

ADVOCACY IMPACTS

Creating waves of change through advocacy

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A document on proven-strategies for
effective advocacy efforts for disability-inclusion

Promotion of Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Bangladesh (PHRPBD) Project
Centre for Disability in Development (CDD)

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Creating waves of change through advocacy

Written and designed by

Mahadir Omer Fahad

Reviewed by

Taslima Akter Keya

Contribution by

Syed Abdus Salam

Illustration by

Md. Sharafat Ali

Photographs

PHRPBD Project and its partners

Published by

A.H.M. Noman Khan

Executive Director

Centre for Disability in Development (CDD)

Date of Publication

March 2022

ISBN-984-8305-00-60

A publication of Centre for Disability in
Development (CDD)

Acknowledgement

In a quest to make Advocacy Impacts: Creating waves of success through advocacy more readable and to-the-point, this document is benefitted from the feedback of its different levels of stakeholders including government and non-government entities in the project's nine (09) catchment areas.

Many thanks to the project's implementing-partner organizations who contributed their ideas and learnings from years of disability-rights advocacy in the field level. We would also like to acknowledge and pay respect to the contributions made by the all the Self-Help Group (SHG) and Apex Body members of the PHRPBD project in the development of this booklet.

The advocacy booklet, Advocacy Impacts: Creating waves of success through advocacy is developed by the PHRPBD project with substantive technical contributions from the staff members of Centre for Disability in Development (CDD). The information in this booklet, or on which this document is based, has been obtained from field-level sources of the project that the authors profess to be reliable and accurate. Throughout this booklet we refer to useful resources produced by other organizations which we acknowledge with sincerity.

This resource is developed with the support of CDD's long-time development partner, CBM.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ii

Foreword

iii

About CDD

iii

Advocacy Initiatives of CDD

iv

About PHRPBD Project

v

Footsteps of PHRPBD Project

vi

Why This Booklet

vi

Who Is This Booklet for

vii

Advocacy Strategy of the PHRPBD Project

viii

Introduction

1 - 17

Impact Stories

18 - 21

Glossary of Key Terms

CDD's Vision

An inclusive world where all persons with disabilities live with dignity

CDD's Mission

To contribute in creating a sustainable inclusive environment where persons with disabilities are meaningfully participating in the mainstream development process on an equal basis with others

Foreword

Persons with disabilities are helping change the world. That is a great news. However, there are still comparatively a few persons with disabilities who are in leadership positions and in some cases, their rights are compromised.

If we want to ensure that persons with disabilities are an integral part of all mainstream development efforts, it is crucial that we understand how advocacy works. In order to bring a positive change in the system where everyone is benefitted and which provides a longer-term solution, advocacy is a MUST. Advocacy is about more than just presenting facts and evidence to decision-makers. It is what we persuade the decision-makers do for the greater good.

Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) has made numerous successful advocacy efforts both at local and national levels through its different development-projects in Bangladesh. As a part of documenting these successes, the Promotion of Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Bangladesh (PHRPBD) project of CDD is publishing the booklet, **Advocacy Impacts: Creating waves of success through advocacy.**

This well-crafted document describes how the advocacy initiatives of the PHRPBD project transformed the lives of persons with disabilities in its nine (09) catchment areas. It is full of evidence-based stories, written in lucid language, with colorful photographs which promises to mesmerize its readers.

Finally, I take the privilege to thank disability-rights advocates across the PHRPBD project for their steadfast activism as well as the staff members of CDD who have given inputs into the development of this booklet. And, of course, I would thank to our development partner, CBM for providing valuable review and contributions to this booklet and supporting us throughout the journey for an inclusive society.

“We aspire a world where every person with disability will say out-loud:
I am independent,
I am empowered, and
I am confident.”

We would appreciate the readers of this booklet to share their observations and comments with us.

A.H.M. Noman Khan

Executive Director

Centre for Disability in Development (CDD)

About CDD and CBM Global

Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) is non-profit development organization exists to advance and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, in all their diversities, and to create a force for bringing change in social inequalities. CDD establishes Disability Inclusion as its priority area and deploys its depth of knowledge and expertise on Disability issues to share with government and non-government entities across Bangladesh for mainstreaming disability-inclusion in national development plans and policies as well as empowerment of persons with disabilities. CDD brings together and supports persons with disabilities and other government and non-government bodies in its working areas to help increase the representation of persons with disabilities in diverse leadership positions. CDD helps to design and develop inclusive and accessible communication materials of its stakeholders and provides capacity building training and orientation on Disability Inclusion to government officials, disability-rights advocates, development agencies, and others who are in the frontline in promoting policies on disability-inclusion. It also provides rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities along with assistive devices for maximizing their movement.

CBM Global is an international and non-profit development organization. It works along with persons with disabilities in the world's poorest places to fight poverty and exclusion and transform lives. Drawing on over 110 years' experience and driven by Christian values, CBM works with the most marginalized in society to break the cycle of poverty and disability and build inclusive communities where everyone can enjoy their human rights and achieve their full potential.

