

ISSUE I JANUARY TO JUNE 2025

NEWSLETTER

TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL OF DISABILITY INCLUSIVE GROWTH



EDITORIAL NOTE

The first half of 2025 has witnessed both challenges and opportunities for disability employment in Bangladesh. Political situation has influenced business confidence, and rapid advances in artificial intelligence are transforming industries and impacting the skills companies are seeking. All these changes make it crucial than ever before to prepare persons with disabilities for current as well as future work. However, the skills that many persons with disabilities possess often do not match the skills employers are looking for. Meanwhile, access to learning market-demand skills is still limited due to inaccessibility, unaffordability, and other barriers. BBDN has worked to close this gap through action-oriented, market-focused initiatives.

In the last six months, we launched digital skills training for youth with disabilities, organized recruitment drives across various districts, and linked TVET institutions with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities to strengthen employment initiatives. We have expanded partnerships with major banks, IT training providers, and hospitality sector to provide training that is market-demanding and supported by reasonable accommodation like sign language interpretation and transport allowances. Recognizing that skill development alone is not enough to ensure sustainable employment, we have also worked on changing mindsets and creating inclusive workplaces. Our sensitization sessions with partners like Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited and BRAC Bank PLC, community-level workshops under the ILO-supported ProGRESS project, and employer dialogues across regions have changed employee mindsets, preparing them to support and collaborate with colleagues with disabilities.

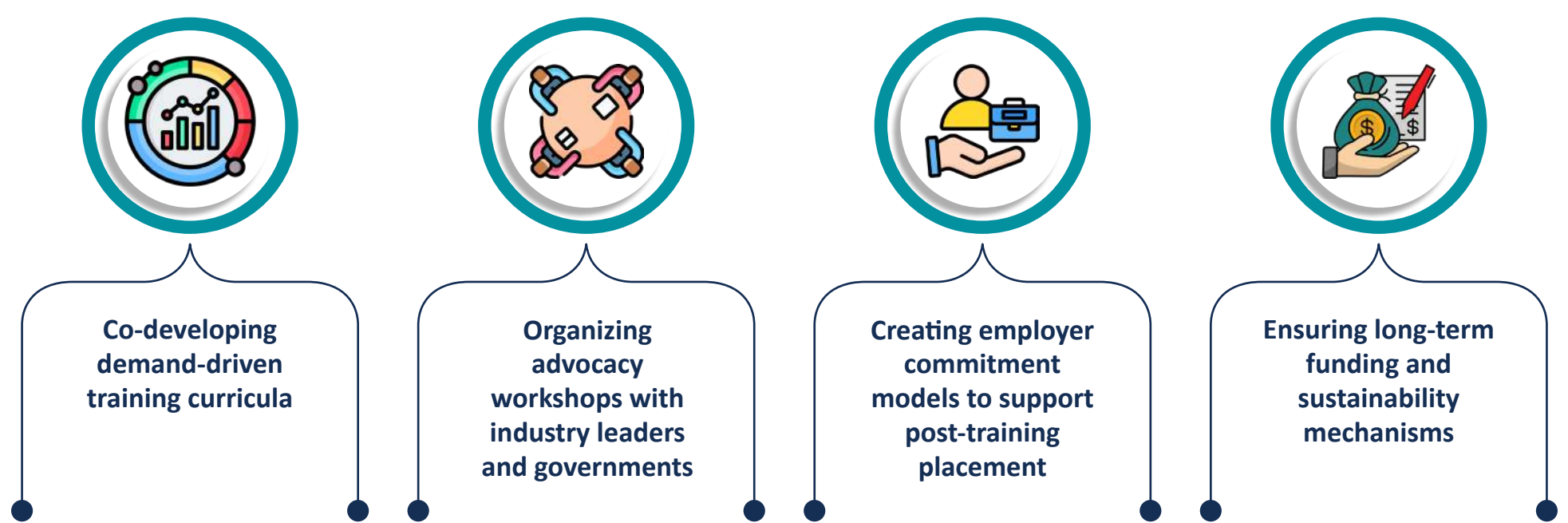
In parallel, we have strengthened workplace health and safety systems through Return to Work training for HR and compliance professionals and Occupational Disease and Occupational Medicine training for factory medical staff in the RMG sector, helping workers reintegrate after illness or injury. The stories in this edition show that when skills connect to opportunity, lives change and businesses grow, even in uncertain times. Entering the second half of the year, our vision remains to build an employment ecosystem where talent is recognised over barriers, where supply meets demand, and where inclusion drives economic and social growth.

