 30 companies from various sectors showcased their dedication to inclusive hiring.
- **Job Placements:** A total of 55 candidates with disabilities received job offers, including:
 - **40 candidates** matched prior to the event.
 - **6 candidates** matched during the fair.
 - **7 candidates** matched through post-event activities.
- **Employer Recognition:** All participating employers were awarded certificates of appreciation for their role in advancing inclusivity.

Impact

- **On Job Seekers:** The fair provided an invaluable opportunity for candidates with disabilities to meet potential employers and secure meaningful employment. It empowered them by showcasing their skills and potential, boosting their confidence and self-esteem.
- **On Employers:** Employers gained a deeper understanding of the capabilities of persons with disabilities, challenging stereotypes, and promoting a more inclusive workplace culture. The fair also highlighted the business case for diversity, demonstrating how inclusive hiring can benefit organizations.
- **On Society:** The event played a significant role in changing societal attitudes, emphasizing that persons with disabilities are capable and valuable contributors to the workforce. Organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) played a key role in mobilizing candidates and helping to match them with employers, strengthening their capacity to organize future job fairs and similar events.

Shaping an Inclusive Future

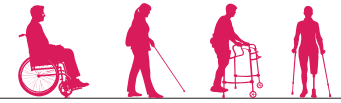
The 2024 job fair in Dhaka marks a significant milestone in promoting inclusive employment practices in Bangladesh. The collaborative efforts of the government, the private sector, and civil society have set a strong foundation for future initiatives, aiming to ensure that persons with disabilities are fully integrated into Bangladesh's workforce and economy. This fair not only provided immediate job opportunities but also set the stage for long-term change in the labor market.



Taslima Begum (low vision), Sales Support Officer at Berger Paints Bangladesh Ltd., sharing her successful two-year working experience.



Peter Bellen, Chief Technical Adviser, ILO, delivering his speech.



Creating Opportunities: Job Fair for Persons with Disabilities in Chattogram



A glimpse of distinguished guests of Chattogram job fair.

The Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN), in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Multi-Partner Trust Fund (UNPRPD MPTF) and Promoting Gender Responsive Enterprise Development and TVET Systems (ProGRESS) initiatives, Access Bangladesh Foundation, and Save the Children, hosted a Job Fair for Persons with Disabilities at the World Trade Center in Chattogram on October 31, 2024. The fair showcased the potential of persons with disabilities while emphasizing the critical role of the private sector in creating an inclusive workforce.



A glimpse of candidates' registration at the fair.

Participants

Job seekers with disabilities: 398 candidates with disabilities registered for the fair, with a male-female

proportion of 75.7% to 24.3%. Over 375 candidates attended in person, representing a diverse range of educational backgrounds and skill sets.



Employers

17 distinguished local and international companies participated. These include Berger Paints Bangladesh, M. M. Ispahani, BRAC Bank, Chittagong Grammar School, Pacific Jeans, American & Efird Bangladesh, Organic Jeans, Vancot, Lub-rref (Bangladesh), Access Bangladesh Foundation, Bangladesh Society for the Change and Advocacy Nexus (B-SCAN), Brac Career Hub, Frontdesk Bangladesh, Clifton Cotton Mills, Genex Infosys, Ritzy Apparels and Plusnet. These companies demonstrated their commitment to disability inclusion by engaging directly with job seekers.

Relevant Stakeholders: The event brought together BBDN network members, employers, civil society organizations, government bodies, media, and development partners, all working towards the common goal of inclusivity.

Key Highlights

- **Employer Participation:** The fair attracted 17 companies from various sectors, demonstrating a growing commitment of the private sector to inclusive hiring.
- **Job Placement:** Several candidates received appointment letters during the event, marking the immediate success of the fair in securing employment for persons with disabilities.
- **Experience Sharing:** Newly recruited employees shared their inspiring journeys offering motivation to other job seekers.
- **Employer Recognition:** Participating employers were awarded certificates of participation for their efforts in promoting disability inclusion.



Part of the employers' receiving certification of participation at the job fair.

Special Guest Remarks



Mohammad Anwar Pasha, Additional Divisional Commissioner (General), Chittagong Chamber of Commerce & Industries, delivering his speech while a Sign language interpreter translating.

Nurul Absar, Director of Food Security & Livelihoods/Child Poverty Program at Save the Children Bangladesh addressed the audience highlighting key issues related to inclusive development. Peter Belen, Chief Technical Advisor of the ILO ProGRESS Project in Dhaka, shared insights on the importance of promoting inclusive employment opportunities. Salahuddin Kasem Khan, Chairman of BBDN's Advisory Council, emphasized the need for continued collaboration among stakeholders to advance disability inclusion in all sectors.

Mohammad Anwar Pasha, Additional Divisional Commissioner (General) and Administrator of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce & Industries, delivered his remarks as the chief guest. In his speech, he stated,

"I applaud BBDN for its work towards building a society free from discrimination. The current government is also working towards this goal. We all need to be aware of the special needs of people with disabilities. It is possible to eliminate discrimination with the collective efforts of everyone and with the coming forward of private institutions."

Additionally, Lieutenant Colonel Mohammad Mahbub Morshed, Principal of Proyas, and Farzana Reza, ILO's National Program Officer, expressed their gratitude for the successful organization of the fair and conveyed their hopes for similar initiatives in the future.

Impact

On Job Seekers: The fair provided an invaluable opportunity for candidates with disabilities to meet potential employers and secure meaningful employment. It empowered them by showcasing their skills and potential, boosting their confidence and self-esteem.

On Employers: Employers gained a deeper understanding of the capabilities of persons with disabilities, challenging stereotypes and promoting a more inclusive workplace culture. The fair also highlighted the business case for diversity demonstrating how inclusive hiring can benefit organizations.

On Society: The event played a significant role in changing societal attitudes, emphasizing that persons with disabilities are capable and valuable contributors to the workforce.

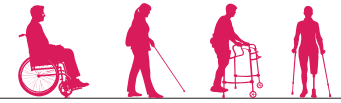
Organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) played a key role in mobilizing candidates and helping to match them with employers, strengthening their capacity to organize future job fairs and similar events.

A milestone for an inclusive future

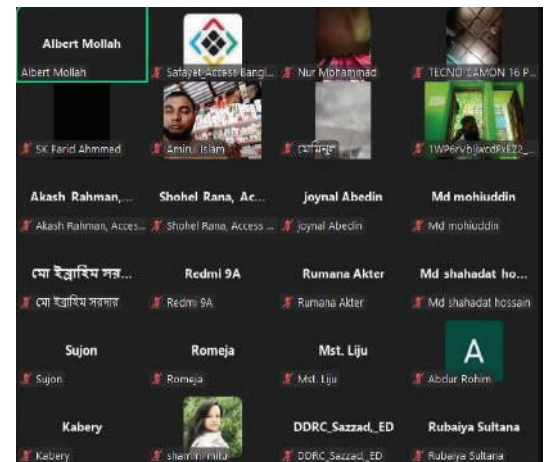
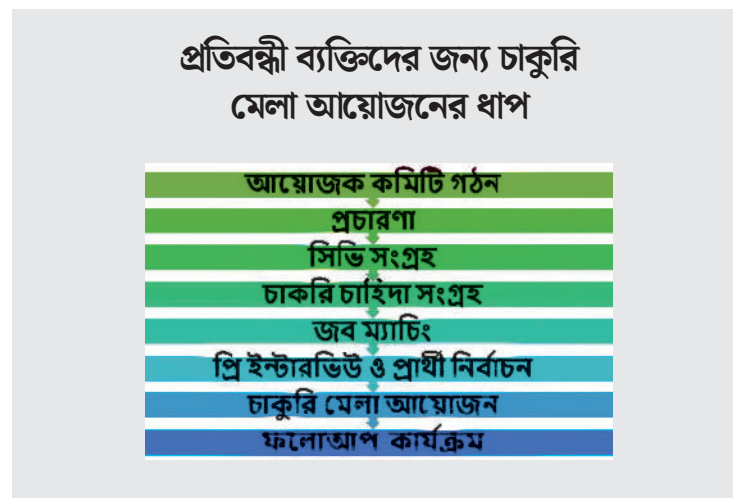
The 2024 Job Fair in Chattogram was a landmark event that exemplified the principles of the UNPRPD and UNCRPD. It demonstrated the power of collaboration between government, the private sector, and civil society to create inclusive pathways to employment. This initiative has set a strong foundation for future efforts to integrate persons with disabilities into the workforce and build a more inclusive society. Moving forward, continued collaboration among stakeholders will be key to ensuring that these efforts are sustained and that persons with disabilities are fully integrated into Bangladesh's economic growth.