CDD and CBM Global work over two decades with the common objective of mainstreaming persons with disabilities in Bangladesh and to make an inclusive society for persons with disabilities.

Advocacy Initiatives of CDD

Advocacy has always been at the heart of what CDD does. Its commitment to its organizational vision and its long experience of working with persons with disabilities and their communities give it the legitimacy to carry out advocacy. CDD's programmes, throughout Bangladesh, have often included advocacy in one form or another, and many of these activities have been successful in bringing about change for persons with disabilities.

CDD firmly believes, people who work to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and protect their rights should be prepared as advocates for Disability Inclusion whatever the issues: education, health, nutrition, protection or any other unmet needs. Having years of experience, CDD knows that, to be an effective advocate of Disability Inclusion, it requires commitment and belief, some modest skills and informed knowledge. Thus, in order to make its advocacy as effective as possible, CDD plans and carries out its advocacy efforts strategically, as an integral part of its core intervention programmes.

A few examples of CDD's successful advocacy;

- 01.** A **multi-purpose accessible rescue boat** has been designed under a DiDRR project of CDD for its flood prone catchment areas. Now, the idea of this boat is being replicated through its construction by Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR),
- 02.** Under the Jatiyo Protibondhi Unnayan Foundation (JPUF) around one hundred and seven (107) **One-Stop Service Centers** are in operation across the country to provide rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. The idea of these service center stemmed from a development project of CDD,
- 03.** CDD's rigorous advocacy made possible the incorporation of **'Deafblindness'** as a type of disability in the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013.

About PHRPBD Project

Promotion of Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Bangladesh (PHRPBD) is a development project of Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) that strives to educate, empower, and encourage persons with disabilities in the community to expedite their development and awareness of their rights. Improvement of standard of the lives of persons with disabilities and effective resource mobilization of local resources are the objectives that the PHRPBD project is working to achieve. PHRPBD project implements its interventions in eight districts in Bangladesh through nine implementing partner organizations with an expectation of reaching a total of 1000 project-participants.

As an integral part of its interventions, PHRPBD project identifies, motivates, unites, and provides training to build capacity of persons with disabilities. The core components of the capacity-building are training/orientation on leadership and disability-rights, gender, advocacy & facilitation, disaster management, mental health, and disability-inclusion in the mainstream society. It also creates linkage with different like-minded development organizations and sensitizes them on disability inclusion.

The project pursues Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID) model and Twin-Track approach to achieve its goals. Through the project's interventions, ninety (90) Self-Help Groups (SHG) and nine (09) Apex Bodies of persons with disabilities have been formed in its catchment areas and became resource platforms for the inclusion of people with disabilities and other marginalized groups in their communities. Alongside, the project also works for increasing local government support so as to effortless and improved access to mental health, livelihood, and protection mechanism of the government by the persons with disabilities. Meanwhile, the project works along with the government and the community for the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream education system.

PHRPBD project has a decided-preference for the development of women with disabilities.

The duration of this project is from 2018 - 2022.

Why This Booklet

Advocacy has played a key role in the work of the PHRPBD project. One of the most important strengths of this project lies in its ability to work together with different government and non-government bodies and influencing them to make certain that the rights are protected and services are ensured for persons with disabilities.

Advocacy Impacts: Creating waves of success through advocacy demonstrates the power of joint collaboration of government and non-government entities for the betterment of persons with disabilities. This booklet exhibits the steps taken by the PHRPBD project to move forward the messages of persons with disabilities to the service-providers i.e., government entities, non-government bodies.

Therefore, this booklet embraces a dual approach:

First, it narrates the reason(s) for each advocacy issue and then highlights the interventions taken for making that advocacy effort a success, and

Second, it expounds the impact generated as results of that advocacy effort and its outcome(s).

Who Is This Booklet for

This booklet is intended to be a resource guide for anyone involved in development-advocacy preferably in the Disability context. The readers of this booklet would gain a deeper understanding and working definition of evidence-based advocacy on Disability issues. The readers would also understand the basic elements of advocacy and how they are integrated into the interventions of the PHRPBD project.

However, general readers and development-practitioners of other fields might be benefitted from this document and could broaden their horizon on Disability, particularly.

Advocacy Strategy of the PHRPBD Project



Introduction

Engagement of advocacy-work in development interventions is significant to inform, raise awareness, and articulate the pressing-issues with the concerned ones. Advocacy work should always be prioritized to ensure that the legal and institutional mechanisms of the State are in function to protect and promote the rights of their citizens.

In order to be a Disability-Inclusion advocate, there hardly need of lawyers, policy analysts or other kinds of expertise; what is required is the right attitude and determination for bringing the aimed-changes. For effective advocacy efforts, cooperation between development organizations and the government is essential to strengthen democratic values which ultimately benefit both the State and the target population.

Goals for disability-inclusion can be achieved through a combination of different approaches, including working closely with decision-makers, lobbying, or raising public awareness. These approaches are not necessarily confrontational. Yet, sometimes it is required to take preparation to challenge the status-quo.

