



BRIDGING THE GAP - ORGANISATIONS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ROLE IN MAKING WORK MORE INCLUSIVE OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

THE EXPERIENCE OF ADD INTERNATIONAL IN
BANGLADESH AND UGANDA.

INTRODUCTION.

THE EXPERIENCE OF ADD INTERNATIONAL IN BANGLADESH AND UGANDA.

The barriers faced by persons with disabilities seeking employment are well-documented: Low levels of education, skills, confidence and support on one side, with negative attitudes and environmental barriers among employers on the other. Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) are uniquely placed to bridge this gap by helping persons with disabilities to build employment skills and confidence while also supporting policymakers and employers to create opportunities in inclusive working environments. But to fulfil this critical role effectively, OPDs need strong organisational capacity – knowledge, skills, links with employers and powerholders, management systems and core funding – and many OPDs have not had the opportunity to develop this capacity.

ADD International's experience in Uganda and Bangladesh is showing how meaningful engagement with OPDs can make a real difference when it comes to making jobs and work more inclusive of persons with disabilities – and that OPDs can play this role most effectively when they have the right support and investment.



OUR APPROACH.

The UKAID-funded Inclusion Works programme is testing models of inclusive employment practice in four countries and generating robust evidence and data which can be used to influence at a national, regional and global level. Under the umbrella of this project, ADD International is supporting OPDs in Uganda and Bangladesh to strengthen the organisational capacity they need to support persons with disabilities to develop marketable skills, while engaging with employers to create employment opportunities and introduce inclusive employment practices.

In **Bangladesh** we are working with 10 OPDs to help young people with disabilities to access employment opportunities. OPDs are working with their members to identify vocational training matched to each individual's aptitude and in line with local employment opportunities. They then work with families to secure their support, and mentor individuals through interview and placement processes. At the same time, OPDs are engaging with vocational training providers and employers involved in the project to increase accessibility and inclusion in the workplace.

A similar approach is taken in **Uganda** where 6 OPDs are helping disabled men and women in their communities to access training and employment. These OPDs have also engaged with over 80 employers through the Federation of Uganda Employers, with 'Disability Inclusion Facilitators' providing tailored mentoring and follow-up to build employers' confidence and capacity to employ persons with disabilities.

Throughout the project OPDs have received ongoing practical support and advice from ADD International to help them deliver the project effectively. In both countries we have supported OPDs to lobby local and national government to ensure existing legislation supporting inclusive jobs and work is enacted. At the same time, OPDs are using the project as an opportunity for strengthening systems and skills so that they can continue to be effective agents of change beyond the life of the project. Tailored packages of institutional support for each OPD were developed based on self-assessments which were carried out annually to identify gaps and priorities for organisational capacity building. Institutional support included:

- Technical support – provision of information and training
- Accompaniment - learning by doing things together, or with advice from other organisations
- Strategic support – provision of specific equipment, staff posts
- Brokering links – introductions to employers, training providers, and key people in government, support in preparing and attending key meetings



BANGLADESH



TANZANIA

DID IT WORK?