Part of OPDs' receiving certificate of participation at the fair.



Capacity Building Training of OPDs on Inclusive Skills and Employment



Part of online capacity building training with OPDs.

In May 2024, Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN) organized two batches of online “Capacity Building Training of Selected OPDs on Inclusive Skills and Employment” under the UNPRPD project funded by The United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Multi-Partner Trust Fund (UNPRPD MPTF) and led by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The sessions aimed to empower selected Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) with the knowledge, skills, and strategies necessary to effectively advocate for and support the inclusion of persons with disabilities in skills training and employment, thereby enhancing their opportunities for meaningful participation in the workforce and creating an inclusive ecosystem in Bangladesh.

Spanning two batches held on May 8–9 and May 15–16, 2024, the training brought together 46 participants (28 males and 18 females) from selected OPDs across 10 districts: Chattogram, Bandarban, Rangamati, Khagrachari, Mymensingh, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, and Sylhet. The group represented a diverse range of disabilities, ensuring an inclusive learning environment.

The training was designed based on a Training Needs

Assessment (TNA) conducted during the Gap Analysis Study, which engaged 50 OPDs across 10 districts to identify knowledge gaps and capacity-building needs. Based on the findings, 25 OPDs were selected, each nominating representatives to participate. The training content was developed in simple, accessible language and tailored to address the identified needs.

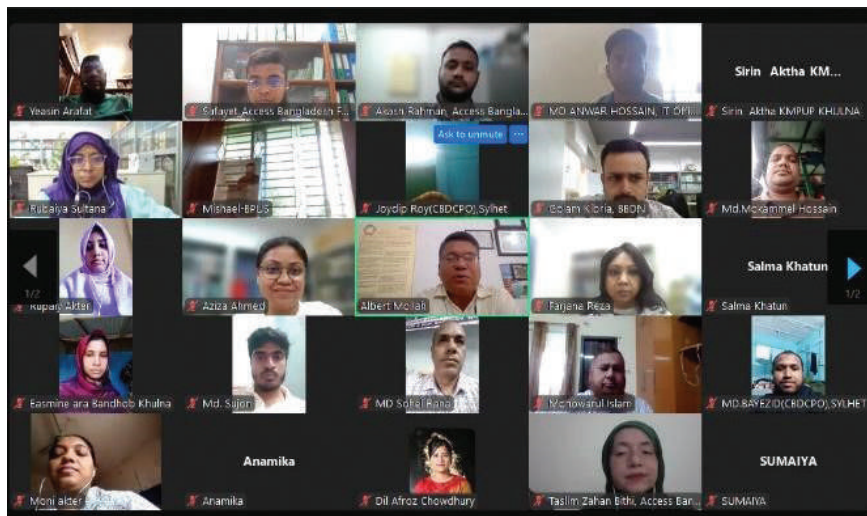
Conducted online via Zoom, the sessions incorporated interactive and accessible features such as breakout rooms, polls, screen reader-friendly materials, and real-life scenarios. Each batch ran over two days and emphasized participatory approaches, practical experience sharing, and open discussions to build confidence and competence among participants.

A total of six facilitators with diverse professional backgrounds and experience in the disability field led the training across both batches. Participants were provided with a comprehensive understanding of disability rights, relevant legislation, and practical strategies for creating inclusive employment opportunities. A key focus of the training was on building the capacity of OPDs to engage with stakeholders—including skills training providers, employers,



and policymakers—to promote disability-inclusive practices within the labor market.

Evaluation results from both pre- and post-training assessments demonstrated a notable improvement in participants' understanding of disability rights, inclusive employment strategies, and their roles as advocates. The interactive nature of the training was well-received, and many participants expressed their appreciation.



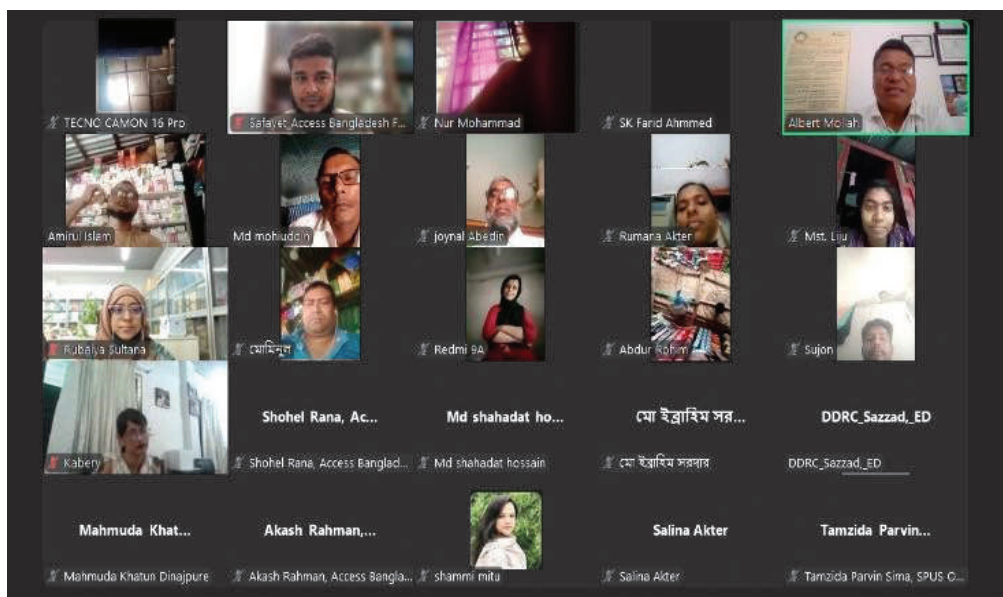
Inaugural Session of Batch 1.

"Typically, OPDs engage in various activities, from organizing courtyard meetings to conducting awareness-raising events and observing different days. We were unaware of the systematic procedures for engaging in skills and employment initiatives. This training was really helpful, and I believe we can now participate more effectively in skills and employment-related initiatives. Thank you to the organizers for such an interactive training session."

Asaduzzaman Chowdhury Russell

A male with visual impairment from Rojonigondha Protibondhi Unnoyon Sangstha of Rajshahi.

This initiative underscores BBDN's commitment to building a more inclusive workforce in Bangladesh by strengthening the capacities of OPDs to drive change and advocate for the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities.



Inaugural Session of Batch 2.

Training Programs on Return to Work



Participants and organizers in a frame.

In 2024, the Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN) organized two batches of certificate training on return to work (RTW) in collaboration with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Dhaka Bangladesh, as part of the 'Social Protection for Workers in the Textile and Leather Sector (SOSI)' project. The training sessions were designed to develop factory/industry-level expert human resources capable of facilitating the reintegration of employees/workers into the workplace following injury or illness by arranging and mobilizing necessary medical and rehabilitation support.

The first training batch, held on July 6-7, 2024, was conducted by Md. Golam Kibria, RTW-Master Trainer, along with a team of experts from BBDN and GIZ, Bangladesh. The training was attended by 33 HR and compliance professionals from 18 ready-made garments (RMG) factories. The inaugural ceremony was graced by Silvia Popp, Project Manager, Social Protection for Workers in the



Part of the Group Work during RTW Training.

Textile and Leather Sector, GIZ, and Aziza Ahmed, Head of Operations at BBDN, alongside other team members from BBDN and GIZ.

The second training batch, held on September 14-15, 2024, was led by Md Golam Kibria, RTW-Master Trainer and Syed Moazzem Hussain, Senior Social Protection Advisor, Social Protection for the Workers in the Textile and Leather Sector, GIZ, with a team of experts from BBDN and GIZ, Bangladesh. A total of 26 professionals from HR and Compliance of 13 RMG factories participated in this batch. The inauguration ceremony was

attended by Syed Saad Hussain Gilani Chief Technical Advisor ILO, Aziza Ahmed, Head of Operations, BBDN with other GIZ and BBDN team members.