To make advocacy initiatives a success, information is the key. Well-researched and authentic information is quintessential to solidify an advocacy issue. With this information, it is easier to suggest timely changes to legislation, public policy, and government programmes to the appropriate agencies e.g., Parliament, the courts, departments, ministries, and others.

The PHRPBD project considered all the above-mentioned issues to make its advocacy efforts successful. This document represents the collective wealth and experience in advocacy, of the PHRPBD project, from within its nine (09) catchment areas as well as the knowledge of outside experts.

**Inclusive
Sports
Get Result**
Page/2

**Allocation of
Budget and
Inclusion in
Government
Facilities**
Page/11

**Inclusive
Health
is a
Priority**
Page/4

**Advocacy
without
Border**
Page/7

**Making
Inclusive
Education
a Reality**
Page/14

**Inclusive
Job is
Not a
Dream**
Page/9

**Assistive
Device for
Increased
Mobility**
Page/16

Impact Stories

Inclusive Sports Get Result

Persons with disabilities often encounter societal barriers and their disability evokes negative perceptions leading to discrimination in the society. Persons with disabilities are considered dependent and seen as incapable which often causes persons with disabilities to experience restricted mobility beyond the cause of their disability. That being the case, persons with disabilities are generally excluded from sports and other recreational activities in their community which deprive them of opportunities essential to their interpersonal, physical, and social development.

The PHRPBD project has been working for a long time to create an enabling environment where persons with disabilities could exercise their rights to participate in sports and recreational activities. The objective of this intervention is to create mass awareness on disability-inclusion among the community people as well as the replication of the idea of inclusive-sports by the Government for spreading across Bangladesh. With the support of the PHRPBD project, the members of the Self-Help Groups (SHG) and Apex Body in Faridpur and Gazipur districts (02 catchment areas of the project) made remarkable success through advocacy with the Local Government in the mentioned areas. These successful advocacy efforts resulted in organizing district level Inclusive Sports and Special Olympic for persons with disabilities from 2016 by the sub-district administration of Faridpur and Gazipur.



A person with physical disability is participating in the Inclusive Sports event

How It Worked

The members of the Apex Body and SHGs are considered resource platforms in their respective locality and their suggestions are valued in different government bodies. They are often consulted by government departments while celebrating different national events. In government-meetings, representatives of the Apex Bodies and the SHGs attend and they place different ideas and recommendations that help the Local Government make their services disability-inclusive. Through those advocacy efforts, they helped realize the government bodies how inclusive-sports help persons with disabilities transcend cultural and social barriers and provides an excellent platform for inclusion.

In those meetings, the Apex Body and SHG members raised the idea of Inclusive Sports (in Gazipur) and Special Olympic (in Faridpur). They persuaded the respective administrations the dire need of the inclusion of persons with disabilities in sports, recreational as well as

entertainment activities in order to mainstream them in the society. As the Apex Bodies and the SHGs have been organizing different inclusive sports events in their areas therefore, they could provide evidence on organizing such events successfully. Upon the realization of the importance of inclusive sports and recreational activities, the government officials of the Department of Social Services (Faridpur) took decision to organize Special Olympic (from 2019) to commemorate each year's International Day of Persons with Disabilities and the Gazipur City Corporation authority decided to organize Inclusive Sports (2019) event.

These events were financed and organized by different government departments of Gazipur and Faridpur. Different non-government and private organizations were also provided their assistance in successfully organizing these events. But, the SHGs and the Apex Bodies were in close association throughout these events.



With the support of the government, the SHGs and the Apex Bodies mobilized around BDT 7,00,000 locally and utilized that money for organizing the Special Olympic (in Faridpur). The programme was comprised of 26 types of events and was attended by participants from 09 sub-districts of Faridpur. A total of 100 persons with disabilities participated in this inclusive-sports programme. And, in Gazipur (Inclusive Sport and Cultural Program), around BDT 79, 843 was mobilized by the government and

non-government bodies along with the SHGs and the Apex Bodies. There were 10 forms of games took place in the event which were attended by 99 participants. And, among them, 77 persons with disabilities who proactively participated in the event.

These programmes turned out a huge success in the respective localities and played a key role for attitudinal change towards the competencies of persons with disabilities.

“Gazipur DC office will always support to make such event a great success and from now on they will provide the refreshments for these events in upcoming years.”