LEADING THE WAY FORWARD

Advisory Council Meeting 2025: Setting The Tone For The Year

On January 11, 2025, BBDN held its annual Advisory Council Meeting at the BEF Office, Police Plaza Concord, Tower-2, Gulshan-1, Dhaka. Trustee Board members, representatives of founder and premier members, general members, and management team attended the meeting to review BBDN’s progress and plan future strategies for disability inclusion in the workplace. The meeting addressed key

challenges for employment of persons with disabilities including, mismatch between training programs and private sector demand, high turnover with the first two years being particularly critical for retention and persistent accessibility gaps in infrastructure and transportation. To address these challenges, the council proposed:



Expanding Our Network: Membership And Strategic Partnerships

In the first half of 2025, BBDN expanded its network with the onboarding of Prime Bank PLC as a Premier Member. In add tion, BBDN signed four Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) to address gaps in skills development and inclusive employment:

- 01 With **Eastern Bank PLC (EBL)** to support digital literacy and employability training for women with disabilities.
- 02 With **Skill Jobs (a concern of Daffodil Group)** and with **Creative IT Institute** to offer industry-aligned accessible IT skills training for persons with disabilities and build pathways to sustainable employment.
- 03 With **Marriott Worldwide Business Council Bangladesh** to promote employment of persons with disabilities in the hospitality sector.

These partnerships reflect the growing recognition among private sectors that disability inclusion is a driver of growth.



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

Enhancing Disability Inclusive Employment Policies in Asia

In May 2025, the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) published a regional study report titled “Enhancing Disability-Inclusive Employment Policies in Asia: Challenges, Good Practices, and Policy Recommendations.” The report highlighted policy challenges, practices, and recommendations for advancing inclusive employment across seven Asian countries including Bangladesh. BBDN conducted the

Bangladesh case study, with CEO Murteza Rafi Khan as Lead National Expert, supported by Program Manager Arup Ratan Chowdhury and Assistant Program Manager Sharlin Akther. The chapter reviews Bangladesh’s policies, laws, and workplace practices, and suggests steps to improve employment for persons with disabilities.

To Read The Full Report
Click This Link Or
**SCAN THE
QR CODE**



SENSITIZATION SPOTLIGHT

Creating Awareness, Changing Mindsets

In the first half of 2025, BBDN continued its journey to create inclusive mindsets through sensitization sessions with private companies and TVET institutions. These sessions helped employees, trainers, and leaders better understand disabilities, break stereotypes, and learn practical steps to make their spaces more inclusive.



Berger Paints: Painting a More Inclusive Future

BBDN in partnership with Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited, a founder member of the network, conducted a sensitization session for their employees from various departments.



Through interactive discussions, group activities, and personal stories, participants explored the concept of disability, barriers persons with disabilities face, inclusive etiquette and practical ways to make their workplace more inclusive. The session also featured a powerful reflection by Nishat Afroz, a Sales Support Officer with low vision, who shared how simple accommodations enabled her to succeed in the workplace. Senior management, including Managing Director Rupali Chowdhury, joined the session and reaffirmed Berger’s long term commitment to disability inclusion.

BRAC Bank: Three Batches, One Commitment

As part of the “Aporajeyo Ami” initiative, BBDN conducted three sensitization sessions with BRAC Bank employees across various roles. Through interactive discussions, group activities, and personal stories, participants explored the concept of disability, barriers persons with disabilities face and inclusive etiquette and practical ways to make their workplace more inclusive. The sessions were enriched by guest speakers from UN Women, Shwapno, and Le Méridien Dhaka. Each of them shared personal and professional insights on inclusive hiring and leadership—highlighting experiences of employees with disabilities thriving in professional roles, as well as managers who champion inclusion on their teams. BRAC Bank’s leadership also showed support, engaging with participants throughout the sessions.