This interactive training focused on equipping participants with the skills and knowledge to lead RTW programs within their organizations. Upon completion, they received certificates recognizing their ability to implement RTW initiatives. This series of training highlights BBDN's commitment to promoting effective RTW processes and creating a supportive environment for workers' reintegration after injury or illness.

Training Programs on Occupational Diseases and Occupational Medicine

Under the GIZ 'Social Protection for Workers in the Textile and Leather Sector' (SOSI) project, BBDN conducted a series of training programs in 2024 focused on occupational diseases and occupational medicine.

These initiatives aimed to strengthen workplace health and safety by equipping professionals with skills for early detection, prevention, and management of occupational hazards.

Training of Trainers (ToT): Occupational Diseases and Occupational Medicine



Dr. Jacques Pelletier, an international expert, conducting a session at the training.

The ToT program was held from November 10-13, 2024, at the Bangladesh Employers' Federation office in Dhaka. It aimed to develop a team of Master Trainers on occupational diseases and medicine, who will subsequently be involved in conducting training sessions at the factory level, supporting the advancement of workplace health and safety standards. Dr. Jacques Pelletier, an international medical expert, and an ILO consultant facilitated the sessions.

A total of 19 participants attended, representing key organizations such as the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE), Department of Labour (DOL), Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA), Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), URMI Group, Team Group, GIZ, and BBDN.

Occupational Diseases and Occupational Medicine Training at Factory level



Arup Ratan Chowdhury, Programme Manager, BBDN conducting a session at the training.

As a natural continuation of the ToT, BBDN organized two factory-level training sessions to equip factory medical professionals with essential tools and knowledge about workplace hazards, prevention strategies, and the early detection of occupational diseases. Both training sessions were held at the UCEP Mirpur Technical School in Dhaka.

The first batch trained on November 19-20, 2024 and included 19 participants from 12 factories. The second batch followed on December 4-5, 2024, with another group of 19 participants from 16 factories. Participants engaged in discussions and hands-on activities designed to enhance their understanding of occupational health challenges and solutions to different factory environments.

Outcome and Impact

The training programs successfully enhanced the capacity of factory-level medical professionals and organizational representatives. Participants gained practical insights into workplace health management, occupational disease prevention,

and safety promotion. The interactive and expert-led sessions ensured that attendees were well-prepared to implement these practices within their respective organizations. These initiatives mark a significant step forward in advancing occupational health standards within Bangladesh's textile and leather sectors.



Orientation Workshop: Empowering OPDs for District-Level Disability Rights Advocacy



A glimpse of the orientation workshop.

On October 3, 2024, BBDN organized a one-day orientation workshop at Alok Training Center, MJF Tower, Mirpur, to prepare OPDs from 10 districts to lead disability rights advocacy initiatives, as part of the ILO ProGRESS project. The workshop aimed to strengthen OPDs' capacity to organize district-level policy advocacy events and promote accountability for the rights of persons with disabilities in skills training and employment.

Originally planned as an online activity, the workshop was shifted to an in-person format to enhance engagement and effectiveness. The event brought together 20 participants (13 male, 7 female), including 16 persons with disabilities (9 male, 7 female) and 5 ethnic minority representatives (4 male, 1 female).

Three facilitators equipped participants with practical strategies for mobilizing key local stakeholders including TVET institutes, employers, chambers of commerce, and local

administration. They provided guidance on designing tailored advocacy campaigns that address specific local contexts, as well as effective methods for securing entitlements for persons with disabilities in education and employment sectors.

Through this capacity building, the workshop achieved several significant outcomes: it prepared OPD representatives to organize 10 impactful district-level advocacy events focused on dismantling systemic barriers; strengthened stronger collaborative networks between OPDs, industries and training providers to promote inclusive practices; and addressed the compounded challenges faced by women with disabilities and ethnic minority groups.

This orientation workshop represented a crucial milestone in BBDN's broader initiative to decentralize disability rights advocacy and synchronize grassroots efforts with national policies on inclusive development.



Capacity Building Training: Empowering OPDs to Support Inclusive Skills and Employment



Part of the group work at the training.

Under the ILO ProGRESS project, BBDN conducted two batches of three-day capacity building training sessions in December 2024 to strengthen the capacity of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) from 10 districts. The training equipped 40 OPD representatives total with practical tools to guide persons with disabilities in accessing skills information, TVET enrollment, career guidance, and employment linkages, addressing critical gaps in inclusive opportunity creation.

The first batch was held on December 4-6 at ASPADA Training Academy, Mymensingh engaged 20 participants (8 male, 12 female) from Mymensingh and Sylhet, including 17 persons with disabilities (5 male, 12 female) and 1 ethnic minority male. The second batch held on December 22-24 at BRAC Learning Centre, Rajshahi trained another 20 participants (6 male, 14

female) from Rajshahi and Dinajpur, of whom 19 were persons with disabilities (5 male, 14 female).

Both training batches featured expert facilitation, with two facilitators leading each batch. These capacity-building efforts produced significant outcomes, including enhanced capacity for OPDs to support persons with disabilities through comprehensive skills-to-employment

pathways. The sessions also addressed intersectional barriers faced by women with disabilities, who represented 65% of all participating persons with disabilities. Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate BBDN's ongoing commitment to decentralizing disability inclusion efforts by building the capacity of OPD networks to drive meaningful change at the grassroots level.



Group presentation by participants at the training.

Recruitment Drive with Le Méridien Dhaka Advancing Inclusive Employment Opportunities



Part of candidates with disabilities giving interview at a recruitment drive with Le Méridien.

In collaboration with Le Méridien, BBDN hosted a spot recruitment drive on November 21, 2024, to create direct employment pathways for persons with disabilities, supported by the ILO ProGRESS project. The event took place at Police Plaza Concord, Gulshan and featured on-the-spot interviews.

The recruitment drive was attended by 23 participants, including 20 males and 3 females, all of whom were persons with disabilities. The interview was conducted by three representatives from Le Méridien, who assessed the candidates' potential for various roles. Following the interviews, four candidates

were selected for the second-round interviews. After the second round of interviews, three candidates with disabilities were offered jobs and they all accepted—marking a significant milestone in their professional journey.

This initiative underscored Le Méridien's commitment to establishing an inclusive workforce while providing persons with disabilities a platform to access formal employment opportunities. As part of BBDN's broader effort to organize 10 recruitment drives with local employers, the event successfully bridged the gap between skilled candidates with disabilities and inclusive employers.

The recruitment drive was attended by 23 participants, including 20 males and 3 females, all of whom were persons with disabilities. After the second round of interviews, **three candidates with disabilities were offered jobs and they all accepted**—marking a significant milestone in their professional journey.



ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH



National Conference on EmpowerAbility: Powering Every Ability



Artists with disabilities perform a symbolic act using ropes to depict struggle and collaboration.

BBDN hosted the groundbreaking “EmpowerAbility: Powering Every Ability” national conference on December 11, 2024 in collaboration with BRAC Bank’s Aparajeyo Ami initiative, International Labour Organization (ILO), and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Dhaka Bangladesh at BICC, Agargaon. This transformative event brought together leaders from government, business, and civil society to advance disability inclusion in Bangladesh.

Bridging Gaps and Building Alliances

The conference opened with a moving cultural performance by Sundaram, a group of artists with disabilities, challenging societal stereotypes and showcasing the transformative power of art in fostering inclusivity. The inaugural session, “Setting the vision towards disability-inclusive growth,” set the tone for the rest of the event. Moderated by Murteza Rafi Khan, CEO of BBDN, the session’s speakers included Ardashir Kabir,

Chairman of BBDN; Peter Bellen, Chief Technical Adviser of ILO; Dr. Andreas Kuck, Country Director of GIZ; and Sabbir Hossain, Deputy Managing Director of BRAC Bank. These thought leaders emphasized the critical role of businesses in driving inclusion and aligning national policies with global standards.

A Call to Action

The Chief Guest of the conference, Brigadier General (Rtd.) Dr. M. Sakhawat Hussain, Adviser to the



Moderators and speakers present a painting to the Honorable Adviser as a token of appreciation.

Ministry of Labour and Employment, delivered an inspiring keynote speech stating,

"Inclusion of persons with disabilities is not only a matter of ethical responsibility but also a fundamental human right. We stand at a transformative moment where we have the opportunity to reshape our society."