Abu Nasar Uddin

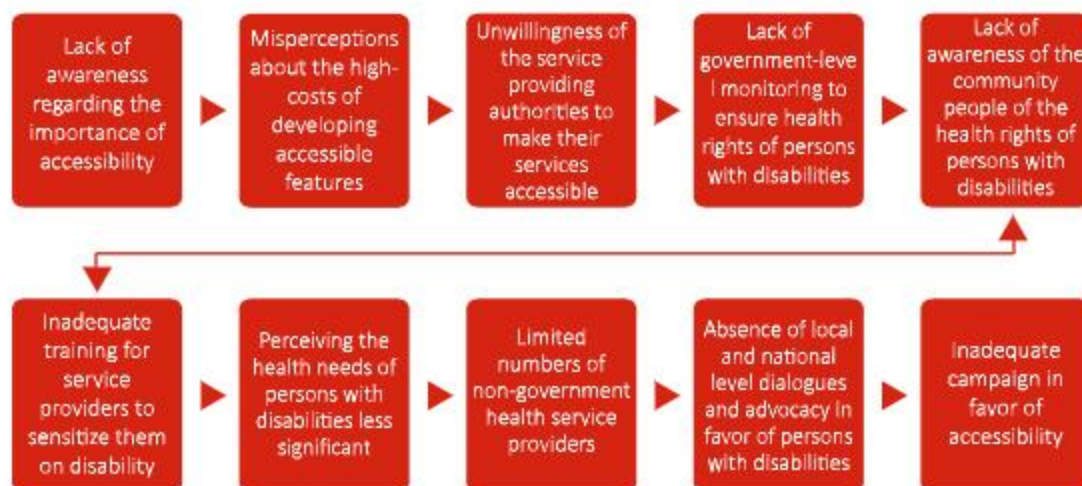
Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) of Gazipur

Inclusive Health is a Priority

To meet the health needs of the people in rural areas in Bangladesh, Union Health and Family Welfare Centers (UHFWC) have been established by the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP) of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of Bangladesh Government. Aside from that, the Government of Bangladesh set-up Community Clinics in the rural and hard-to-reach locations in the country. These health services authorities are in operation with the aim to provide family planning, menstrual regulation, vaccinations, and reproductive, maternal, and general health services to the inhabitants of its respective areas.

But, this is a common knowledge that, persons with disabilities are yet far away from claiming their health rights in a least developed county like Bangladesh. Although, there are good number of entitled rights for persons with disabilities to access to health services but they could not reach to those because of numerous reasons e.g., inaccessibility in health service structures, lack of knowledge about persons with disabilities among the health service providers. But, due to inaccessible infrastructures and lack of the knowledge of the needs of persons with disabilities, these health service providers could not provide with their services to persons with disabilities in comparison to persons without disabilities.

Following is an illustration of a series of challenges that persons with disabilities face to access to their health rights:



Advocacy Initiatives

Considering the situation, The PHRPBD project planned to lay interventions to address the vulnerable condition of the persons with disability seeking health services. The members of the SHGs and the Apex Bodies prepared an advocacy plan with the assistance of the project and its implementing partner organizations to make health structures disability-inclusive in their locality.

Following are the advocacy initiatives in brief:

1. Awareness

- First, the project identified the persons with disabilities within the community. For that, the SHGs and the Apex Bodies organized meeting with the community people with and without disabilities.
- The members of the SHGs and the Apex Bodies persuaded the community-people regarding the importance of the health care. As well as, made them understand that, it is their rights to seek services from the health service-providers.
- Then, the SHGs held meeting with the authority of the community clinic in their respective localities. In those meetings, they provided information regarding disability to the health professionals (authorities of the community clinics) to ensure there is up-to-date knowledge on and impact of disability.
- Through these meetings, the service providers of the community clinics came know about the rights of persons with disabilities who seek services relating to health and care.

2. Participation of Health Service Providers

- The SHGs and the Apex Bodies invited the local health service providers to their different meetings to build relationships with them. In those meetings, persons without disabilities in the communities were also present to show their solidarity with the rights of persons with disabilities.
- Through the involvement of the health service providers in different activities of the SHGs and the Apex bodies, they were able to identify different health-related barriers that persons with disabilities face.
- These community consultation between service providers and the service recipients helped bridge the service gap.
- The participation of the health service providers also helped them gain knowledge about the potential of persons with disabilities.

3. Engagement of Local Government

- The representatives of the Local Government became sensitized about the health-service needs of persons with disabilities through different activities of the SHGs and the Apex Bodies.
- The engagement of the representatives of the Local Government with the activities of the SHGs and the Apex Bodies has strengthened the importance of the health-service needs of persons with disabilities.



One of the accessible community clinics in the catchment areas (Kulaura, Moulvibazar) of the project

- Given the importance of the health-service needs of persons with disabilities, the Members of Union Parishod, in the project-catchment areas, held meeting with the community clinic authorities in order to ensure access to health services for persons with disabilities.

Outcomes

As a result of the interventions of the project, remarkable outcomes generated which are as follows:

- Awareness of available health services is increased. Persons with disabilities and their caregivers became aware of their entitled health services.
- Access to service has been improved. Persons with disabilities along with the community-people started going to the community clinics for getting health services.
- Accessibility has been ensured. The initiatives of the project helped strengthen access for people with disabilities with mobility issues. The accessible features of the clinics encouraged persons with disabilities seeking services.
- Attitudinal changes took place. Attitudes of the families of the persons with disabilities and the broader community went through a massive change. Both the community people and the service providers are looking at the health needs of persons with disabilities in a very positive way.