Sensitizing TVET Trainers for Disability-Inclusive Learning

To enable inclusive learning spaces in TVET, BBDN conducted sensitization sessions with instructors and other employees from Creative IT Institute and Skill Jobs (Daffodil Group). Participants explored the unique challenges persons with disabilities face in accessing TVET programs and learned practical strategies to remove barriers in teaching and classroom environments.



Sensitization In Numbers (Jan–June 2025)



SKILLING BANGLADESH’S YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

BRAC Bank PLC and BBDN under 'Aporajeyo Ami' Empower Youth with Disabilities

Through the “Aporajeyo Ami” initiative, BRAC Bank and BBDN are supporting youth with disabilities to gain digital skills in Graphic Design and Digital Marketing. The training is delivered in collaboration with Skill Jobs a concern of Daffodil Group and Creative IT Institute. Before classes began, BBDN conducted sensitization sessions with trainers and staff to help them better understand the needs of learners with different disabilities. BBDN also partnered with B-SCAN, an organization of persons

with disabilities (OPD), to identify and mobilize candidates. Following a careful assessment and selection process, 36 youth with disabilities were enrolled across both courses. All trainees are receiving transportation allowances and other accommodations to ensure they can participate fully. The sessions are supported with sign-language interpretation.

“

We’re not just training individuals - we’re preparing future freelancers, professionals, and leaders who will thrive in the digital economy.

”

NAFISA SHADAF
AVP & Senior Manager, BRAC Bank PLC



Classes of digital skills training underway.

EBL and BBDN Partnership: Women With Disabilities Take The Lead

BBDN and Eastern Bank PLC (EBL) have launched a dedicated training program on Digital Marketing for women with disabilities. To prepare for the program, BBDN first held a sensitization session with the instructors at Skill Jobs. Then, in partnership with B-SCAN, candidates were identified, assessed, and selected for the course. Fifteen women with

disabilities are now enrolled and actively participating. The sessions are supported with sign language interpretation, transportation allowances, and other necessary accommodations to ensure a supportive learning environment.

“

Women with disabilities face multiple layers of marginalization due to both gender and disability. We are grateful to EBL for stepping forward to support their skills development and employment prospects.

MURTEZA RAFI KHAN
CEO, BBDN

”

“

At EBL, we believe in the power of digital skills to transform lives. This collaboration with BBDN aligns with our mission to foster inclusion and support the skill development of persons with disabilities.

AHMED SHAHEEN
Additional Managing Director, EBL

”

Together with our partners, BBDN is building a future where persons with disabilities are equipped to lead, work, and succeed in a fast-changing digital world.



51 persons with disabilities are undertaking digital skills training

- 36 persons through the “Aporajeyo Ami” initiative in collaboration with BRAC Bank PLC
- 15 persons as part of a CSR initiative in collaboration with Eastern Bank PLC (EBL)



100% of sessions supported with sign language interpretation



1 OPD onboarded to support outreach and candidate selection



2 TVET institutes engaged (Skill Jobs, Creative IT Institute)



GRASSROOT ADVOCACY

Advancing Inclusion from the Ground Up

Inclusion begins where people live, learn, and work—at the community level. In the first half of 2025, BBDN organized a series of regional workshops across Bangladesh under Promoting Gender-Responsive Enterprise Development and TVET System (ProGRESS) project, supported by International Labour Organization (ILO). These workshops brought together local stakeholders to identify barriers, exchange ideas, and take practical steps toward disability-inclusive development. The events focused on two key themes that worked hand-in-hand:



Masreka Khan, National Program Officer - Gender and Skills Policy, delivering remarks at a workshop on citizen rights advocacy.



Part of workshops on citizen rights advocacy with multi-stakeholders.



Part of workshops on citizen rights advocacy with multi-stakeholders.

1. Workshops on Citizen Rights Advocacy with Multi-Stakeholders

These workshops created space for open discussions on core concepts of disability, rights-based approach, understanding of accessibility, existing facilities, and barriers faced by persons with disabilities in accessing skills training, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Discussions also covered the current status of relevant national policies and legal frameworks on

skills and employment, highlighting gaps from a disability inclusion perspective, and fostering local consensus on practical solutions. Organized in collaboration with Access Bangladesh Foundation and local organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), the workshops encouraged local voices to reflect on real challenges and propose solutions.