.....

Brig Gen (Retd) M Sakhawat Hossain
Adviser, Ministry of Labour and Employment

His words resonated deeply, setting the stage for a day of discussions and actionable commitments.

Exploring Pathways to Inclusion

The conference featured three insightful panel discussions, each addressing critical dimensions of disability inclusion.

1. Learning from experiences of persons with disabilities:



A diverse panel of speakers with disabilities shares insights.

Moderated by Salma Mahbub, General Secretary of B-SCAN, this session spotlighted personal stories of resilience and professional success. Panelists included Md. Nazmus Sakib, Diversity and Inclusion Officer at UNDP Bangladesh; Md. Amjad Hossain, Officer at Alternative Banking Channel, BRAC Bank PLC; Taslima Begum, Sales Support Officer at Berger Paints

Bangladesh; and Noor Nahian, Founder and President of the Bangladesh Wheelchair Sports Foundation.

2. Disability-inclusive skills and employment: Led by Albert Mollah, Executive Director of Access Bangladesh Foundation, this panel explored innovative approaches to workforce inclusion. Speakers included



Panelists engage in a discussion while the audience attentively follows.

Shamarukh Fakhruddin, Director of Urmi Group; Dr. Sohrab Hossain, Executive Director of CRP; Md. Shahedul Alam, Chief Corporate and Regulatory Officer at Robi; and Amrita Rozario, Country Director of Sightsavers.

S. Gavriel, General Manager of Le Méridien Hotels & Resorts; A.H.M. Noman Khan, Executive Director of the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD); and Sabbir Nasir, Managing Director of ACI Logistics Ltd. (Shwapno).

3. Scaling employment solutions

across sectors: Moderated by Mira Luoma, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Specialist at ILO, this session focused on public-private partnerships and sustainable strategies for scaling inclusive employment practices. Panelists included Constantinos

Commitments for Change

The conference emphasized the importance of advancing disability-inclusive business practices in Bangladesh and encouraged participants to set benchmarks for actionable commitments. A total of 15 commitments were received from organizations and individuals, including:

- **SHIN SHIN Group:** "Presently, we have over 100 colleagues with disabilities. We aim to double this number by 2025. Inclusion is our commitment."
- **BRAC:** "We commit to providing specialized support services to help people with disabilities thrive and overcome poverty."
- **Envoy Textiles:** "We will continue to include employees with disabilities in mainstream decision-making and leadership roles."
- **BGMEA:** "BGMEA encourages its member factories to create more job facilities for persons with disabilities and actively participate in programs to enhance knowledge of disability issues."
- **Urmi Group:** "We are committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities account for 1% of our workforce."
- **BYLC:** "As a leadership development organization, we pledge to make our training programs more inclusive."



Panelists and the moderator display framed artwork made by an artist with autism on stage after the discussion.



Representative of VIPS, an OPD, explaining accessibility related products and services to a visitor at their stall.

Showcasing Innovation and Creativity

The conference featured ten vibrant stalls, each showcasing products and services by and for persons with disabilities. These included handcrafted goods by Ankur Handicrafts, Projapoti Crafts, and Mashroompolli, alongside innovative tech solutions by Intelion Techbridge, Drishti Technologies Limited, and CrowdV. Organizations such as the Visually Impaired People's Society (VIPS), Sporsho Foundation, and Hashi Butiqics also displayed their initiatives, highlighting the entrepreneurial spirit and creative potential of persons with disabilities. The involvement of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH further underscored the collaborative effort to promote inclusivity and innovation.

Symbolic Moment of Empowerment

One of the most inspiring highlights of the event was the presentation of artwork by Mahi, an artist with autism, to the panelists. This heartfelt gesture showcased the creative potential of persons with disabilities and reinforced the conference's core message—that inclusion not only unlocks individual talent but enriches society as a whole.

Accessibility at Its Core

Accessibility remained a cornerstone of the event. Real-time sign-language interpretation, Braille schedules, and real-time translation services ensured full participation by attendees with diverse disabilities. This thoughtful inclusion underscored BBDN's commitment to creating equitable opportunities.

A Vision for the Future

Through "EmpowerAbility," BBDN reaffirmed its mission to create a society where the potential of persons with disabilities is recognized and valued. Panelists and participants emphasized that disability inclusion is not just an ethical imperative but also a strategic advantage, promoting innovation and productivity. The event highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships, resource mobilization, and accessible technologies and policies to empower persons with disabilities and enable them to actively participate in the workforce. The conference set a benchmark for disability inclusion in Bangladesh by breaking down barriers and forging cross-sectoral partnerships paving the way for sustainable and equitable development. As Bangladesh continues its journey toward inclusive growth, events like EmpowerAbility serve as a powerful reminder that true progress lies in empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring their inclusion in every sector of society.



Roundtable on Career Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities: Challenges and Solutions



A glimpse of the roundtable.

BBDN organized a crucial roundtable on September 21, 2024 in partnership with Daily Prothom Alo and supported by the UNPRPD project and ILO Bangladesh. The event at the Pragati Insurance Building in Dhaka brought together 12 distinguished participants representing a diverse cross-section of stakeholders including disability rights organizations, government agencies, private sector representatives from prominent industry associations like BKMEA and NASCIB, and international NGOs such as BRAC and Sightsavers, to discuss critical barriers and potential solutions for skills development and employment of people with disabilities.

This roundtable served as a significant platform for raising awareness about the challenges persons with disabilities face in accessing the workforce and highlighted the importance of establishing an inclusive work environment. The event underscored the media's powerful role in advocating for disability-inclusive policies and initiatives,

demonstrating how strategic media engagement could influence policy change, raise public awareness, and drive societal transformation.

Discussion points: The discussion centered on the barriers faced by people with disabilities in accessing employment and explored actionable solutions to overcome these challenges.

Key Points Raised During the Discussion Included

1. Lack of opportunities and support: A major concern was the limited employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Participants noted that many face barriers such as inadequate vocational training, lack of access to technology and infrastructural challenges, which hinder their chances of securing employment. Moreover, those interested in self-employment encounter difficulties, especially women with disabilities who often face restrictions from family and control over their finances. This creates an additional barrier to their entrepreneurial success.



2. Legal frameworks and enforcement: While Bangladesh has laws in place to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, enforcement remains a significant issue. Employers often fail to comply with legal requirements for accessible workplaces, and there is a lack of accountability for non-compliance. The roundtable emphasized the necessity of ensuring better implementation of laws to guarantee that persons with disabilities enjoy equal rights in the workplace.

3. Corporate responsibility and inclusion: Corporate representatives highlighted the importance of creating an inclusive work environment for people with disabilities. They stressed the need for companies to actively recruit, train, and retain employees with disabilities. However, it was pointed out that overcoming the negative attitude about hiring persons with disabilities is a key challenge. To address this, businesses were encouraged to focus on recruiting individuals based on their needs and gradually adapt the workplace as required, rather than waiting for workplaces to be fully accessible before making hires.

4. Government and NGO involvement: The discussion also underscored the role of the government, NGOs, and international organizations in creating a supportive ecosystem for the employment of persons with disabilities. Contributions from organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO) were acknowledged, and it was noted that the government and these organizations must collaborate more proactively to strengthen efforts aimed at inclusive employment.

5. Awareness and societal attitudes: Changing societal perceptions of persons with disabilities was identified as a critical factor in advancing disability inclusion. Participants advocated for public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives to challenge prevailing stigmas and promote inclusivity. It was emphasized that the inclusion agenda should be driven not only by business or buyer needs but should be seen as a broader societal responsibility, ensuring that inclusion becomes a core value across all sectors.

Proposed Action Points

The roundtable concluded with a collective call for action, urging both the public and private sectors to work together to create sustainable, inclusive employment opportunities. Some of the key action points discussed are summarized here.

1. Strengthen enforcement of disability laws and hold employers accountable for workplace accessibility.
2. Promote corporate sensitization programs to challenge negative mindsets about hiring persons with disabilities.
3. Promote public-private partnerships to create a supportive ecosystem for inclusive employment.
4. Tailor vocational training programs to the needs of persons with disabilities, including access to adaptive tools.
5. Improve access to loans and financial resources for entrepreneurs with disabilities, especially women entrepreneurs with disabilities.
6. Launch public awareness campaigns to challenge societal stigmas and promote disability inclusion.
7. Implement targeted initiatives to support entrepreneurs with disabilities in overcoming financial and social barriers.

