BBDN
Bangladesh Business & Disability Network

HALF-YEARLY NEWSLETTER 2026







Towards The Sustainable Development Goal
of Disability Inclusive Growth

Editorial Note

EDITORIAL NOTE



2025 was a year of profound promise and success, setting a significant benchmark with 118 total recruitments. Building upon that strong legacy, the first half of 2026 has been equally resourceful and efficient, reflecting our unwavering commitment to inclusive employment. We have maintained significant momentum, and it is a testament to our team's dedication that we are already very close to our desired annual goals within just six months.

This period also marks a momentous chapter as the Social Protection for Workers in the Textile and Leather Sector (SOSI) project, implemented by BBDN in collaboration with GIZ, draws to a successful conclusion after two years of impactful work in strengthening workplace health, safety, and Return-to-Work systems. Simultaneously, we are pleased to confirm that our other flagship initiatives — Promoting Gender-Responsive Enterprise Development and TVET System (ProGRESS) project, supported by Global Affairs Canada and implemented by ILO, Aporajeyo Ami initiative in collaboration with BRAC Bank PLC, and Entrepreneurship Development initiative in collaboration with Eastern Bank PLC (EBL) — are operating in full swing, continuing to advance disability inclusion within the TVET ecosystem and corporate sectors alike.

As we reflect on these milestones, our resolve to drive sustainable, inclusive growth strengthens. We are incredibly proud of the progress made by our team, partners, and the community. Moving into the second half of 2026, we remain dedicated to turning today's foundational achievements into tomorrow's greater opportunities, shaping a landscape where every individual's potential is valued and empowered.

Charting The Path Forward

Partnership with EBL

On 22 January 2026, BBDN signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Eastern Bank PLC (EBL) to advance entrepreneurship and economic opportunities for persons with disabilities.



Group photo of EBL and BBDN representatives taken at the MoU signing ceremony.

Welcoming New Members

In first half of 2026, we welcomed three new members to the BBDN network.

BATA Bangladesh
Premier Member

Centro Tex Ltd.
Corporate Member

Songjog Foundation
Resource Member

Discussion on Skills and Employment of Persons with Disabilities in Bangladesh

On 11 March 2026, Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN) convened BBDN resource members and disability-focused organizations to examine why employment outcomes have not kept pace with the growth in skills development initiatives.



Group photo of participants and organizers taken after the discussion.



Discussion on skills and employment going on.

Key Recommendations Proposed:

- Strengthen post-placement follow-up, retention support and counselling.
- Promote inclusive workplaces through employer/co-worker sensitization and reasonable accommodation.
- Expand partnerships with OPDs and district-level actors to reach more candidates.
- Expand mid-level jobs, ntrepreneurship pathways and employer opportunities.
- Shift from event-based job fairs to pipeline-based, demand-driven job matching.
- Strengthen training through pre-training preparation, addition of soft skills and tailored approaches to different disability groups.
- Develop a centralized database of skilled persons with disabilities.

Project and Initiatives

APORAJEYO AMI

Aporajeyo Ami, the flagship CSR initiative of BRAC Bank PLC in collaboration with BBDN, continued advancing its 3-year partnership in the first half of 2026, building on BRAC Bank's structured 7-step disability inclusion journey.



Group photo of participants and trainers at a sensitization session with BRAC Bank employees.

Disability Sensitization Sessions

During the first half of 2026, BBDN conducted disability sensitization sessions for BRAC Bank PLC employees and trainers/staff of partner training institutes to promote disability inclusion and create respectful, accessible, and supportive environments.