An Example of Achievement

The hospital authority of Chakaria Upazila Health Complex appointed a woman with physical disability, Ayetun Nahar, 23 (a member of the Apex Body in Chakaria, Cox's Bazar) as a volunteer providing assistance to persons with disabilities who come as service recipients in the hospital.



The allocated room for persons with disabilities

After a certain period of time, the hospital authority permanently appointed Ayetun Nahar in the hospital as one of its staff members with the responsibility to maintain the register of service-recipients with disabilities. As well as, Ayetun Nahar has been enlisted in the master-roll of the Municipality of Chakaria, Cox's Bazar on December 20, 2021 from where she would be provided with a monthly honorary allowance.

Although, the Government of Bangladesh has a strong commitment to provide health services that are inclusive but in reality, persons with disabilities continue to experience discrimination, inequalities, and stigmatization in accessing health and rehabilitation services in the community clinics. Besides, persons with disabilities, have poorer health outcomes compared to persons without disabilities from the community clinics. But, the interventions of the PHRPBD project proved that, with proper plan and advocacy, this situation could change.



The government notice that states to provide rightful services to persons with disabilities

Advocacy without Border

Often persons with disabilities are seen less organized in making collective efforts. One of the main reasons of this situation is, persons with disabilities hardly afford to arrange any physical space that has monetary involvement. Due to this challenge, persons with disabilities could not organize themselves for holding any meeting and they even could not be involved in any skill development training because of the absence of physical spaces.

The PHRPBD project realized this situation and planned to lay intervention in conjunction with the SHGs and the Apex Bodies in its catchment areas. The project took a number of initiatives (would be explained below through an exemplary case) to address this situation. Among the initiatives, the most significant one was making advocacy efforts with the representatives of the Union Parishod (UP) in the catchment areas of the project.

Along with the members of the SHGs and the Apex Bodies, the project held several advocacy meetings with the UP authority to make them understand the importance of this issues. Then the UP authority realized this situation and allocated rooms (one in each location) for persons with disabilities therefore they could utilize the room for various purposes. As a result of this initiative, now the persons with disabilities are being benefitted in the following cases;

- 01.** The members of the SHGs and the Apex bodies could conduct their regular meetings in those allocated rooms,
- 02.** The SHG and Apex Body members can organize training on different income generating activities (IGA) in those rooms for their skill development which opens up their opportunity to access to different livelihood options, and
- 03.** The members of the SHGs and the Apex Bodies can use these rooms to run mini-sewing machine factory where women with disabilities can work to earn and make monetary contribution to their families.

The project's achievement also lies in the cases where a few UPs in some of the catchment areas of the project, developed infrastructure (rooms) in the UP premises so persons with disabilities could enjoy the above-mentioned opportunities.

Story of a Room Allocation (in Steps)

Following is an example of a successful advocacy effort by the members of the SHGs and the Apex Bodies (of the PHRPBD project) with the Local Government in Chakaria, Cox's Bazar. Through this effort, Shahar Bil Union Parishod (an UP outside of the catchment area of the project) allocated a room for persons with disabilities.

Step 01

The Apex Body started to make visit to Shahar Bil Union Parishod. During the visit, they held meeting with the Members and the Chairperson of the union.

Step 02

The Apex Body invited the Chairperson and the Members of the union, along with persons with disabilities of Shahar Bil union to attend sensitization meeting.

Step 03

The Apex Body helped the persons with disabilities of Shahar Bil union to form small-groups of persons with disabilities in 09 Wards of their union.

Step 04

And, for the smooth flow of function of the small-groups, each group elected their President, Vice-President, and Secretary.

Step 05

The SHG members of Shahar Bil union keep minutes of each of their monthly meeting.

Step 06

The representatives of the UP often make physical visit to the allocated room to monitor the activities of the SHGs.



The SHG members of the Shahar Bil union are holding a meeting with the Local Government representatives



One of women with disabilities is working in a garment-factory

Inclusive Job is Not a Dream

Persons with disabilities in Bangladesh have been facing marginalization in all aspects of their lives. Many people with disabilities face major barriers to social inclusion in their communities. They are deprived of the opportunity to enroll in education and, as they grow older, in employment and/or job opportunities. Many are not able to access mainstream training or decent education and this leads to significantly decreased employment opportunities. Although access to employment is recognized in Bangladesh as a fundamental right, less than 20 per cent of people with disabilities are currently in work (<https://www.newagebd.net/article/169774/disability-inclusive-employment>).

The PHRPBD project addressed this issue in all of its catchment areas for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in formal and non-formal employment opportunities. The SHGs and the Apex Bodies are the central of the interventions of the PHRPBD project where the implementing partner organizations of the project have been providing assistance for the smooth implementation of the project. With the support of the SHGs and the Apex Body, the project became successful in creating linkage for formal jobs in Ready Made Garments (RMG), banking, City Corporation office, educational institutions, NGOs, and INGOs for persons with disabilities in different positions.