This roundtable was a crucial step towards bridging the gap for people with disabilities in national skill development programs and access to employment. By generating open dialogue, bringing together different stakeholders, and outlining concrete solutions, the event set the stage for ongoing collaboration to ensure a more inclusive and equitable future for people with disabilities in the workforce.

This roundtable highlighted the collective responsibility of all sectors to ensure that persons with disabilities are not left behind, but instead, are empowered to contribute meaningfully to society. Bangladesh can pave the way for a truly inclusive workforce where persons with disabilities have the opportunity to thrive through continued collaboration and action.

Empowering Entrepreneurs with Disabilities: Discussion on Accessible Financing Solutions

BBDN in collaboration with SME Foundation (SMEF) organized a discussion titled "Empowering Entrepreneurs with Disabilities: Discussion on Accessible Financing Solutions" at Police Plaza Concord, Gulshan-1, Dhaka, on October 23, 2024. The event was supported by the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Promoting Gender Responsive Enterprise Development and TVET Systems (ProGRESS) project, where both BBDN and the SMEF serve as partners.

A total of 29 participants attended, including representatives from financial institutions such as: SME Foundation, BRAC Bank, Mutual Trust Bank, Shahjalal Islami Bank, Kormoshongsthan Bank, and NRBC Bank. Other key attendees included representatives from prominent organizations as well as stakeholders working on disability inclusion. Among the attendees, four were persons with disabilities—three women and one man. Through insightful discussions, participants explored the challenges and opportunities in financial inclusion for persons with disabilities.

Mahbubul Islam from the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) shared valuable insights on the essential requirements for developing financial products that cater to the needs of persons with disabilities based on their experience. Sightsavers provided an overview of the SME policy landscape.

Several entrepreneurs with disabilities also participated in the event, openly discussing the discrimination they face, despite being qualified and equipped,



Honorable guests, organizers and participants at the discussion.

in accessing loans and financial support from banks and financial institutions.

Notable speakers at the event included Peter Belen, Chief Technical Advisor of the ILO ProGRESS project; Anwar Hossain Chowdhury, Managing Director of the SME Foundation; Monsur Ahmed Chowdhury, Trustee of BBDN; and Murteza Rafi Khan, CEO of BBDN.

The Chief Guest, Anwar Hossain Chowdhury emphasized in his speech the importance of SMEF and its extended network actively engaging in every stage of the implementation process. He noted that while numerous theoretical discussions have been held and extensive research conducted, the reality on the ground tells a different story. People with disabilities continue to face significant challenges in establishing their own businesses. Many still go door to door seeking support, but their needs remain unmet. Although there are policies in place, effective implementation remains a challenge, he noted.

"This makes it all the more vital for us to come together, organize, and collaborate to genuinely support people with disabilities in building their businesses and becoming self-sufficient. Now is the time for collective action," Anwar Hossain Chowdhury said.

Discussants at the programme underscored the urgent need to address barriers to financial accessibility and emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts in creating inclusive financial products and services.

The "Empowering Entrepreneurs with Disabilities" discussion marked a significant step toward creating an inclusive ecosystem for entrepreneurs with disabilities in Bangladesh. By initiating dialogue between stakeholders, the event created opportunities to explore accessible financing solutions and potential partnerships. It laid the groundwork for future collaboration aimed at improving access to finance, skills training and employment for persons with disabilities.

Linking Opportunities: Enhancing Employment for Persons with Disabilities in the Private Sector



Guests' delivering remarks at the workshop.

On November 10, 2024, the Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN) concluded its UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) program with a knowledge-sharing workshop titled “Linking Opportunities: Enhancing Employment for Persons with Disabilities in the Private Sector.” Held at the Chamber Building in Dhaka. The event was funded by UNPRPD and ILO Bangladesh, with support from Access Bangladesh Foundation.

The workshop brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) such as the Khulna Mohanagar Protibandhi Unnayan Parishad, Joyer Pothe Pratibandhi Sangstha, Disabled Development and Research Center (DDRC), Protibandhi Kallyan Somiti, Protibandhi Atto Unnoyon Songstha, Rajonigandha Protibandhi Unnayan Songstha, Kolpona Protibandhi Unnayan Sangstha, Community Based Disability and Child Protection Organization, and Bangladesh Protibandhi Unnayan Sangstha.

Additionally, key participants included representatives from the International Labour Organization (ILO), Access Bangladesh Foundation (ABF), skills training institutions, and development partners (UNICEF, UN Women). This multi-stakeholder engagement facilitated meaningful discussions on actionable steps and provided critical feedback to refine future interventions for disability-inclusive employment in Bangladesh.

Key Discussion Points

The discussion began with an overview of employment challenges faced by persons with disabilities, including discriminatory attitudes, lack of reasonable accommodations, job insecurity, and limited access to assistive technologies—especially for women and those with severe disabilities. Employers also face challenges such as skill mismatches, infrastructural limitations, and the absence of inclusive policies.



Key stakeholders face specific hurdles. Private employers often lack resources and inclusive policies, while skills development agencies deal with inaccessible facilities and inadequate training materials. OPDs often have limited capacity for effective advocacy and collaboration with employers or training institutions.

Supply-side gaps include poor job market preparation for persons with disabilities, inaccessible hiring processes, and non-inclusive workplace cultures. On the demand side, training programs often do not match labor market needs, and there is limited cooperation between employers and OPDs along with few internship or on-the-job training opportunities.

Support mechanisms are needed at all levels: assistive devices and flexible work for employees, accessible application processes and relaxed education requirements for job seekers, and disability awareness training and inclusive hiring practices for employers. Recommendations included inclusive recruitment policies, adapted training materials, and stronger collaboration between OPDs, employers, and

training institutes. Governments and NGOs must also enforce disability rights laws and improve infrastructure.

Best practices and success stories from the inclusive private sector initiatives were shared, followed by open discussions with OPD representatives about lived experiences and practical solutions. The session concluded with action points such as strengthening partnerships, formalizing inclusive recruitment events, and setting up monitoring systems to track progress.

Building Inclusive Employment

The workshop underscored the importance of creating accessible pathways to employment and building an inclusive work environment for persons with disabilities. The discussions and recommendations made during the event laid a strong foundation for future initiatives aimed at improving employment opportunities and integration for persons with disabilities in Bangladesh's workforce. The event also highlighted the importance of continued collaboration among all stakeholders to ensure that persons with disabilities are not left behind in the country's economic growth.



Strategic Partnership for Disability Inclusion: Save the Children and BBDN Join Forces

Save the Children in Bangladesh and BBDN have officially formed a strategic partnership to address the diverse needs of youth in Bangladesh, particularly those with disabilities. By aligning with national laws and international standards, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the collaboration aims to overcome barriers to education and employment for young people with disabilities. This partnership will focus on enhancing disability inclusion in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and the broader skills system, with a goal of fostering a more inclusive environment for youth with disabilities.

The formalization of this collaboration was marked by the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in February 2024 at Save the Children Bangladesh office. The MoU was signed by Shumon Sengupta, Country Director of Save the Children in Bangladesh, and Murteza Rafi Khan, CEO of BBDN. The signing ceremony was attended by representatives from both organizations. The event served as an important step towards creating a more inclusive environment where young people with disabilities can access education, employment opportunities, and ultimately experience improved livelihoods and greater social inclusion.



A glimpse of the MoU signing between BBDN and Save The Children.

Public-Private Partnership: BBDN and SMEF Join Hands to Advance Disability-Inclusive Financial Services



Anwar Hossain Chowdhury, Managing Director of SMEF and Murteza Rafi Khan, CEO of BBDN signing the MoU.

BBDN and the SME Foundation (SMEF) formalized their commitment to promoting financial inclusion for persons with disabilities with a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on October 23, 2024 at BEF Office, Police Plaza Concord, Tower-2, Gulshan-1, Dhaka. The ceremony marked a pivotal step towards creating an inclusive financial ecosystem that supports entrepreneurs with disabilities.