Participants identified several community priorities, including:

Raising Awareness On Disability Rights And Inclusion

Making Training Centres And Public Transport Accessible

Improving Inclusive Teaching Practices

Involving OPDs, Employers Associations And TVET Institutes

Access To Finance And Business Development Services For Entrepreneurs With Disabilities

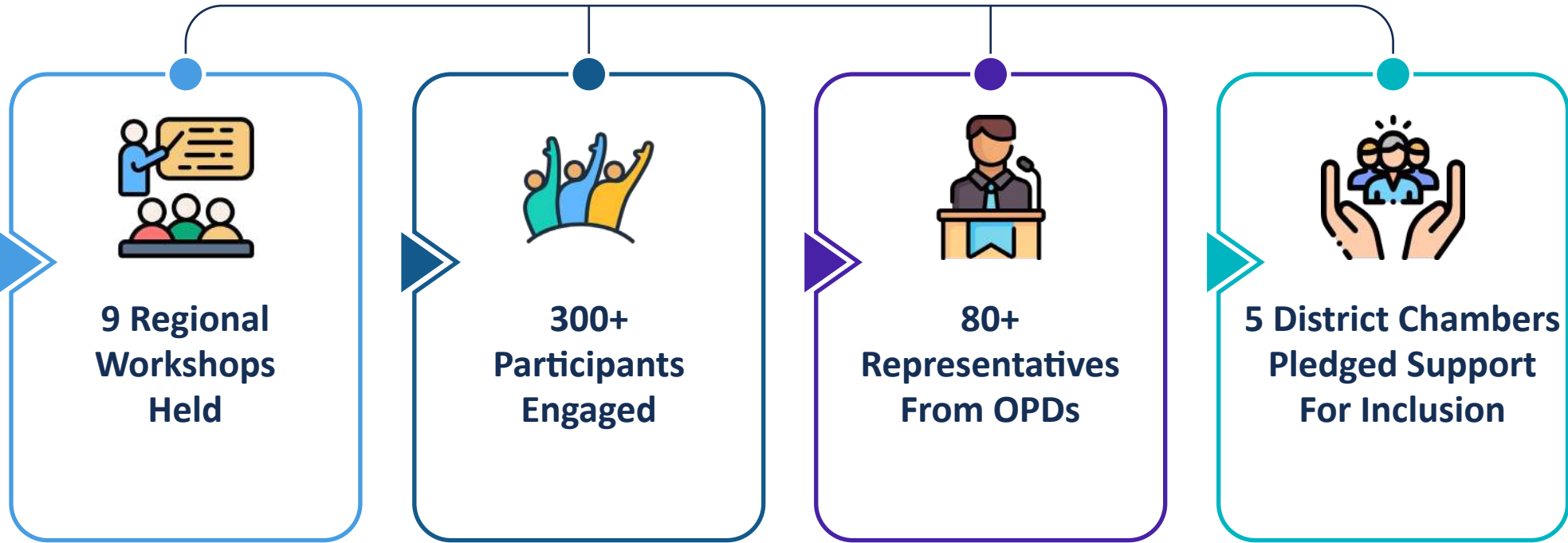
2: Workshop on Building a Disability Inclusive Workforce

These workshops focused on engaging local employers and business leaders. BBDN partnered with district Chambers of Commerce and Industry, women’s chambers, SME Foundation, NASCIB chapters, and entrepreneur networks to highlight the value of disability inclusion in the workplace. Participants were introduced to core concepts of disability, workplace accessibility, reasonable accommodation, and respectful communication. Building on this foundation, discussions were facilitated on practical steps for inclusive hiring, tax benefits, and CSR opportunities. Local employers also had opportunities to interact with persons with disabilities, hear their experiences, and understand their potential as employees and entrepreneurs.



Part of workshops on building a disability- inclusive workforce.

Grassroot Advocacy Snapshot: Jan–June 2025



Through these workshops, BBDN is strengthening local ecosystems for inclusion connecting communities, employers, and service providers to turn commitment into action. By building these foundations at the grassroots, we are paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable Bangladesh.