Following are the advocacy initiatives taken for the inclusion of persons with disabilities for their inclusion in the formal job sector:

1st, the SHGs and the Apex Body raised awareness in the community about the potential of persons with disabilities.

2nd, the SHGs and the Apex Body members communicated with different government and non-government institutes in order to sensitize them about disability and inclusion so they include persons with disabilities in their training programme.

3rd, they selected potential persons with disabilities to link them with those training opportunities so they could equip themselves with market-required skills.

4th, the SHGs and the Apex Body made extensive consultation with different government and non-government organization to identify employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

5th, in collaboration with the project, the SHGs and the Apex Body carried out accessibility audit in selected private industries.

6th, the SHGs and the Apex Body provided with recommendation to the selected private organizations to make their office-infrastructure accessible.

7th, the project along with the SHGs and the Apex Body held sensitization meetings with the authorities of different organizations in order to change their attitudinal barriers.

8th, the project in collaboration with the SHGs and the Apex Bodies influenced the HRs and Directors (who hold power to change policies) for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their organizations, and

9th, as a result of the advocacy initiatives, a total of **158** persons with disabilities secured formal jobs in different organizations.

As part of the advocacy, the project put forward the following recommendations:

- 01.** Dedicating a senior management person/staff member as inclusion officer and forming an Inclusion Team in the office,
- 02.** Developing a disability inclusion action plan aiming at inclusion outcomes,
- 03.** Periodic follow-up and highlighting successes of the factory in equal opportunity and disability inclusion among colleagues, buyers, government agencies and relevant stakeholders; and

It is observed that, through coordinated efforts between the government and the private sector and other stakeholders, sustainable empowerment of persons with disabilities could be ensured. Combined efforts among all the parties will surely help persons with disabilities protect their rights and give them access to skills training and employment in Bangladesh.

Allocation of Budget and Inclusion in Government Facilities

It is often observed that, persons with disabilities remain unemployed. They could not be a part of their family when it comes to contribute financially to their family. In their respective communities, persons with disabilities are looked down upon because of their zero-financial contribution to their family. One of the main reasons of this situation is, persons with disabilities do not get adequate opportunities to prepare themselves to be competent for earning money. Beside that, they are mostly deprived of accessing other government schemes that could help them become socially and financially sound. Although, there is provision of budget-allocation for the development of persons with disabilities. But due to the unawareness of the issue both in the representatives of the Local Government and the persons with disabilities could not access to this allocated-budget.

Given the situation, the members of the SHGs and the Apex Bodies of the PHRPBD project, started to craft plan to bring this issue forward so persons with disabilities could benefit from the allocated budget. The project ran interventions in all its catchment areas in conjunction with the SHGs and the Apex Bodies as well as with the implementing partner organizations of the project.

Following are the steps taken by the SHGs and the Apex Bodies in order to ensure that the allocated budget is used for the benefit as well as the development of persons with disabilities.

- 01.** The members of the SHGs and Apex Bodies discussed about this issue in their meetings.
- 02.** In those meetings they, developed the plan that how they would approach to the Union Parishod to demand the utilization of the allocated budget for persons with disabilities.
- 03.** As the members of the SHGs and the Apex Bodies attended the Ward meetings and Open Budget meetings of their respective Unions, they raised the issue in those meetings.
- 04.** Through the participation in those meetings, they described how the utilization of the allocated budget could ensure the welfare of persons with disabilities.
- 05.** The members of the SHGs and the Apex Bodies also persuaded the Local Government authority that, persons with disabilities would be hugely benefitted if they are properly included in in their entitled government-schemes.
- 06.** They also discussed with the representatives of the Union Parishod about how the allocation of the budget could result in the development and socioeconomic empowerment of persons with disabilities.

The Changes Occurred

As a result of these advocacy initiatives, the Local Government authorities became sensitized about the needs of utilization of the allocated budget for persons with disabilities. Following are the initiatives taken by the Local Government bodies to ensure the proper utilization of the allocated budget for persons with disabilities.

01. Different departments of the Local Government took initiatives to incorporate persons with disabilities in their different training programmes.
02. The members of the SHGs and the Apex Bodies along with other persons with disabilities were able to access to the different government-schemes.
03. Through the allocated budget and inclusion in other government schemes, persons with disabilities became able to access to livelihood-related training programmes e.g., cow and goat rearing, poultry, agriculture and horticulture, tailoring.
04. Utilizing the allocated budget, the Department of the Social Welfare provided assistive devices to increase the mobility of persons with disabilities.
05. Inclusion in government schemes and the allocated budget also helped to construct accessible infrastructure of Local Government offices so persons with disabilities could access to the building to seek service.



Outcomes Generated

- Access to mainstream training programmes of persons with disabilities to increase their livelihood opportunities, has been ensured.
- Budget allocation and inclusion in government schemes of persons with disabilities have been ensured.