The MoU was signed by Murteza Rafi Khan, CEO of BBDN, and Anwar Hossain Chowdhury, Managing Director of SMEF, in the presence of key representatives from both organizations. This partnership underscores a shared vision of advocacy, capacity-building, and the development of accessible

financial services tailored to the needs of entrepreneurs with disabilities.

Under this collaboration, BBDN and SMEF will work towards establishing robust linkages between OPDs, partner TVET institutes, and local industries. The aim is to ensure that persons with disabilities can access financial resources and opportunities essential for their business growth.

This agreement highlights a progressive shift toward inclusivity in Bangladesh's financial and entrepreneurial sectors, reaffirming both organizations' dedication to empowering persons with disabilities through equitable economic opportunities.

Private Sector Collaboration for Disability Inclusion: BBDN Partners with BRAC Bank under "Aporajeyo Ami" Initiative



BBDN joined hands with BRAC Bank PLC to drive forward the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities. This

strategic collaboration, established under BRAC Bank's flagship corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative, "Aporajeyo Ami," marks a significant milestone in BBDN's mission to create inclusive opportunities across Bangladesh.

BBDN and BRAC Bank formalized their partnership on October 15, 2024, through an MoU signed by Murteza Rafi Khan, CEO of BBDN, and Sabbir Hossain, Deputy Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer of BRAC Bank. This collaboration, anchored in BRAC Bank's 'Aporajeyo Ami' CSR initiative, focuses on three pillars: skill-building for persons with disabilities, accessibility audits of physical and digital infrastructure, and sensitization workshops for bank staff.

Sabbir Hossain underscored the bank's commitment, stating, "At BRAC Bank, we believe that inclusion is not just a responsibility but a necessity for a thriving society. Our

partnership with BBDN is more than just a commitment; it is a call to ensure persons with disabilities are seen, heard, and given the opportunity they deserve to help contribute more to national economic growth."

Commenting on the partnership, Murteza Rafi Khan said, "This partnership with BRAC Bank is a significant milestone in our ongoing mission to build a more inclusive Bangladesh. Together, we will amplify the voices of persons with disabilities, creating pathways for them to thrive personally and professionally."

"Our collaboration signals that the business community is ready to embrace a diverse workforce and to empower persons with disabilities to have fulfilling lives and be meaningfully included in our economic and social fabric," he added.

This partnership reflects BBDN's commitment to inclusion through private sector engagement. By advancing skills, accessibility, and workplace inclusion, the collaboration with BRAC Bank showcases the power of joint efforts to empower persons with disabilities.



The moment of the MoU signing between BRAC Bank and BBDN.



AWARENESS RAISING



Building Momentum for Disability Inclusion through Awareness



Trainers and participants in one frame at a sensitization session with BRAC Bank Young Leaders.

BBDN implemented a series of impactful awareness-raising initiatives in 2024 to promote disability inclusion across various sectors. These activities, conducted under diverse projects and collaborations, highlight BBDN's dedication to building an inclusive society by enhancing understanding, challenging misconceptions, and advocating for best practices. This section summarizes the key awareness-raising efforts.

Sensitization Workshop on Disability Inclusion at BRAC Bank

On November 24, 2024, BBDN partnered with BRAC Bank to conduct a sensitization workshop for members from the Young Leaders (YL) batches of 2022 and 2023, aimed at promoting disability inclusion in leadership development. Facilitated by BBDN experts including Aziza Ahmed (Head of Operations), Arup Ratan Chowdhury (Programme Manager), Sharlin Akter (Assistant Programme Manager), and Rubaiya Sultana (Sr. Programme Officer), the session focused on

raising awareness about disability inclusion in the workplace, addressing key topics such as understanding disability, identifying workplace barriers, and exploring global best practices for inclusivity. Participants were also introduced to legal frameworks supporting disability rights, reinforcing their responsibility to create a barrier-free environment.

Interactive activities, including group discussions and presentations, helped participants gain a deeper understanding of disability inclusion. A moving testimonial from Amjad Hossain, a visually impaired team member at BRAC Bank, highlighted the importance of breaking down barriers and building a culture of inclusivity, showcasing the resilience and potential of individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

This collaboration advanced BRAC Bank's commitment to an inclusive workplace while supporting broader corporate sector transformation in Bangladesh through BBDN's expertise in disability inclusion.



Part of the session with Consiglieri Research Firm.

Enhancing disability inclusion in research at Consiglieri Research Firm

As part of the ProGRESS Project, BBDN conducted a sensitization session with Consiglieri Research Firm on January 15, 2024. The session aimed to equip the firm's team with the tools to incorporate disability inclusion into their value chain study.

The workshop, attended by all members of Consiglieri's team, provided participants a deep understanding of how to approach disability inclusion in research practices. It explored the diverse needs of persons with disabilities and addressed practical strategies for removing barriers to their participation. Participants were introduced to inclusive research methodologies, with a focus on using accessible data collection tools and practicing respectful interaction with persons with disabilities.

Following the session, Consiglieri began the data collection phase of their value chain study and identified the needs of persons with disabilities. This process was conducted with respect and thoroughness, ensuring that research findings reflected the perspectives of the disability community.

This collaboration highlights how disability inclusion can be integrated into research practices, with lasting benefits for both policy and business decisions. The insights gathered will contribute to more inclusive value chain assessments, furthering the movement toward a more inclusive society.

Sensitization Workshops for Employers: Building a Disability-Inclusive Workforce

As part of the ProGRESS Project, BBDN organized two workshops with four chambers of commerce and industry in the Chittagong region to raise disability awareness and promote workplace inclusivity.

1. Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI)

Held on April 24, 2024, at the CCCI office, the first workshop brought together 26 participants—22 men and 4 women—including business leaders, employers, and disability advocates. Omar Hazzaz, President of CCCI, attended as the



An inspiring address by Salahuddin Kasem Khan, Chairman, BBDN's Advisory Council, during the sensitization workshop with the Chattogram Chamber.

Chief Guest. The session focused on breaking common myths about disabilities, discussing inclusive hiring practices, and providing practical strategies to accommodate employees with disabilities. It emphasized how businesses can integrate inclusivity into their operations, benefiting both employees and the organization.

2. Rangamati Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI)

On June 3, 2024, BBDN hosted its second workshop in collaboration with the RCCI at the Rangamati Chamber Bhaban. The event brought together 37 participants—21 men and 16 women—from RCCI, the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Bandarban Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry, and the Khagrachari Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Md. Abdul Wadud, President of RCCI attended as the Chief Guest. The workshop aimed to deepen participants' understanding of the barriers faced by employees with disabilities and provided actionable strategies for creating supportive work environments.

These workshops underscored the importance of building an inclusive workplace culture and highlighted the role of employers in driving social change by embracing disability inclusion.

Disability awareness training at Save the Children Bangladesh

BBDN collaborated with Save the Children Bangladesh to host two major disability awareness sessions with the



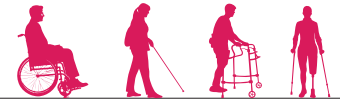
Rangamati Chamber President addressing participants at the sensitization workshop.

aim to raise awareness and equip participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to embrace diversity within their activities nationwide.

- **April 28, 2024: Sensitization training for employees:** Held at Save the Children's office in Gulshan, this session focused on breaking down barriers and addressing biases associated with disability. Over 30 participants including senior management, employees from various departments, and field-level partners, attended. Through interactive discussions, presentations, and



Part of sensitization session with Save the Children Bangladesh.



Part of sensitization session with Save the Children Bangladesh.

activities, participants gained valuable insights into the importance of creating a diverse and inclusive environment.

- **October 16, 2024: Awareness program for TVET teachers:** BBDN also organized a hybrid disability awareness program for TVET teachers from Save the Children's partner organizations. This session was attended by 77 participants, including 60 online while 17 joined in person. The training covered inclusive teaching methods, accessibility strategies, and classroom etiquette to ensure that students with disabilities are accommodated and supported in educational settings.

Both sessions underscored BBDN's commitment to inclusivity empowering workplaces and education systems to uplift persons with disabilities.

Driving Lasting Impact

BBDN's awareness-raising initiatives in 2024 played a crucial role in promoting disability inclusion across various sectors. Through workshops and collaborations with research firms, chambers of commerce, NGOs, and corporate entities, BBDN has shared essential knowledge, addressed misconceptions, and inspired tangible change. These efforts have helped organizations recognize their role in creating an accessible and inclusive environment for people with disabilities.

