



## **Innovation to Inclusion**

**Data-driven advocacy for  
inclusive employment and  
social protection**

## **A learning document**

The experiences of organisations  
of persons with disabilities in  
Bangladesh and Kenya

## Acknowledgements

i2i would like to thank Lucie Pannell for coordination of the learning process, and all partner OPDs in Bangladesh and Kenya who engaged in the process and shared their knowledge and experience:

**Bangladesh:** Alliance of Urban DPOs Chittagong (AUDC); Bangladesh Disabled Development Trust (BDDT); Bangladesh Society for the Change and Advocacy Nexus (B-SCAN); Community Based Disability and Child protection Organization (CBDCPO); Disabled Child Foundation (DCF); Disabled Development and Research Center (DDRC); Human Rights Disability and Development Foundation (HDDF); National Council of Disabled Women (NCDW); National Grassroots Disabilities Organization (NGDO); Women with Disabilities Development Foundation (WDDF).

**Kenya:** Albinism Society of Kenya; Cerebral Palsy Society of Kenya (CPSK); Deaf Empowerment Kenya (DEK); Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN); Kenya Paraplegic Organisation (KPO); Kenya Union of the Blind (KUB); Tinada Youth Organisation; United Disabled Persons Of Kenya (UDPK); Vision of the Blind (VoB); Women Challenged to Challenge (WCC).

**Front cover photo:** Unnati Rani, 39, a textiles worker at a factory in Dhaka. Unnati is a member of National Council of Disabled Women (NCDW), an OPD involved in the i2i programme.

**Photo:** i2i/Leonard Cheshire/Habiba Nowrose

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## Executive summary

**i2i (Innovation to Inclusion) was funded by the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and ran from 2019 to 2022. Working towards achieving the sustainable development agenda to leave no one behind, the programme aimed to address the key challenges persons with disabilities experience in accessing economic opportunities and waged employment.**

A key part of the i2i programme has involved finding innovative ways in which Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in Bangladesh and Kenya can successfully advocate for access to economic opportunities, waged employment and social protection for persons with disabilities.

This document explores and records the experiences of OPDs implementing data-driven advocacy. OPDs in both Bangladesh and Kenya shared their experiences of carrying out data-driven advocacy activities as part of i2i. They observed how others in a similar context navigated the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and adapted their activities.

Overall, OPDs identified that collecting data formed the cornerstone of their advocacy strategies. They confirmed that the development of relationships with key stakeholders, rights

holders and duty bearers was key. Additionally, they emphasised that working together as a coalition to plan clear strategy and goals, to strengthen and unify their collective voice, and also leverage the skills of individual OPDs was essential to the success of the activities.

Through sharing their experiences, challenges and successes, OPDs identified 12 specific learning points for other OPDs implementing advocacy activities. These included the importance of education and meaningful engagement of rights holders; sensitisation of duty bearers as an essential first step; the importance of data for credibility, impact and targeting of actions; the importance of developing two-way relationships and identifying ‘champions’; the importance of demonstration and visual, tangible illustrations of change; and the understanding that advocacy action is a starting point along a long road to achieving change.

The experiences of OPDs through the i2i programme also points to 6 key learning points for other stakeholders planning and supporting activities (including government departments, International and National Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and donors). These included ensuring data gathering processes and tools are built into advocacy strategies alongside ‘process indicators’; supporting OPDs to work as a coalition and engage nationally and internationally in sharing and learning; and planning for changes or ‘shocks’ to plans and processes.

## List of acronyms

DPO	Disabled Persons Organisation
EDF	European Disability Forum
FCDO	Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office
i2i	Innovation to Inclusion
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OPD	Organisation of Persons with Disabilities
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability



# Introduction

## What is i2i?

**i2i (Innovation to Inclusion), a three-year programme running from 2019 to 2022, was funded under the UK Aid Connect programme through the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Leonard Cheshire led a diverse consortium of partner organisations in Bangladesh and Kenya all of whom were involved in the implementation of the i2i programme activities.**

i2i aimed to address the key challenges persons with disabilities experience in accessing economic opportunities and waged employment, and work towards achieving the sustainable development agenda to leave no one behind. The programme had a specific focus on generating data and evidence to highlight and support sustained inclusive economic opportunities for persons with disabilities, particularly women. The evidence and learning from i2i will be used to identify and implement, at scale, successful innovative interventions for the benefit of persons with disabilities in Bangladesh and Kenya, and further afield.

## How is advocacy used in i2i?

A key part of the i2i programme involved finding innovative ways that Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) can successfully advocate for access to economic opportunities and waged employment amongst key duty bearers, ensuring equal access to resources, education, training, and reasonable accommodation in accessing employment and social protection.