Making Inclusive Education a Reality

In the context of Bangladesh, it is often seen that, children with disabilities are less likely to attend school than children without disabilities where children with an intellectual or sensory disability are the least likely group to attend school. Even it is found that, among the majority of the children who have disabilities are not enrolled in school.

Inclusive Education is one of the utmost prioritized areas of the PHRPBD project that aims to work to ensure that students with disabilities could access to the mainstream education system. The PHRPBD project started implementing interventions on Inclusive Education on a pilot basis in five (05) primary schools in Kulaura, Moulvibazar in 2015. Later on, from 2018, it scaled up its interventions and incorporated additional five (05) primary schools and two (02) secondary schools in the same location, namely, Kulaura, Moulvibazar.

The PHRPBD project gained success in making 12 government schools disability-inclusive in Kulaura, Moulvibazar through advocacy.

Advocacy Initiatives

In the journey to make inclusive education a reality, the members of the SHGs and the Apex Body of Kulaura, Moulvibazar (one of the catchment areas of the PHRPBD project) played the vital role.

- At first, the project-team made several visits to the selected schools along with the SHGs and the Apex Body and held sensitization meetings with the teachers and the members of the School Management Committee (SMC) in order to make them understand the importance of inclusive education.
- As a second part of the plan, the project held consultation meeting with the representatives of the Union Parishad the Upazila Education officials where students with disabilities, their parents, and the community-people were also present.
- In addition, the project carried out an accessibility assessment in consultation with the Local Government bodies (Education Department) of Kulaura, Moulvibazar.
- And, finally, a comprehensive activity-plan, based on different assessments, was also shared with the Upazila Education Officer (UEO).



An accessible school
Kulaura upazila of
Moulvibazar district (one
of the catchment areas of
the project)

Advocacy Outcomes

The advocacy efforts run by the SHGs and the Apex Body of the PHRPBD project turned out a huge success to ensure access to education for students with disabilities. Following are a few outcomes:

The Government has adopted the Inclusive Education model and they are working to implement the Inclusive Education model in 193 government primary schools	The enrollment of children without disabilities has been (even from private-owned schools) increased in the accessible schools
A remarkable rate of interaction between students with disabilities and students without disabilities has been increased	Approximately BDT 27,75,000 has been contributed by the community run the interventions successfully
A total of 99 children with disabilities have been enrolled so far through the motivation of the teachers and the parents	The stakeholders of the project have involved themselves in the monitoring the Inclusive Education interventions
A significant change in the mindset of the community people about the potential of children with disabilities took place	The rate of enrolment and turn-out of children with disabilities in the classroom have been increased to a significant extent

This story testifies that, united effort of SHG members, Apex body and PHRPBD could bring tremendous changes through effective advocacy.



A student with physical disability is attending assembly in one of the inclusive schools in Kulaura, Moulvibazar

Assistive Device for Increased Mobility

Assistive Devices (AD) play a significant role in enabling persons with disabilities to carry out their daily activities and participate actively and productively in community life. Access to assistive devices is essential for persons with disabilities and is an important part of any development strategy. The absence of assistive devices hinders persons with disabilities to access to education or to work which result in the cycle of poverty.

The SHGs and the Apex Bodies of the different catchment areas of the PHRPBD project have been running advocacy efforts with different bodies of the Local Government for making available of assistive devices for persons with disabilities. The PHRPBD project was able to secure a number of successes in this pursuit. The following is one such success story in Chittagong (one of the catchment areas of the project).

The staff members of Shangshoptak (one of the implementing-partner organizations of the PHRPBD project in Anawara, Chittagong) along with the members of the SHGs and the Apex Bodies were working for persons with disabilities in their areas to bring them into the mainstream development process.



A glimpse of the assistive device distribution ceremony

As a part of their work, community mobilizer and the community disability resource persons of the project along with the Apex Body members placed an appeal to the Executive Officer of the Zilla Parashod for allocating assistive devices for persons with disabilities. In that meeting, the Apex Body members explained the needs of assistive devices to the Executive Officer. Then the Executive Officer advised them to prepare a plan of required assistive devices and to forward plan as an appeal to the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO).

After that, the members of the SHGs and the Apex Bodies, in collaboration with Shongshoptak, carried out a survey in their area to prepare an estimate of required assistive devices for persons with disabilities. Through the survey, a list of assistive devices was prepared which were e.g., wheelchair, tricycle, hearing-aid, special-chair, white-cane.

Having prepared the list, the SHGs and the Apex Body communicated with A.K. Khan CRP in Chittagong in order to prepare an approximate value of the assistive devices which was **BDT. 2,00,000**. Then, the appeal for the assistive devices and the entire plan of the assistive

devices were placed to the office of the UNO. Having received the appeal and the plan, the UNO forward that to the Zila Parishod. After that, the Zila Parishod received the appeal and kept the plan for the fiscal year 2017-2018.

In the meantime, after submitting the appeal and the plan for the assistive devices, the SHGs and the Apex Body followed-up the issue regularly. Then made physical visit to the Zila Parishod and the office of the UNO to get the updates of the issue.

Then, after several months, Shongshoptak received a letter from the UNO office which requested them to form a committee to implement the plan for manufacturing and distribution of assistive devices. Instantly, Shongshoptak formed a seven-member committee and made a contract with A.K. Khan CRP for manufacturing assistive devices. Then, a team from the A.K. Khan CRP made a visit to Anawara Upazila, Chittagong in order to conduct an assessment and then forwarded the assessment report to Dhaka CRP for manufacturing assistive devices. After a certain time, Dhaka CRP sent the assistive devices to Shongshoptak through A.K. Khan CRP.

On September 15, 2018, a programme was organized in the hall-room of the Anawara Upazila where the UNO of Anawara Upazila was present as the chief-guest. In that programme, the chief guest distributed the assistive devices among the persons with disabilities in Anawara Upazila. The entire programme was organized by Shongshopat and the SHGs and the Apex Body of the PHRPBD project which was financially supported by Chittagong Zila Parishod. Among the recipient of the assistive devices, there were men with disabilities, women with disabilities, and children with disabilities.



Photo of a similar assistive device distribution ceremony in Chakaria, Cox's Bazar

Glossary of Key Terms

Source:
Disability Inclusive
Development Toolkit, CBM

Accessibility: means ensuring that people with disabilities are able to have access to the physical environment around them, to transportation, to information such as reading material, to communication technology and systems on an equal basis with others. Accessibility requires forward thinking by those responsible for delivery of private and public services to ensure that people with disabilities can access services without barriers.

Barriers: when discussed in relation to people with disabilities, barriers can have a number of meanings. They can be structural barriers, such as physical barriers (e.g. stairs), also structural in terms of how a society organises itself in areas such as welfare and support services, opportunities to own or control resources and decision making. Barriers can also be attitudinal, for example prejudice and negative perceptions of people with disabilities can create barriers hindering their full and equal participation in society.

Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR): is focused on enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities and their families; ensuring inclusion and participation. It is a multi-sectoral strategy that empowers persons with disabilities to access and benefit from education, employment, health and social services. CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of people with disabilities, their families and communities, and relevant government and non-government health, education, vocational, social and other services. (WHO CBR guidelines definition).

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): The CRPD is an international human rights treaty, which protects the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Parties to the Convention (those who have ratified it) are required to promote, protect, and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by people with disabilities.

Disability: Article 1 of of the CRPD states that 'Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'.

Disability-inclusive development: focuses particularly on the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. It actively seeks to ensure the full participation of people with disabilities as empowered self-advocates in all development processes and emergency responses and works to address the barriers, which hinder their access and participation. While CBM's focus is disability-inclusive development, we adhere to the general principles of inclusive development in our work.

Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs): are usually self-organised organisations where the majority of control at board level and at membership level is with people with disabilities. The role of a OPD is to provide a voice of their own, on all matters related to the lives of people with disabilities.

Empowerment: is a process by which people, organisations or groups who are powerless become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, develop the skills and capacity for gaining control over their lives, exercise their control without infringing on the rights of others and support the empowerment of others in the community.

Equality: There are three definitions of equality. Formal equality refers to being respected equally that all persons irrespective of their background or characteristics are born equal. Equal opportunities is a process to ensure that all people regardless of age, sex, race, disability or any other characteristic have access to the same opportunities in life as others in the community and are able to participate equally in the public sphere. The third definition is de-facto equality where people have equality of outcomes.

Equity: is where there is formal recognition that women and men, girls and boys have different interests, preferences, needs which may necessitate different treatment and opportunities. It demands a redistribution of typical power relations, structures and resources; transformation in unjust power relations, hegemonies and structures; opening up of access to resources and participation for traditionally marginalised groups. Equity ultimately is about achieving fairness or equality of outcomes for all – in effective de-facto equality.

Impairment: an impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action.

Inclusive development: ensures that marginalised groups actively participate and benefit from the development processes and outcomes, regardless of their age, gender, disability, state of health, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion or any other characteristics. It seeks to address the deepening inequality and consequent lack of access to opportunities for those who are excluded from development gains and processes.

Reasonable accommodation: is an adjustment made in a system to accommodate or make fair the same system for an individual based on a proven need.

Universal Design: involves designing products and environments so that the widest range of people possible can use them, without need for adaptation or specialised design. Universal Design evolved from Accessible Design, a design process that addresses the needs of people with disabilities. Universal Design goes further by recognising that there is a wide spectrum of human abilities. Everyone passes through childhood, periods of temporary illness, injury and old age. By designing for this human diversity, we can create things that will be easier for all people to use.

For more information, please contact:

Taslima Akter Keya
Coordinator

Centre for Disability in Development (CDD)
A-18/6, Genda, Savar, Dhaka-1340
Bangladesh
01713021695
info@cdd.org.bd
cdd.org.bd



This project is supported by CBM Australia, and is an Australian Aid project funded by the Australian Government