Part of workshops on building a disability- inclusive workforce.

EMPLOYMENT IMPACT

Driving Employment of Persons with Disabilities

At BBDN, we view employment as a critical step toward inclusion—where persons with disabilities can participate fully in economic and social life. Over the past six months, our focus has been on building practical, business-driven solutions that connect skilled candidates with disabilities with job opportunities. By working directly with employers and community partners, we’re making inclusion work on the ground.



Recruitment Drives with Shwapno



In collaboration with ACI Logistics Limited (Shwapno) and with support from International Labour Organization (ILO) under the Promoting Gender-Responsive Enterprise Development and TVET System (ProGRESS) project, BBDN organized recruitment drives in multiple districts. These events brought together job-ready candidates with disabilities and Shwapno’s hiring teams for direct interviews.

A total of 69 candidates participated. After on-the-spot interviews, 25 were offered employment at Shwapno outlets in multiple districts across Bangladesh.

“

We’re building a stronger team by embracing diversity and empowering every individual, including persons with disabilities.

SAJJAD HOSSAIN
HR Manager, Shwapno

”



Building Skills to Employment Bridge

To make employment efforts more sustainable, BBDN supported formal agreements between TVET institutions and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs). These partnerships are helping create a stronger link between training and job placement by:

- 01 Prioritizing enrollment of persons with disabilities in vocational training.
- 02 Supporting inclusive course design through collaboration between OPDs and training institutes.
- 03 Coordinating job-matching and placement efforts with local employers and BBDN’s business network.

So far, 6 Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed across three districts, which will strengthen locally driven employment ecosystems.



BBDN Inclusive Employment Bridge: Jan–June 2025



69 Candidates Participated In Recruitment Drives



25 Job Offers Extended



6 MoUs Signed Between TVETs And OPDs



3 Districts With Inclusive Hiring Underway

By connecting skills to real opportunities, BBDN is driving systemic change. We remain committed to expanding these efforts so that skilled persons with disabilities are recognized, supported, and given the space to thrive.

CREATING EXPERTS AT RMG SECTOR on

Occupational Disease and Occupational Medicine and Return To Work

The journey to inclusive workplaces is not complete without making them safe, welcoming, and supportive—especially for workers returning after an injury or illness. In 2025, BBDN expanded its efforts to build the capacity of HR professionals and compliance officers on return-to-work (RTW) processes, aiming to support structured RTW initiatives. It also trained factory medical professionals on occupational disease and occupational medicine, equipping them with essential knowledge on workplace hazards, prevention strategies, and the early detection of occupational illnesses. These activities were carried out in collaboration with GIZ Bangladesh under the Social Protection for Workers in the Textile and Leather Sector (SOSI) project.



Dr. Silvia Popp, Project Manager, Social Protection for Workers in the Textile and Leather Sector, GIZ, delivering remarks.

Training on Occupational Disease and Occupational Medicine in Chattogram & Dhaka



Part of group photo of participants, facilitators, and organizers after successful completion of training.

To strengthen workplace health systems, BBDN conducted three batches of training on occupational disease and occupational medicine. These were delivered by certified trainers from our pool of Master Trainers developed last year. This training aimed to equip factory medical professionals with essential knowledge about workplace hazards, prevention strategies, and the early detection of occupational diseases. The goal is to reduce work-related illnesses and enhance workplace safety. A total of 64 medical professionals from 37 factories were trained. The result: stronger awareness and improved readiness to respond to health issues at work.

Return to Work (RTW) Training in Chattogram & Dhaka

BBDN organized two batches of Return to Work (RTW) training in Chattogram and Dhaka for participants from RMG factories in the first half of 2025. The training aimed to develop factory-level human resources who can coordinate and facilitate the reintegration of workers after injury or illness by arranging necessary medical and rehabilitation support. Participants learned the principles and benefits of RTW, the role of RTW coordinators, and steps to set up and manage RTW processes in factories. The sessions also covered stakeholder benefits, rehabilitation support, mental health reporting, and strategies for monitoring and evaluation to ensure smoother transitions back to work and healthier, more inclusive workplaces. The sessions were led by Dr. Rushan Afroze (Health Advisor, GIZ), Arup Ratan Chowdhury (Program Manager, BBDN), Rear Admiral Harunur Rashid (Retd), and certified RTW Master Trainers. A total of 56 HR and compliance professionals from 30 factories took part, with each factory developing its own RTW plan. To support implementation, a follow-up mentorship process has begun through the RTW alumni network.