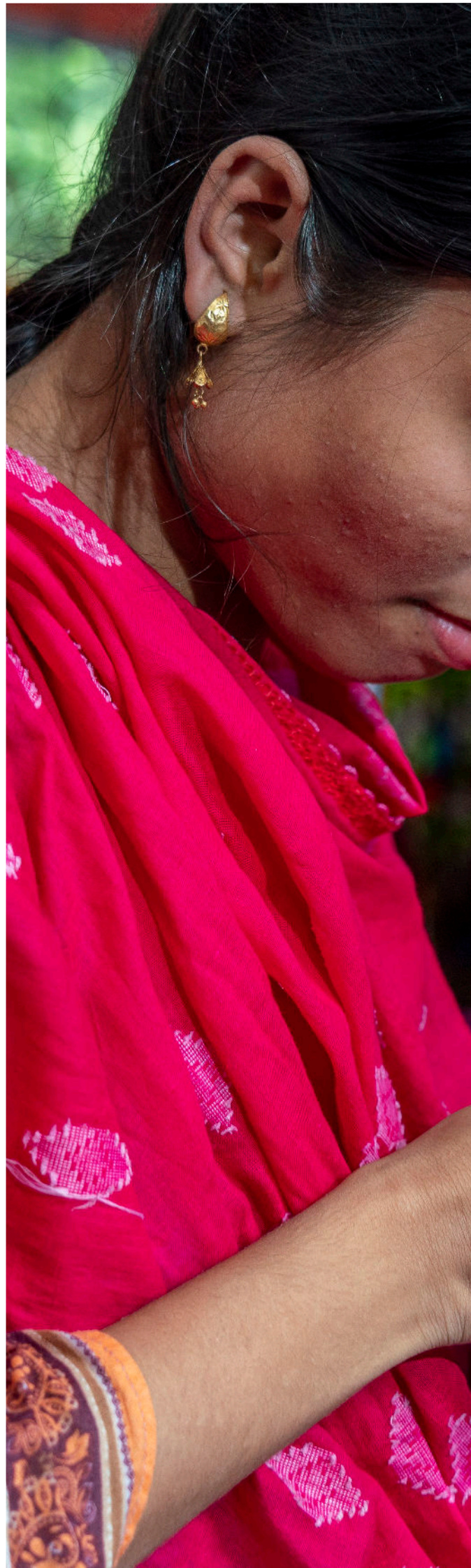
Among employers in the project areas in **Bangladesh**, there has been a shift in attitudes towards persons with disabilities. Where previously there was discrimination and assumptions that they would not make good employees, employers have become more confident about employing young persons with disabilities, and they have taken practical steps to create more inclusive workplaces. Young persons with disabilities involved in the project have increased their confidence and employability, with many now securing jobs, contributing to their families, and enjoying more recognition within their communities.

In **Uganda** 60 women and men with disabilities have secured either job placements, internships or started their own self-employment. Most project participants said that the training received had helped them to improve their skills in CV writing, making job applications, and doing interviews. The fact that much of the training was online due to the pandemic also helped them to build their confidence in using computers, and almost all participants say they are now keen to access further skills training online. Employers involved in the project have received the information, resources and day-to-day advice which has helped them become more disability-confident. One employer involved in the project is Ecobrix which describes how the local OPD MADIPHA has helped them to become more disability-confident employers through advice, accessibility audits, workshops and exchange programs:

'This has enabled us to understand what inclusion means in practical terms. They mobilize different categories of people that they send to us here to learn different skills.' Ecobrix representative

OPDs participating in the project in both countries have been positive about the value of the **capacity building support** received. Through an anonymous satisfaction survey most OPDs rated the support received as 'very useful', particularly the self-assessment process and the technical support provided. Most said that the support received had made their organisations 'more' or 'a great deal' more effective, with examples of increased capacity including: being better networked with employers; new or more robust policies; updated databases of members including jobseekers; better facilities; and greater confidence in reporting.

'It has made our organizations greatly more effective from the word go [...] support staffs, giving all of them the required training in project management and [...] equipping them with skills and techniques-- in approaching potential employers, [...] selling to them the ideal and the importance of promoting disability inclusion with the employment market.' Respondent from an OPD based in Uganda.





IMPLICATIONS FOR MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT.

If governments are serious about making jobs and workplaces more inclusive of persons with disabilities, they should recognise the role that OPDs can play in bridging the gap between unemployed persons with disabilities and those with the power to create employment opportunities – employers, training providers and policymakers. OPDs are uniquely placed to play this role because they are membership organisations, rooted in their communities, representing the diverse lived experience of persons with disabilities. This means they can reach and support marginalised persons with disabilities – because they share similar lived experience. They can also influence employers to adopt more inclusive attitudes and practice, because they are an example of what persons with disabilities can achieve, and they can provide insights into barriers faced.

However, meaningful engagement with OPDs on promoting inclusive jobs and work can only happen if OPDs have the institutional capacity to do this effectively. Governments and other development stakeholders should provide more opportunities for OPDs to access organisational capacity building support, including technical support, accompaniment and funding – both during funded interventions, and in the longer term - so that they are resourced to become active partners in the change process.



ADD International is a disability rights organisation. We partner with organisations of disability activists in Africa and Asia and help them access the tools, resources and support they need to build powerful movements for change.

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