The impact of BBDN's work goes beyond raising awareness; it has equipped participants with the tools to implement inclusive practices and policies. By creating a culture of inclusion, BBDN has encouraged organizations to integrate disability inclusion into their operations, contributing to a more inclusive society in Bangladesh. These initiatives have made significant strides in ensuring that disability inclusion remains a priority for the future.



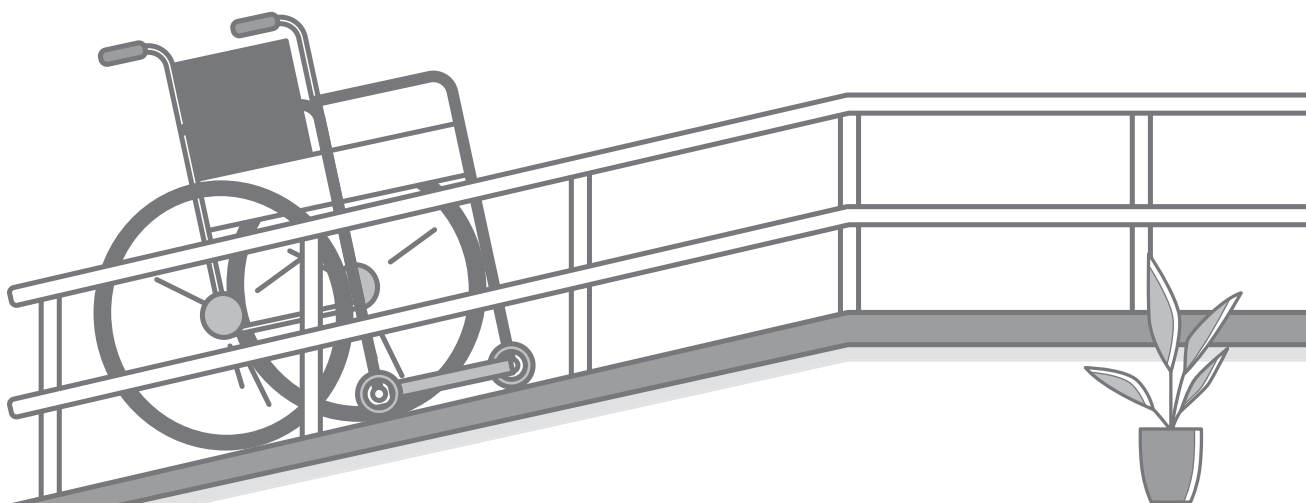
Challenges Addressed in 2024

- **Overcoming Barriers to Employment:** Throughout 2024, BBDN tackled significant barriers that prevented persons with disabilities from accessing meaningful employment opportunities. A major focus was to address widespread societal stigma through targeted awareness campaigns and sensitization workshops with employers and stakeholders. The organization worked to combat discriminatory attitudes by showcasing success stories and testimonials from employed persons with disabilities, demonstrating their valuable contributions.

Physical accessibility barriers were addressed through workplace assessments and recommendations, as demonstrated in partnerships like BRAC Bank. BBDN also worked to bridge the skills gap through specialized training programs and partnerships with TVET institutes. A particularly challenging area was the limited access to funds, especially for women entrepreneurs with disabilities, which BBDN addressed through strategic partnerships with the SME Foundation and various financial institutions.

- **Promoting Inclusive Hiring Practices:** BBDN made significant strides in promoting inclusive hiring practices across various sectors, from hospitality with Le Méridien to banking with BRAC Bank. The organization facilitated the implementation of reasonable workplace accommodations through corporate partnerships and sensitization programs. BBDN supported the development of comprehensive databases of job seekers with disabilities and strengthened collaboration between organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and employers to improve job matching.

The organization promoted apprenticeship and internship programs to create clear pathways to employment and advocated for better enforcement of disability laws and workplace accessibility requirements. Through corporate sensitization programs, BBDN worked to combat negative mindsets surrounding the hiring of persons with disabilities. The organization also developed frameworks for inclusive job fairs and recruitment events, as demonstrated by successful initiatives in both Dhaka and Chattogram, which helped create direct connections between qualified candidates and potential employers.



Success Stories

Md. Mobinur Rahman with Physical Disability (Campaign Officer, BYLC): "I have always wanted to contribute to society, especially to empower young people so that people recognize and empower youth with disabilities like myself. Thanks to BBDN Job Fair, I secured my role as a Campaign Officer at Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC). This opportunity allowed me to connect with youth-led organizations in Manikganj and drive positive social change there."



Afrina Ashraf with Physical Disability (HR Executive, Flowater Solutions Ltd & Flosolar Solutions Ltd): "I faced many obstacles but I didn't allow the obstacles to be my weakness, rather used them like shields and made them my strength. People insulted me many times for my impairment, but those insults gave me more strength and helped me to become self-reliant. My biggest courage came from BBDN. With its support I got the chance to prove my ability and work in a private company. I want to thank BBDN for supporting me in this journey."

Rubel Haque with Physical Disability (Associate Officer, BRAC Skills Development Programme): "Before this job, life was very hard for me. People looked down on me because of my disability. I tried many times but no one gave me a chance. Now I work with BRAC Skills Development Programme, and I help young people in Joypurhat to start small businesses. This job gives me hope. I learn many things, I feel proud. Now I believe, even with a disability, I can do something good for others."



Jahanara Jahan Lima with Hearing Disability (Kitchen Support Expert, Hotel Le Méridien Dhaka): "At the age of 6, I lost my hearing completely and my speech became

increasingly difficult. I tried to understand people's words by lip-reading, although I could not understand everything. After graduation, despite all my qualifications, nobody gave me jobs just because I had a disability. Finally, through a BBDN job fair, I was offered a chef position at Le Méridien Dhaka. This was a big moment in my life - for the first time I got the chance to unleash my creativity. I got promoted here and am working like everyone else."

Our Members and Partners

Founder and Premier members



General members



Resource members



Strategic partners





New Members in 2024

BBDN experienced significant growth in its membership base during 2024, welcoming several distinguished organizations that strengthened the network's capacity to promote disability inclusion in Bangladesh's private sector.



The Network welcomed **BRAC Bank PLC** as a premier member, marking a significant expansion in the financial sector. As one of Bangladesh's leading banks, BRAC Bank's membership demonstrated the growing recognition of disability inclusion in the banking sector and provided valuable momentum for promoting inclusive employment practices in the financial services sector.



The addition of **SAJIDA Foundation** as a general member brought crucial development sector expertise to the Network. With their extensive experience in implementing development programs that have impacted over 6 million individuals across Bangladesh since 1993, SAJIDA Foundation's membership enhanced BBDN's capacity to bridge social development and private sector inclusion initiatives.



M. M. Ispahani joined as a premier member, representing a significant addition from the country's traditional business sector. Their membership reflected growing awareness and commitment to disability inclusion among Bangladesh's established business houses, setting an important example to follow.

These strategic additions to BBDN's membership base in 2024 not only expanded the Network's reach but also diversified its sectoral representation, strengthening its ability to promote disability-inclusive employment practices across different industries in Bangladesh.



Member Benefits

Are you ready to become a leading business on disability inclusion?

Companies in Bangladesh are increasingly recognizing that diverse and inclusive workforce, especially those including employees with disabilities, drive better business results. Organizations that embrace disability inclusion excel in innovation, problem-solving, and talent attraction, making them more competitive in today's evolving labor market.

By joining BBDN, your organization/company will gain access to valuable services that support the recruitment and inclusion of persons with disabilities. These services can help your business not only can create a more inclusive workforce but also take advantage of a tax rebate. Taxpayers who hire at least 10% of their workforce or more than 25 employees with disabilities are eligible for a tax rebate of 5% or 75% of the total salary paid to employees with disabilities—whichever is less.

Join BBDN and become a leading business on disability inclusion and unlock the full potential of your workforce.

What We Offer

As a BBDN member, your organization will benefit from:

Knowledge sharing and support

- Access to best practices and resources for disability inclusion.
- Guidance on creating and implementing inclusive workplace policies.
- Strategies to combat stigma and stereotypes associated with disabilities.
- Support for developing accessibility initiatives and solutions.
- Networking opportunities with thought leaders, disability organizations, and like-minded businesses.

Practical assistance

- Recruitment support for candidates with disabilities.
- Tailored training and development programs to build an inclusive workforce.
- Advisory services for workplace modifications and reasonable accommodations.
- Guidance on legal compliance and leveraging available incentives.

- Access to success stories, case studies, and real-world examples of inclusive practices

Recognition and visibility

- Opportunities to showcase your organization's commitment to inclusion through BBDN events, publications and awards.
- Positioning as a leader in disability inclusion within Bangladesh's business community.

This comprehensive support ensures your organization is well-equipped to lead in building an inclusive and productive workforce.

Membership Categories

1. Premier member (Tk. 1,00,000/year)

- Eligibility for board of trustees and advisory council positions.
- Priority exposure in BBDN publications and events.
- Full access to all BBDN inclusion services.
- Dedicated support for implementing inclusion initiatives.
- Recognition as a disability inclusion champion.

2. Corporate member (TK. 50,000/year)

- Eligibility for advisory council membership.
- Featured presence in BBDN publications and events.
- Participation in specialized training programs.
- Comprehensive inclusion support services.

3. General member (TK. 25,000/year)

- Access to BBDN interventions and events.
- Networking opportunities with resource members.
- Participation in sub-committees.
- Basic inclusion support services.

4. Resource member (TK. 10,000/year)

- Open to NGOs, DPOs, universities, and service providers.
- Collaboration opportunities and access to the business network.
- Platform to share resources and knowledge.

How to Become a Member

Application Process

- **Express interest:** Contact BBDN via email at info@bbdn.com.bd to express your intention to join.
- **Submit application:** Complete the membership form and indicate your membership type.
- **Pay membership fee:** Submit payment via cheque or pay order to "Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN)."
- **Onboarding:** Receive confirmation and resources to start your inclusion journey.

Membership form

Name of the organization			
Industry		Number of employees	
Address			
Primary contact name		Designation	
E-mail		Phone number	
Secondary contact name		Designation	
E-mail		Phone number	

Please ✓ the type of membership for your organization

Premier Membership	☐ Tk. 100,000 per year
Corporate Membership	☐ Tk. 50,000 per year
General Membership	☐ Tk. 25,000 per year
Resource Membership	☐ Tk. 10,000 per year



Membership fees (by cheque or pay order) are to be made payable to **Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN)**.

.....
Signature of Chairman, Managing Director or Director

.....
Date

BBDN Board of Trustees



Ardashir Kabir

President of Bangladesh Employers' Federation, (BEF)
Managing Director of Sathgao Tea Estate, Director of
Kedarpur Tea Co. Limited & Chairman of BBDN



Salahuddin Kasem Khan

Chairman, Advisory Council
Bangladesh Business & Disability Network, Former
President of Bangladesh Employers' Federation, (BEF)



M. Salman Ispahani

Chairman, M M Ispahani Limited



Monsur Ahmed Chowdhury

Director, Impact Foundation



Rashed Ahmed Chowdhury

Chairman, Banga Garments Ltd, ABC Building Products
Ltd, Vice Chairman, Mutual Trust Bank PLC (MTB)



Rupali Chowdhury

Managing Director of Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited
& Former President Foreign Investors' Chamber of
Commerce & Industry (FICCI)



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Independent Director, Advisor, Teacher and Financial Consultant



Dr. Mohammad Sohrab Hossain

Executive Director, Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP)



Farooq Ahmed

Secretary General & CEO, BEF



Sadaf Saaz Siddiqi

Group Director, ESKE Clothing



Faiaz Rahman

Director, URMI Group



BBDN Team Members



Murteza Rafi Khan

Chief Executive Officer



Aziza Ahmed

Director Operations



Zameare Rahman

Senior Accounts & Admin Manager



Arup Ratan Chowdhury

Programme Manager



Md. Tareq Mahmud

Deputy Programme Manager



Sharlin Akter

Assistant Programme Manager



Rubaiya Sultana

Senior Programme Officer



Nayem Molla

Communications and Admin Officer

Looking Forward

Strategic Priorities for 2025

BBDN aims to advance disability inclusion by prioritizing the following in 2025

1. Expand inclusive employment opportunities

- Organize job fairs in underserved regions to connect persons with disabilities with inclusive employers and promote the adoption of inclusive hiring practices across industries.

2. Empower women with disabilities

- Provide targeted skills development programs for women with disabilities, with an emphasis on market-driven skills such as IT, entrepreneurship, and leadership.

3. Enhance skills development programs

- Strengthen training initiatives for OPDs, TVET institutions, and employers to better align with market needs.

4. Advocate for policy advancement and implementation

- Support the alignment of national frameworks with global standards such as SDGs and the UNCRPD, while advocating for the rigorous implementation of disability inclusion laws and regulations to ensure measurable progress.

5. Drive research and innovation

- Conduct research to identify barriers and opportunities in disability-inclusive employment and promote solutions that enhance workplace inclusion.

6. Strengthen public-private partnerships

- Build strategic partnerships with government, private sector, and development actors to build inclusive financial and entrepreneurial support systems for persons with disabilities.

Call to Action

Let's work together to create a society where everyone thrives!

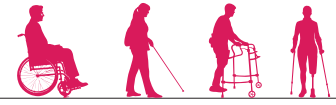
BBDN invites businesses, organizations, and community leaders to join hands in achieving a disability-inclusive Bangladesh. Here's how you can contribute:

- **Businesses:** Commit to inclusive hiring practices, accessibility in the workplace, and supporting skills development for persons with disabilities.
- **Development partners:** Partner with us to fund and scale impactful initiatives.

- **Advocates:** Collaborate with us to influence policies that break down barriers and ensure equal opportunities.
- **Communities:** Engage in awareness campaigns to challenge stigma and promote inclusion.

We can empower persons with disabilities—especially women and youth—to acquire skills, secure employment, and contribute meaningfully to society by working together. Let's build a future defined by equity and opportunity for all.

For collaboration opportunities, reach out to us at info@bbdn.com.bd.



Acknowledgements

BBDN extends its heartfelt gratitude to all the **partners, supporters, and individuals** who played a vital role in advancing our mission for disability inclusion in 2024.

Supporters and Network Members

We are sincerely grateful to those who have consistently championed our mission and contributed to the strength of our network:

- **Network Members:** For their valuable support, active engagement, and shared commitment to advancing disability-inclusive employment.
- **Individual Donors:** For believing in our vision and standing beside us with your generous support — turning hope into action and enabling real, lasting change in the lives of persons with disabilities.
- **Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI):** For their continued guidance and steadfast support— helping us create meaningful pathways to disability-inclusive employment.

Partners

We deeply appreciate the impactful collaboration and unwavering support of our key partner organizations:

- **International Labour Organization (ILO):** For guiding and supporting our efforts through the ProGRESS and UNPRPD projects and other initiatives aimed at workplace inclusion.
- **GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit):** For working with us on critical capacity-building programs like Return to Work and occupational health initiatives in the RMG sector.

- **BRAC Bank PLC:** For their continued partnership on the Aporajeyo Ami initiative, promoting inclusive employment and organizational practices.

Collaborating Institutions and Advocates

We thank our broader circle of collaborators who have strengthened our work across sectors and communities:

- **Chambers of Commerce and Industries across the Country:** For their growing support and efforts to integrate disability inclusion into the private sector.
- **Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs):** For their grassroots leadership, participation, and advocacy in all our programs.
- **Save the Children Bangladesh:** For partnering with us on disability-inclusive TVET (technical and vocational education and training) initiatives.
- **Small and Medium Enterprise Foundation (SMEF):** For supporting our initiatives to empower persons with disabilities in the SME sector.
- **TVET Institutions:** For advancing inclusive skills development and vocational training.
- **Media Partners – especially Daily Prothom Alo:** For amplifying our message and raising public awareness on the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

We also gratefully acknowledge the unwavering commitment of our **Advisory Council** and the **Board of Trustees**, whose passion and dedication continue to fuel our progress.

Together, we are creating pathways to opportunity and building a future where disability inclusion stands at the core of national development. Thank you for being part of this transformative journey.



Bangladesh Business & Disability Network

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Employers' Federation**