### OPD or DPO?

**An Organisation of Persons with Disabilities (OPD) can also be referred to as a Disabled Persons' Organisation (DPO). In this learning document we use the term OPD but the meaning is the same: a representative organisation or group of persons with disabilities.**



Activities specifically targeted the implementation of two articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): Article 27 (equal right to work and employment) and Article 28 (equal right to adequate standard of living and social protection).

### The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

**Article 27** recognises the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others, prohibiting discrimination and protecting equal opportunities, including access to vocational guidance programmes, opportunities in self-employment, the public sector, and the private sector. Link: [Article 27 – Work and employment | United Nations Enable](#)

**Article 28** recognises the right of persons with disabilities to adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. This also includes access to disability-related assistance, devices and social protection. Link: [Article 28 – Adequate standard of living and social protection | United Nations Enable](#)

A participant attends training on business and life skills for deaf people run by OPD Deaf Empowerment Kenya as part of the i2i programme.  
**Photo:** i2i/Leonard Cheshire/Patrick Meinhardt



Through i2i OPDs have trialled an innovative approach, implementing evidence-based, data-driven advocacy and meaningful engagement in national accountability and/or monitoring processes.

The innovative approach involved a step by step process with OPDs in both Bangladesh and Kenya to:

**Develop knowledge and skills**



**Identify and gather relevant data**



**Use strategic evidence-based planning**



**Strengthen the national coalition of OPDs, and play to the strengths of each individual member to effectively use data.**

Two workshops were held in both Bangladesh and Kenya (first facilitated in-person, but then online due to the COVID-19 pandemic) to prepare OPDs for advocacy activities.

The workshops covered key background information such as understanding Article 27 and 28 of the UNCRPD and key data tools such as the Washington Group Questions.

The Workshops also introduced Leonard Cheshire's Disability Inclusion Tracker (Inclusion Counts: Disability Data Tracker: A data collection and advocacy guideline for Organisations of Persons with Disabilities) to support OPDs to collect data and analyse the extent to which national legal and policy frameworks in their country are in compliance with Articles 27 and 28 of the UNCRPD.

OPDs planned implementation of Leonard Cheshire's Disability Inclusion Tracker as a coalition, and then used the data gathered to plan advocacy strategies that mobilised the key strengths of each individual OPD. Key to the approach was strengthening OPDs' evidence-base and collective voice to hold duty bearers accountable with legitimacy and credibility.

**Inclusion Counts: Disability Data Tracker: A data collection and advocacy guideline for Organisations of Persons with Disabilities**

**Article 27:**

[https://www.disabilitydataportal.com/fileadmin/uploads/lcdp/Documents/Disability\\_Data\\_Tracker\\_-\\_work\\_and\\_employment\\_-\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.disabilitydataportal.com/fileadmin/uploads/lcdp/Documents/Disability_Data_Tracker_-_work_and_employment_-_FINAL.pdf)

**Article 28:**

[https://www.disabilitydataportal.com/fileadmin/uploads/lcdp/Documents/Disability\\_Data\\_Tracker\\_-\\_adequate\\_standard\\_of\\_living\\_and\\_social\\_protection\\_-\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.disabilitydataportal.com/fileadmin/uploads/lcdp/Documents/Disability_Data_Tracker_-_adequate_standard_of_living_and_social_protection_-_FINAL.pdf)



Participants at the i2i advocacy workshop in Bangladesh sit around a table in discussion.

**Photo:** i2i/Brett Richards



## About this learning document

### What is the purpose of this learning document?

**This document gathers learning from the implementation of i2i's innovative approach to advocacy using data-driven strategies to inform advocacy actions to improve access to economic opportunities and waged employment for persons with disabilities.**

Bringing together collective experience from OPDs in Bangladesh and Kenya, this learning document outlines the advocacy tools and methods that OPDs used in the i2i project, and showcases those they identified as being the most effective, highlighting key challenges and recommendations for using data as a basis for action.

This advocacy learning document also explores the experiences of carrying out advocacy activities to support access to employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic – a time when the pressures on persons with disabilities have been exacerbated.

Marko Titus works as a cashier at Carrefour Village Market, Nairobi. Carrefour is one of the large private sector organisations being engaged by i2i.  
**Photo:** i2i/Leonard Cheshire/Patrick Meinhardt

### Who is this learning document for?

This document is for any individual or organisation planning activities that aim to advocate for inclusive economic opportunities and waged employment for persons with disabilities.