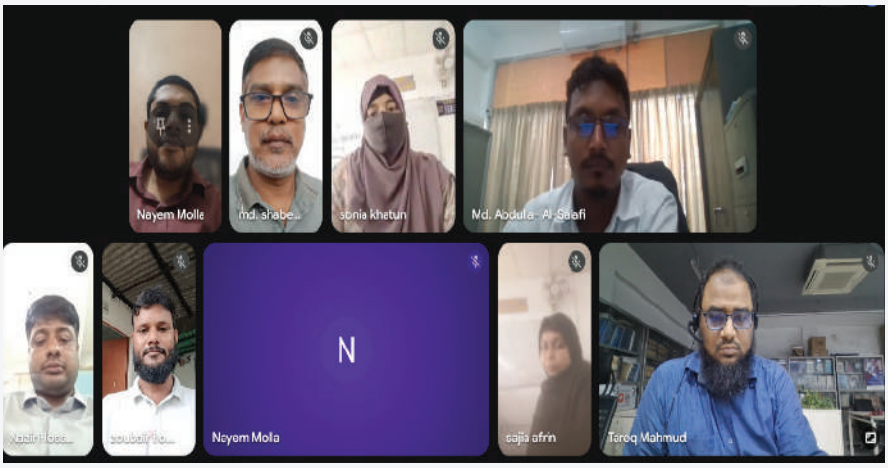


Md Tareq Mahmud, BBDN Deputy Program Manager, facilitating a sensitization session with UJJWALA, a training institute.

For BRAC Bank, BBDN conducted the 5th and 6th batches on 26 January and 1 April 2026, respectively. Batch 05 was held at BRAC Bank's Sepal Platinum Tower in Dhaka with 19 participants, while Batch 06 was conducted online for employees from the Chattogram operations, with 10 participants. The sessions focused on disability inclusion and appropriate workplace interactions.

BBDN team, consisting of Aziza Ahmed, Director, Operations; Md Tareq Mahmud, Deputy Program Manager; and Nayem Molla, Communication and Admin Officer, facilitated the sessions, with opening and closing remarks from Nafisa Shadaf, AVP & Senior Manager – CSR Resource Mobilization, BRAC Bank PLC, and Shafiq R. Bhuiyan, Vice President & Head of Internal Communication and CSR, BRAC Bank PLC.

BBDN extended disability sensitization to training partner institutions where persons with disabilities were enrolled in skills training under Aporajeyo Ami. Ahead of the training, sessions were conducted for 6 trainers and staff of ASHRAI TTC, Rajshahi, on 13 July, and 6 staff of UJJWALA, Dhaka, on 21 July 2026. The sessions covered disability types, barriers to vocational training, inclusive communication, and accessible classroom practices.



Part of sensitization session with ASHRAI TTC, a training institute.

Skills Training & Employment Pathways

BRAC Bank and BBDN, in collaboration with training institute partners, continued to expand skills training and employment pathways for persons with disabilities in the first half of 2026. An overview is provided below:



Part of skills training of persons with disabilities under Aporajeyo Ami initiative.

19
Beautification Skills Training
UJJWALA, Dhaka

20
Mobile Phone Servicing Training
ASHRAI TTC, Rajshahi

20
Sewing Machine Operation Training
ASHRAI TTC, Rajshahi

4
Hospitality Internship
Le Méridien Dhaka







Part of skills training of persons with disabilities under Aporajeyo Ami initiative.

Career Guidance and Job Readiness Session

Under the Aporajeyo Ami Initiative, BBDN, in collaboration with BRAC Bank PLC, organized a half-day Career Guidance and Job Readiness Session on 21 January 2026. Facilitated by professionals from the BRAC Skills Development Program, the session provided practical, market-oriented guidance to 59 participants with disabilities (49 male, 10 female).

Key areas covered included:

- **Goal Setting & Employment Opportunities**
  Job sectors, employment trends, transferable skills, and alternative career pathways.
- **Advanced CV Writing**
  Essential CV components, common mistakes, and use of AI tools for CV development.
- **Workplace Etiquette & Interview Preparation**
  Professional conduct, grooming, body language, dress code, and common interview questions.



Roundtable discussion going on at The Business Standard.

Roundtable Discussion:

Data Matters — Numbers and Evidence are Key to Disability-Inclusive Society

On 20 May 2026, BBDN and BRAC Bank PLC, in collaboration with The Business Standard (TBS), organized a multi-stakeholder roundtable at the TBS office in Dhaka. Advocate Rejaul Karim Siddiquee, Disability Inclusion Expert, delivered the keynote, and the session was moderated by TBS Senior Executive Editor Sharier Khan. The discussion brought together representatives from government, development partners, financial institutions, academia, and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs).

Key recommendations proposed at the roundtable:

- Adopt Washington Group functional-difficulty questions as the national standard to improve accuracy and reduce stigma-driven underreporting.
- Develop a national disability data ecosystem with common indicators aligned with the UNCRPD and SDG 8, connecting BBS, DSS and other government data sources.
- Improve labour market data and regularly update employment information, including job changes, promotions and retention through the DIS system.
- Strengthen field-level verification, train data collectors and expand awareness initiatives to address underreporting and geographic gaps.
- Improve coordination among banks, government and stakeholders to track meaningful financial inclusion and account usage.
- Ensure meaningful OPD participation in disability data collection, policy and planning, while strengthening inter-ministerial coordination and accountability.

