



STAR+: Disability Inclusive Skills Training in Bangladesh

Project timeline: November 2019 – March 2023

Project budget: £1.8 million

Capturing the power of collaboration: BRAC, Action on Disability and Development, Light for the World, Sense International/Centre for Disability Development and a range of OPD partners across targeted districts.

Most of the 1.3 billion people with disabilities around the world¹ are of working age, however only a third are in employment². Employment opportunities for people with disabilities are frequently limited by discrimination and environmental barriers. **That is why Disability Inclusive Development - Inclusive Futures is working to create more employment opportunities for people with disabilities in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - and to drive commitments from employers, business leaders and governments to make this happen.**



The situation in Bangladesh

With only 15 percent of Bangladesh's labour market operating in the formal sector³, securing work in can be a challenge for all, but is particularly so for people with disabilities. **Sixty four percent of young people with disabilities are estimated to be out of work.**⁴ Discrimination and exclusion of people with disabilities in Bangladesh is common; at home, in the community, and in the workplace, creating barriers to employment.

Bangladesh's Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act (2013) bans discrimination in the workplace, however implementation of legislation and policies is lagging. **There is an urgent need to improve inclusive employment practices in Bangladesh, across informal and formal sectors, and to empower people with disabilities to reach their economic potential.**

How we helped

For maximum impact, this project took a successful large-scale on-the-job apprenticeship programme run by the non-governmental organisation BRAC in Bangladesh – the Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR) programme – and through partnership and innovation, developed it to be disability inclusive (STAR+).

Using existing STAR infrastructure, teams and offices, the project targeted young people with disabilities aged 14 – 35 in 46 of Bangladesh’s 64 districts.

To guide this work, we brought together a consortium of experts to improve inclusive employment practices and opportunities for people with disabilities in Bangladesh, including Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), non-governmental organisations, local and national government and research institutes.

Change was delivered through key pillars of activity:

- **At organisational level** we worked with BRAC to make the existing STAR programme disability inclusive. The existing STAR programme previously supported almost 30,000 young people to graduate with a 95% employment rate. We wanted to see a growth of young people with disabilities within these numbers, particularly young women with disabilities and deafblind young people not in education. With peer-to-peer support from Light for the World, BRAC completed a disability inclusion self-assessment and BRAC staff were trained on disability awareness and inclusion using a Disability Inclusion Score Card. We adapted tools and guidelines to focus on issues of discrimination and Disability Inclusion Facilitators with lived experience of disability were hired to support learners, families and trainers throughout.



“From the training, I have learned ... tailoring... From BRAC, I have received an electric motor which has been fixed to [my] sewing machine... Now I earn 4,500 BDT on average per month... My message to other persons with disabilities will be that they should receive skills training and become self-reliant.”

Mim, young participant in STAR+.

[Watch Mim’s story in our video.](#)

- **At community level** we wanted to break barriers for young people with disabilities and address negative stereotyping. Working with OPDs and young people we designed and distributed behaviour change communications materials in project locations and hosted community awareness events. In collaboration with local government and OPDs, we reviewed local government lists of young people registered as having a disability and undertook house-to-house surveys in targeted communities to identify young people with disabilities and encourage them to participate in STAR+. Once registered, STAR+ trainees were supported to receive assistive devices and access government benefits, as needed.

- **At system strengthening and employment level** local employers – master crafts persons – were trained and supported to take on young trainees with disabilities, ensuring their workplaces were accessible. STAR+ trainees received 12 months of support, starting with a three-month enrolment period to select their chosen trade, with options ranging from tailoring and mobile phone servicing to motorcycle servicing and IT

support. Trainees were matched with a local master crafts person for three to six months of on-the-job training, including one day a week of classroom training. This was followed by a three-month transition to employment or self-employment.

Project impact



By the end of the project, 1,250 young people with disabilities (including 681 women) had received on-the-job training and 95% of graduates were placed in employment. Graduates achieved an average monthly income of BDT 3,000 (£22) – higher than the project’s target of BDT 2,000 (£15). Many participants previously had no income, and project learning showed a transformation of their self-esteem, optimism about the future and social standing.



Behaviour change communications reached over 7,300 community members and advocacy events reached over 550 civil society representatives.

Discovering what works

The project delivered extensive learning resources through a national policy dialogue, **policy briefs**, **learning reports**, workshops and more. Learn about our **randomised control trial** - one of the few trials of a livelihood intervention to date amongst people with disabilities in a LMIC setting - and our **behaviour change communication toolkit**.

Breaking barriers for people with disabilities

Disability inclusion is critical for reaching the Global Goals and we are producing the evidence on what works in a range of different areas. We now need the allocation of resources for disability inclusion in employment to turn evidence into action.

To find out more visit

inclusivefutures.org/employment or contact Claire Walsh at cwalsh@sightsavers.org.

Endnotes

- 1 World Health Organization (2023) Factsheet: Disability. Available online at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health#:~:text=Key%20facts,1%20in%206%20of%20us>
- 2 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Factsheet on Persons with Disabilities. Accessed 26.09.23. Available online at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/factsheet-on-persons-with-disabilities.html>
- 3 LO/FTF Council (2020) Labour Market Profile – Bangladesh – 2020. Danish Trade Council for International Development and Cooperation, p. 27. Available online at: <https://www.ulussekretariatet.dk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/LMP-Bangladesh-2020-Final-rev.pdf>
- 4 Leonard Cheshire (2018) Disability Data Review: A collation and analysis of disability data from 40 countries. Leonard Cheshire, UK. Available online at: https://www.disabilitydataportal.com/fileadmin/uploads/lcdp/Documents/report-web_version.pdf