**Key learning** points are highlighted for both OPDs implementing activities, but also other stakeholders planning and supporting activities, including government departments, International and National Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and donors.



## How was the learning presented in this document gathered?

This learning document has been led by two consortium members; Leonard Cheshire and the European Disability Forum (EDF), and draws upon the collective experiences of i2i OPD members in Bangladesh and Kenya.

OPDs from Bangladesh and Kenya were brought together to share experiences through online engagement. To encourage open, equal and enjoyable participation from the OPD members, a diverse programme of activities was explored, including:

- **A discussion forum using a closed Facebook group (encouraging open discussion, targeted questions and polls)**
- **Two separate focus group discussions with Bangladesh and Kenya**
- **Three informal discussions with Bangladesh and Kenya to explore specific themes emerging from the focus group discussions**
- **A final 'online party' to discuss emerging themes and work towards consensus among OPDs members on key learning on advocacy tools and methods.**

Between 20 and 25 OPD members attended each of the online sessions (focus groups, informal discussions and online party), representing OPDs in Bangladesh and Kenya. Discussion was engaging and interactive, with members agreeing with, or supporting experiences in the other country.

The closed Facebook group was set up to allow OPD members from Bangladesh and Kenya to create a comfortable space where

they could interact and discuss learning. However, the Facebook group was not actively used by all OPD members. OPD members expressed that they preferred to have dedicated time to interact through an online meeting, rather than communicate through a social platform.



**Key learning: Explore the range of online communication tools and those that OPDs would find most useful to engage, guide and own the process, as technology has rapidly changed to support online working and collaboration through the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Nasrin Jahan is executive director of the Disabled Child Foundation (DCF), an OPD based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. DCF has been working with Leonard Cheshire on the i2i programme.

**Photo:** i2i/Leonard Cheshire/  
Habiba Nowrose



## OPDs' experiences

### The most common advocacy tools and methods that OPDs used

**OPDs in Bangladesh and Kenya developed plans for data collection and advocacy activities as part of national coalitions. This ensured that they leveraged the different strengths of individual OPDs to form one collective voice at the national level.**

Firstly, individual OPDs took responsibility for specific areas of data collection. Once data on national legal and policy frameworks had been collected, the OPDs developed a targeted advocacy strategy. Again, individual OPDs took responsibility for using specific tools and methods for specific activities, based on their strengths and experiences.

OPDs employed a wide range of advocacy tools and methods, including:

- Using Leonard Cheshire's Disability Inclusion Tracker for gathering data on national legal and policy frameworks
- Monitoring/collecting information
- Holding meetings with duty bearers – government representatives or private businesses/companies
- Developing policy briefings and/or guidelines
- Sharing information using posters/leaflets

- Using radio/television/social media
- Holding events or demonstrations
- Demonstrating change, for example through actions like developing an online jobs' portal.

OPDs in both Bangladesh and Kenya confirmed that gathering, collecting, monitoring, and sharing data formed the core of their advocacy strategies.



**Key learning: Build the development of data gathering processes and tools into any advocacy strategy**

The impact of gathering data on national legal and policy frameworks was evident in both Bangladesh and Kenya, with OPDs sharing that it increased their credibility with stakeholders, particularly government representatives. Increased credibility supported the development of relationships with stakeholders.

Data also helped OPDs to plan more targeted actions, both in terms of identifying key stakeholders and key policy provisions/frameworks.

## Data supports credibility, helps build relationships and, ultimately amplifies impact – an example of using the media

Having evidence based data enabled an OPD in Kenya to effectively engage with national media channels to share advocacy messages. Using evidence, the OPD produced news articles, engaged in radio talk shows and programmes focused on livelihoods, and produced a media ‘backgrounder’, which included statistics and information for news releases.

Building a relationship with specific media channels, the OPD was able to equip the media with knowledge and resources on inclusion, and was also supported to equip persons with disabilities to engage in media and use media exposure to maximize impact. For example, to maximize impact of a written article, persons with disabilities were encouraged to respond to the article and generate discussion.

The media provided a meaningful platform which the OPD had not been able to tap into previously. As a result of sharing data, building credibility and relationships with the media, one radio programme has already committed to regularly include persons with disabilities.



**Key learning:** Data helps build credibility which can lead to stronger relationships and greater impact



**Key learning:** Two-way relationship development (between rights’ holders and duty bearers) is key to achieving impact

## Data helps target key stakeholders and ‘champions’ to achieve change – an example of promoting inclusion through engaging sign language interpreters in key institutions

Following a desk review of policies and provisions for persons with disabilities using Leonard Cheshire’s Disability Inclusion Tracker, an OPD in Kenya identified key gaps where Article 28 (ensuring equal right to adequate standard of living and social protection) was not being upheld in Kisumu County.