To read the full report
click BBDN Roundtable at TBS

SOSI PROJECT

Social Protection for Workers in the Textile and Leather Sector (SOSI) project, implemented by BBDN in collaboration with GIZ, continued to strengthen occupational health, worker protection, and Return-to-Work (RTW) systems during the first half of 2026.



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

Return To Work (RTW) Training

BBDN organized four batches of Return to Work (RTW) training in 1st half of 2026 in Dhaka, Chattogram, and Rajshahi to develop factory and industry-level experts capable of coordinating the successful reintegration of employees into the workplace after injury or illness. The training sessions were led by BBDN expert team along with GIZ team. A total of 132 participants representing 67 factories and institutions participated across the four batches.



Part of participants receiving certificates after completing RTW / OD and OM Training



Md Tareq Mahmud, Deputy Program Manager, BBDN, facilitating a session.



Group photo of guests of a RTW Training inauguration ceremony.



Dr. Rushan Afroze, Health Advisor, GIZ, facilitating a session.

Occupational Diseases and Occupational Medicine Training

BBDN conducted four batches of training on Occupational Diseases (OD) and Occupational Medicine (OM) in 2026 across Dhaka, Chattogram, and Rajshahi to build the capacity of factory medical professionals on workplace hazards, prevention methods, and early detection of occupational diseases. The training was facilitated by OD Master Trainers. A total of 99 participants representing 53 factories and institutions participated across the four batches.



Arup Ratan Chowdhury, Program Manager, BBDN, facilitating a session.

Lessons, Results, and Future Directions:
Promoting Disability-Inclusive Workplaces in Bangladesh



Group photo of guests at the "Lessons, Results, and Future Directions: Promoting Disability-Inclusive Workplaces in Bangladesh".

On 30 June 2026, BBDN, in collaboration with GIZ under the Social Protection for Workers in the Textile and Leather Sector (SOSI) project, convened key stakeholders to reflect on the project's achievements and discuss advancing disability-inclusive workplaces in Bangladesh. Three technical sessions focused on strengthening inclusive employment and occupational health systems.

The event was graced by Md. Forhad Siddique, Inspector General (Additional Secretary), Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) as the Chief Guest, and Md. Abdul Wadud, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) and Farooq Ahmed, Secretary General and CEO, Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF) as the Special Guests.



Part of guests delivering remarks at the event.

Session 1: Decoding the Policy Gaps

- Examined gaps between the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 and the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013, highlighting the need to harmonize provisions on disability, reasonable accommodation, rehabilitation, employment retention, and non-discrimination.



Muhammad Habibur Rahman, Assistant Secretary General: Legal Affairs Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF), delivering Keynote Presentation.



Session 2 presentation delivered by Arup Ratan Chowdhury, Program Manager, BBDN and Indira von Gierke, Advisor, SOSI, GIZ.

Session 2: Return to Work in Action – From Policy to the Factory Floor

- Highlighted RTW programme achievements, with 9 training batches reaching 276 HR, welfare, compliance, and medical professionals from 140 factories and organizations across Dhaka, Chattogram, and Rajshahi.

Session 3: Current Perspectives and Future Career Pathways on Occupational Diseases

- Presented outcomes from 9 Occupational Disease and Occupational Medicine training batches, building the capacity of 202 medical professionals from 116 factories, and discussed strengthening occupational health systems and career pathways.



Session 3 presentation delivered by Dr Likhon Akter Jassi, an OD and OM Master Trainer and Dr. Rushan Afroze, Health Advisor, GIZ.

PROGRESS

Under the Promoting Gender-Responsive Enterprise Development and TVET System (ProGRESS) project, supported by Global Affairs Canada and implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO), BBDN continued its work as an implementing partner to advance disability inclusion within Bangladesh's TVET and employment ecosystem.



Participants sharing remarks during the TOT Module validation workshop.