Part of group activity of RTW training.



Part of role-play activity of RTW training.



Syed Moazzem Hussain, Senior Social Protection Advisor, GIZ Bangladesh, facilitating a session.



BBDN Program Manager Arup Ratan Chowdhury facilitating a session.

Peer Learning: ToT Alumni Coordination Meeting

On March 16, 2025, under Social Protection for Workers in the Textile and Leather Sector (SOSI) project, BBDN, in collaboration with GIZ Bangladesh, hosted a quarterly coordination meeting with alumni of Occupational Disease and Occupational Medicine Training of Trainers (ToT) program. Held at BEF office in Motijheel, the meeting aimed to reconnect with ToT alumni who have begun conducting training on occupational disease and occupational medicine, providing a platform to share successes, challenges, and lessons learned. It served as a platform to exchange best practices, gather feedback for improving future sessions, and align future training efforts to further advance workplace health and safety standards in the textile and leather sectors.

Key attendees included Syed Saad Hussain Gilani, Chief Technical Advisor, Project to Support Employment Injury Scheme (ILO); Shafiqul Islam, Special Advisor to the EIS Pilot Special Unit; Syed Moazzem Hussain, Senior Social Protection Advisor, SOSI (GIZ); Dr. Rushan Afroze, Health Advisor, SOSI (GIZ); and Aziza Ahmed, Director Operations, BBDN. Additionally, the meeting was graced by the presence of Ruben Capote, Country Manager and Anny Chowdhury, HR Manager of The Simon Project.

“

These alumni are now ambassadors of inclusive reintegration—bridging health, HR, and compliance.

SYED MOAZZEM HUSSAIN
Senior Advisor, GIZ

”



Syed Moazzem Hussain, Senior Social Protection Advisor, GIZ Bangladesh, delivering his speech.



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



Group photo of guests, participants, and organizing team.

Creating Experts in RMG: A Snapshot (Jan–June 2025)



Through its work on occupational disease and return-to-work, BBDN continues to build a future where recovery is not a barrier—and no worker is left behind.

SPECIAL INITIATIVES & NATIONAL DIALOGUES

Building OPDs' Capacity: Training on Inclusive Skills and Employment in Barishal

From February 4–6, 2025, BBDN organized a three-day training in Barishal to strengthen the capacity of local organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) in promoting inclusive skills and employment. The training was held under the ILO-supported ProGRESS project. Participants included representatives from Bangladesh Protibandhi Unnayan Sangstha (Barishal) and Bandhab Protibandhi Sangstha (Khulna), and took place at Hotel Kingfishers in Barishal. A total of 23 people joined the sessions, 15 of whom were persons with disabilities.

Led by two experienced facilitators, the training focused on giving OPD members practical tools to support persons with disabilities in accessing skills training, enrolling in technical and vocational education (TVET) programs, and finding job opportunities. The sessions also encouraged open discussion, addressed local challenges, and emphasized the important role OPDs play in making their communities more inclusive.



Justice and Support: Workshop on Rights of Persons Injured in the July Uprising

On April 13, 2025, BBDN and Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) co-hosted a workshop titled “Rights and Protection of Persons Injured in the July Uprising” at BBDN office in Motijheel. The event focused on the mental health, legal rights, and inclusion needs of individuals who acquired disabilities during the uprising. Bringing together voices from legal, psychosocial, and disability inclusion backgrounds, the workshop created space for meaningful dialogue and solidarity. It deepened understanding of the lived experiences of injured individuals and reaffirmed a collective commitment to dignity, justice, and inclusion.



Building Better Futures: Celebrating Voices of Resilience and Change for Workplace Inclusion

On May 5, 2025, BBDN, International Labour Organization (ILO) and Bonhishikha, organized an event titled “Building Better Futures: Celebrating Voices of Resilience and Change for Workplace Inclusion” at BCFCC, Agargaon, Dhaka. Held in honor of International Labour Day, the event focused on advancing workplace rights, inclusion, and policy change. The program featured remarks from key national leaders, including Brigadier General (Retd.) Dr. M Sakhawat Hussain, Adviser to the Ministry of Labour and Employment; Sharmeen S. Murshid,

Adviser to the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs; Tuomo Poutiainen, Country Director of ILO; A H M Shafiquzzaman, Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Employment; Badal Khan, Chairman of the National Coordination Committee for Workers’ Education (NCCWE); Tahmid Ahmed, Vice President of the Bangladesh Employers’ Federation (BEF); and Syed Nasim Manzur, Managing Director of Apex Footwear Ltd.



The Event’s Highlights Included:

- 1

A moving story from Rokibul Islam, a youth with a physical disability who secured a job at Le Méridien Dhaka through ILO ProGRESS Project and BBDN, which illustrated the impact of inclusive hiring practices.
- 2

A dialogue session where BBDN’s Nayem Molla spoke about the barriers youth with disabilities face after completing their education, calling for greater employer responsibility and improved access to digital opportunities.
- 3

A panel discussion on workplace rights, where BBDN Trustee Sadaf Saaz Siddiqi emphasized the need for stronger protections and fair treatment for all workers.
- 4

Entrepreneurship booths showcased innovation and resilience, with stalls led by entrepreneurs with disabilities and representatives from OPDs.
- 5

A closing workshop focused on career development for marginalized groups, particularly youth with disabilities, highlighting tools and guidance for building meaningful employment paths.



VOICES FROM OUR NETWORK



AZIZA AHMED
Director Operations, BBDN

Attending the Global Disability Summit in Berlin reminded me why inclusion work matters and how wide the movement is. I left with three takeaways: real progress in Bangladesh needs companies, OPDs, NGOs, and government pulling together; technology, including AI, can expand opportunity; and lasting change depends on dialogue and trust. The Amman-Berlin Declaration’s 15 for 15 pledge calls on governments and organizations to put at least 15% of their development budgets toward disability inclusion through 2030. It’s a challenge we should meet. I urge all partners to invest in skills and employment so people with disabilities can thrive.



I never thought someone like me could stand out in a tech competition. But after enrolling in a Graphic Design course at Creative IT Institute and doing the classes, my confidence and skills boosted up. Then I participated in the National IT Competition for Youth with Disabilities and placed second! This win is for every youth with a disability who was told they couldn’t. I'm grateful to BBDN and its partners for boosting up the confidence of youth with disabilities like me.



MOHSIN ABDULLAH
Graphic Design Trainee, Creative IT Institute



KOWSHIK AHMED SAJIB
Digital Marketing Trainee, Skill Jobs

When I joined the digital marketing course, I just wanted to learn. I never imagined I’d get a call from Dhaka Tribune offering me a trainee reporter position. This opportunity changed my life. Now, I want to use my voice to report on inclusion, access, and social change.



I lost vision in one eye at the age of six during a painful time when my parents separated. I grew up without my mother, and later had to adjust to my father's new family, where I often felt like a burden. Financial struggles were constant, but I continued my studies and supported myself by tutoring younger students. Even with all these challenges, I never gave up. With support from the ProGRESS project, I got the chance to work at Shwapno as a sales associate. That opportunity changed my life. Now I can stand on my own feet take care of my own expenses, and live with dignity. I am proud of the person I’ve become.



AKHINOOR SULTANA MIM
Hired at Shwapno through ILO–BBDN Recruitment Drive



LOOKING AHEAD

BBDN Vision: July–December 2025



STAY CONNECTED WITH BBDN



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Year in
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Membership
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Resources on
Inclusive
Employment

THANK YOU

We are deeply grateful to all our partners, members, and collaborators—employers, OPDs, training institutes, government allies, and development organizations—who have stood beside us during the first half of 2025. Every training completed, every job created, every barrier removed, and every story celebrated has only been possible because of your trust and support.

Together, we are opening doors, changing lives, and reshaping the future of inclusion in Bangladesh. Thank you for believing in this journey with us. We look forward to walking hand in hand with you in the days ahead.

_____ BANGLADESH BUSINESS AND DISABILITY NETWORK (BBDN)