These gaps included access to health services and justice, especially for women with disabilities seeking protection. The Kenyan OPD mapped the key stakeholders and influential figures who would have the potential to achieve change in these two areas and targeted these in their advocacy actions.

Using the data gathered, the OPD presented the gaps to the key stakeholders and as a result achieved a key step towards inclusion by ensuring sign language interpretation is available in health services and on the Police gender desk to support women with disabilities.



**Key learning:** Data helps target key stakeholders and persons of influence



**Key learning:** Identifying key ‘champions’ in influential positions can help fast-track change and facilitate ‘quick wins’



## Data helps target weak or ineffective policies and provisions – an example of identifying where tax incentives need to change to be effective

As a result of data gathering using Leonard Cheshire's Disability Inclusion Tracker, the coalition of OPDs in Bangladesh identified that a Government tax rebate incentive included in the 2019-2020 National Budget was not realistic and would therefore not achieve change. The Government offered a 5% tax rebate to companies where 10% of their employees were persons with disabilities. The OPDs pointed out that 10% was too high a target and would therefore not incentivise companies to work towards employing more persons with disabilities.

The OPDs have met with the Chamber of Commerce to suggest reducing the target to a 3% tax rebate if 5% of the work force employed are persons with disabilities.

So far this change has not been accepted. Whilst progress towards change may take many years, one of the OPDs in Bangladesh is confident that if each meeting can start to turn the mindset of one person, then change is possible.



**Key learning:** Data helps target key weak or ineffective policies and provisions



**Key learning:** It can be a long road to achieving change, which starts with small steps



**“Change will be a long process... I believe change comes 5 to 10 years down the line, but hopefully if one person changes their perspective as a result of a meeting, then it is a step towards change... raising the voice, step by step”**  
(OPD member, Bangladesh).

Shamim Hossan, manager and storekeeper of Shap Embroidery in Dhaka. Shamim is a member of the National Grassroots Disabilities Organization (NGDO), an OPD involved in the i2i programme.  
**Photo:** i2i/Leonard Cheshire/Habiba Nowrose

## Data facilitates targeting policies and provisions that are out of date – an example of where social security provisions are not in line with the real cost of living

An OPD in Bangladesh identified that the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) 2015-2020 stated that Disability Allowance should rise to the equivalent of \$20 per month, but it remains below \$10 per month – just enough to cover the cost of breakfast for one person for a month. The OPD is approaching the relevant ministries responsible for the National Social Security Strategy (2021-2025) before it is finalised at the end of the year but to date there has been little traction.

The OPD is also targeting the Social Protection Policy in Bangladesh, which states that an individual can only access one source of social security, for example:

- A student receiving Disabled Students Allowance, cannot also receive Disability Allowance
- An individual receiving Older Age Allowance, cannot also receive Disability Allowance

However, this is not in line with a Government announcement in 2019 that Disability Allowance would be available for all persons with disabilities. As yet, the Social Protection Policy has not been aligned with the announcement.



A man sits on the ground in a market in Bangladesh selling bananas.

**Photo:** Julker Naeem on Unsplash



**Key learning:** Data helps target key weak or ineffective policies and provisions



**Key learning:** It can be a long road to achieving change, which starts with small steps



## The tools and methods OPDs found to be most effective

OPDs cited developing relationships through meetings with duty bearers, alongside engagement of rights' holders, as the most effective tools and methods for advocacy.

The collective experience of OPDs suggests that sensitisation and awareness raising using data is a key first step, which then requires a period of relationship development between duty bearers and rights' holders. OPDs also cited the importance of demonstrable change as being essential, together with the requirement for background sensitisation. Small steps such as ensuring venues and meeting arrangements (online or in-person) are accessible are key to building awareness, momentum and progress towards change.

Ripa Tabassum, human resources officer for textile company AJI Group, keeps colleagues updated on workplace rules at the factory in Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

**Photo:** i2i/Leonard Cheshire/Habiba Nowrose



## Data-driven sensitisation is the first step in achieving meaningful engagement of duty bearers and concrete commitments that can be followed up – an example of sensitisation workshops

In Kenya, the consortium of OPDs facilitated sensitization workshops in Nairobi and Mombasa Counties with duty bearers and rights holders. Duty bearers included representatives from County and National Government, and employers. Data from the desk review was presented at the sensitization workshop, identifying gaps and areas for improvement to ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities in social protection and employment. The focus was to encourage duty bearers to commit to change.