Validation Workshop: ToT Module on Disability Inclusion for TVET Professionals

BBDN is developing a Training of Trainers (ToT) Module on Disability Inclusion for TVET Professionals in collaboration with the Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) and ILO with support from its consultant Center for Disability in Development (CDD). The module was informed by a rapid survey across nine DTE-affiliated TVET institutions, which found that persons with disabilities represented only 0.15% of trainees (79% male, 21% female), with key barriers including limited awareness, inaccessible infrastructure, weak institutional support, and limited outreach.

As part of the module development process, a validation workshop was organized on 21 May 2026 at the DTE Conference Room, Agargaon, to review the draft module and gather technical feedback. The workshop brought together representatives from DTE, ILO, BBDN, TVET institutions, and organizations of persons with disabilities. Mr. Abul Khair Md. Akkas Ali, Director General of DTE, attended as Chief Guest and reaffirmed DTE's commitment to equal access to skills development.



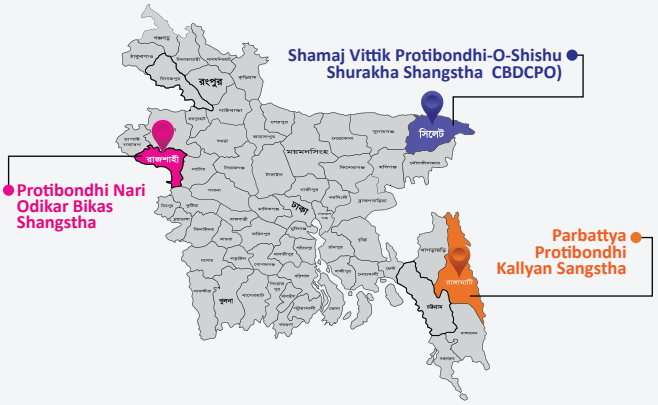
TOT Module validation workshop going on.



Part of group discussion session at the TOT Module validation workshop.

Shared Service Facilities for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities

BBDN also launched a pilot **Shared Service Facilities (SSF)** initiative under ProGRESS to expand economic opportunities for aspiring and active entrepreneurs with disabilities. The initiative is being piloted across **Rangamati, Rajshahi, and Sylhet,** with three local Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) leading implementation.



Bangladesh map with highlighted 3 SSF implementing districts and implementing OPDs.

How it works

SHARED SPACE
OPD offices become accessible community resource hubs.

SHARED EQUIPMENT
Equipment such as computers, sewing machines and other resources are available on a need basis.

PEER LEARNING
Local entrepreneurs share practical experience and business knowledge.

BUSINESS GUIDANCE
Participants receive guidance on licences, finance and skills training.

In peer learning sessions, successful local entrepreneurs step up as role models to share their journeys and offer hands-on guidance on various topics, including:

- Navigating trade license application processes.
- Accessing loans and financial products from banks and financial institutions.
- Enrolling in free skill-development and vocational training programs.

EARLY IMPACT

Entrepreneurs across all three pilot districts have reported positive experiences, particularly valuing access to shared physical resources and practical business guidance.

Empowering Partners

Disability Inclusion Orientation for Save the Children

On 25 January 2026, BBDN facilitated a day-long Disability Inclusion Orientation for 41 staff and partner representatives of Save the Children in Bangladesh under the Skills to Succeed – GG12 programme. The hybrid session, facilitated by Arup Ratan Chowdhury (Program Manager, BBDN) and Sharlin Akther (Assistant Program Manager, BBDN), focused on disability inclusion and practical approaches to creating inclusive learning environments and ensuring equal access to skills development and employment for youth with disabilities.



Sharlin Akther, Assistant Program Manager, BBDN, facilitating a session.



Arup Ratan Chowdhury, Program Manager, BBDN, facilitating a session.

BBDN Vision: July–December 2026



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Membership Information

Resources on Inclusive Employment

Kabita's Return to Work

THANK YOU

"

Inclusion does not happen through one programme, one organization, or one moment. It takes employers willing to open doors, training institutions willing to adapt, partners willing to invest, and persons with disabilities given the opportunity to demonstrate what they can contribute.

Over the first half of 2026, we have seen these connections take shape from classrooms and training centres to workplaces, factories, and policy discussions. Each partnership has helped move disability inclusion from conversation to practice.

To our members, partners, employers, government institutions, OPDs, training providers, and development partners: thank you for opening doors, challenging barriers, and building this journey with us. There is much more to do. We look forward to turning the foundations built today into greater opportunities tomorrow.

— Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN)