

Project Title: *A Call to Action: National Advocacy Initiative to Strengthen the Functions of District-level Disability Service Centers (Pratibandhi Shahajjo & Seba Kendro – SSK) in Bangladesh*



Project Duration: 9 months (March - November 2025)

Implemented by: Bangladesh Disabled Development Trust (BDDT)

Media Partner: Dainik Dhaka Times

Supported by: Free Press Unlimited (FPU)

About the Project

District-level Disability Service Centers (PSOSKs) play a critical role in delivering services for persons with disabilities in Bangladesh. However, many centers face challenges such as staff shortages, accessibility barriers, limited infrastructure, and gaps in service delivery. To address these issues, BDDT implemented a national advocacy initiative aimed at strengthening SSK functions through evidence generation, stakeholder engagement, and policy advocacy.

The project adopted a participatory and evidence-based approach by collecting data from 32 SSKs across Bangladesh and facilitating dialogues among persons with disabilities, government officials, civil society organizations, media representatives, and experts. The initiative sought to identify service gaps, amplify the voices of persons with disabilities, and develop practical policy recommendations to improve disability services nationwide.

The project ultimately moved beyond documenting challenges and created pathways for sustained engagement with policymakers to influence long-term reforms in disability service delivery.

What BDDT Has Done Under the Project?

Under this initiative, BDDT carried out a series of strategic interventions to strengthen disability service systems and improve advocacy for persons with disabilities. BDDT established a formal partnership with Dainik Dhaka Times to strengthen media-based advocacy. Dainik Dhaka Times not only supported investigative reporting and nationwide media coverage on disability service issues, but also increased public awareness and visibility of challenges affecting SSKs.

Why CSO-Media Collaboration?

BDDT's advocacy efforts can only achieve wider impact when the findings reach policymakers, service providers, and the general public. Through its partnership with media, particularly Dainik Dhaka Times, BDDT has been able to transform evidence collected from 32 district-level disability service centers (PSOSKs) into public discourse. Journalists participated directly in field data collection alongside BDDT representatives, which enhanced the credibility, transparency, and accuracy of the evidence gathered. Media reports helped expose service gaps, workforce shortages, infrastructure challenges, and accessibility barriers that persons with disabilities face. By publishing investigative stories, the media can always create public pressure on relevant government agencies to address these issues and implement reforms.



Picture: MoU Signing and Strategic Meeting with Media Partner – Dainik Dhaka Times

The project specifically aimed to strengthen accountability and inclusion, and media coverage is a powerful tool for holding authorities accountable for the quality of disability services. Media also amplified the voices and recommendations of persons with disabilities that emerged from the strategic dialogues and roundtable discussions held across different divisions of Bangladesh. Through newspapers, online platforms, and other media channels, awareness about disability rights and available services reached a much larger audience than BDDT could reach alone. The collaboration further helps generate support from civil society organizations, development partners, and policymakers for sustainable improvements in PSOSK services. Since one of the project's expected outcomes is stronger collaboration between civil society and media, this partnership itself served as a model for evidence-based advocacy. Ultimately, close cooperation between BDDT and Dhaka Times increased the likelihood that research findings will translate into concrete policy actions, improved service delivery, and greater social inclusion for persons with disabilities.

A. Data Collection for Evidence-based Advocacy

- Conducted nationwide data collection across 32 Disability Service Centers (PSOSKs) to identify service gaps and operational challenges.
- Developed a structured questionnaire and created a comprehensive evidence database.
- Documented issues related to accessibility, staffing shortages, therapy services, assistive devices, and infrastructure.



Picture: Data Collection from District-based PSOSKs

B. Roundtable Discussions with Stakeholders

- Organized 8 divisional roundtable discussions involving government officials, civil society representatives, NGOs, and disability related stakeholders.
- Engaged 138 participants to identify solutions for improving SSK services.
- Generated recommendations including disability-friendly infrastructure, gender-sensitive staffing, one-stop service systems, and stronger outreach mechanisms.



Picture: Snaps from Divisional Roundtable Discussion with Stakeholders

C. Strategic Dialogues with Persons with Disabilities

- Conducted 8 strategic dialogue sessions with persons with disabilities across divisions.
- Engaged 154 participants (74 men and 80 women) to share lived experiences and service needs.
- Collected recommendations on therapy support, assistive devices, vocational opportunities, child-friendly services, and accessibility improvements.



Picture: Moments from Divisional Strategic Dialogues with Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

D. Policy Advocacy and Government Engagement



Picture: Signing MoU with Consultant



**Picture: Project Implementation Team
BDDT**

- Appointed a highly influential disability rights expert to facilitate engagement with national policymakers.
- Prepared and submitted an evidence-based national advocacy proposal to the Department of Social Services and relevant government bodies based on the findings from data collection, roundtable discussions and strategic dialogues.
- Conducted follow-up meetings with government institutions to support policy consideration and institutional reforms.

E. Building Sustainable Networks

- Strengthened relationships with government agencies, media, civil society actors, and disability organizations.
- Established a platform for continued dialogue and advocacy beyond the project period.



Picture: Advocacy Proposal Submission and Follow-Up Meetings by BDDT Team

Through this project, BDDT successfully transformed community experiences and field evidence into a national advocacy agenda, contributing to stronger accountability and improved disability service discussions in Bangladesh.

BDDT's Commitment

BDDT remains committed to advancing the rights, dignity, and inclusion of persons with disabilities through evidence-based advocacy, strategic partnerships, and active engagement with communities and policymakers. The organization believes that accessible, responsive, and quality disability services are essential for ensuring equal participation and opportunities for all.



Picture: Report Sharing Event with Stakeholders

Building on the achievements of this initiative, BDDT will continue to work with government institutions, organizations of persons with disabilities, media partners, and civil society actors to strengthen disability service systems and promote sustainable policy reforms. BDDT is committed to ensuring that the voices and lived experiences of persons with disabilities remain at the center of advocacy and decision-making processes.

Through continued collaboration and innovation, BDDT seeks to contribute to a more inclusive Bangladesh where every person with a disability can access services, exercise their rights, and participate fully in society