Several general commitments were made, however, one of the OPD members noted that it was challenging to get stakeholders to make concrete commitments that could be followed up. The OPD member had learned that a step by step process could help work towards concrete commitments: firstly, to bring duty bearers on board, then make concrete commitments and then agree together on monitoring the commitments. The key is to work together with duty bearers and rights' holders, and it is the duty of OPDs to provide the tools and support that duty bearers need to follow through with their commitments. Support may include data or practical tools such as accessibility audit tools. Commitments need to be shared by OPDs, rights' holders and duty bearers.



Charity Wangechi, Edwin Opetu at training on data entry and scanning at Stepwise offices in Nairobi, organised through the i2i programme.

**Photo:** i2i/Leonard Cheshire/Patrick Meinhardt



**Key learning:** Sensitisation of duty bearers using data is an essential first step in the process leading to change



**Key learning:** Two-way relationship development (between rights holders and duty bearers) is key to achieving impact



**Key learning:** OPDs need to support duty bearers to develop, implement and monitor concrete commitments – the commitments are shared commitments!



## Demonstrating action can achieve change, but it needs to be in a wider context of awareness and sensitisation for sustainable impact – an example of setting up a job portal

The creation of a job portal through the i2i programme in Bangladesh has provided a springboard for change and the portal has already registered more than 4,000 persons with disabilities, who have submitted their CVs. In the Chattogram Municipality some women have already accessed employment with garments' factories. However, one of the OPDs in Bangladesh noted that whilst the portal is a springboard, attention needs to be paid to the barriers to sustainable employment. Ensuring reasonable accommodation in the workplace eliminates key barriers. Some of the women have left the positions because of poor accommodation.



**Key learning:** Demonstration of change can be a useful springboard but needs to be part of a wider programme of awareness and sensitisation for sustainable impact



**Key learning:** Individual advocacy actions should not be seen as an end point, but as a starting point to build a movement towards change

Maryanne Mungai works as a cashier at the Carrefour supermarket in Two Rivers, Nairobi.

**Photo:** i2i/Patrick Meinhardt



## Key challenges that OPDs faced carrying out advocacy tools and methods

Through discussing their experiences, OPDs shared encountering the following key challenges during their advocacy activities:

- Lack of awareness amongst rights' holders, who sometimes were not aware of key stakeholders in the areas of inclusive employment and social protection
- Conflicts arising between duty bearers and rights' holders during meetings, causing what one DPO member called 'friendly crossfire' (OPD member, Kenya), which OPDs had to manage
- High expectations amongst rights' holders for the outcome of meetings and activities, and disappointment in the lack of immediate concrete outcomes that meet their needs
- The desire from rights' holders for immediate concrete outcomes caused a tension between the pursuit of short term and long term outcomes of advocacy activities. There was a lack of understanding that few advocacy activities produce immediate results and many require longer term strategies and relationship development.



Trainer Jane Muchiro speaks to jobseekers about data entry and scanning at the Stepwise offices in Nairobi. Stepwise is a partner and supporter of the i2i programme in Kenya.

**Photo:** i2i/Leonard Cheshire/Patrick Meinhardt

Suggested solutions to these challenges included:

- Ensuring rights holders have adequate information on the aims and expectations of the activities and are involved in the whole process from start to finish
- Ensuring that reporting on advocacy activities includes 'process indicators' not just 'outcome indicators'.



**Key learning:** Educate rights' holders and meaningfully engage them in the whole process



**Key learning:** Ensure 'process indicators' are included in Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) plans for advocacy activities

**“We have learned how to carry on and adapt, but this was not ideal and activities had reduced potency”**  
(OPD member, Kenya).

An overriding challenge faced by all OPDs in Bangladesh and Kenya was COVID-19, as the i2i programme had only just started when the pandemic reached both countries. COVID-19 therefore impacted on key activities, meaning that the initial planning workshops in Kenya were both held online and the second in Bangladesh was online. Changes to these training and planning activities lengthened the duration of the activities and potentially lessened the effectiveness by providing information over online meetings and not in-person.

The advocacy plans of OPDs were also affected, with data collection pivoting from in-person interviews to desk-based research. OPDs cited key impacts of carrying out advocacy during COVID-19:

- Lockdowns caused activities, especially face-to-face meetings, to stop as movement was limited
- It has been harder to engage stakeholders, even in online meetings
- Government representatives were less receptive and not happy to collaborate as they were busy and overwhelmed
- Online meetings are not as effective
- More concrete commitments could have been achieved in face-to-face meetings.

Early in the pandemic, the OPDs noted that COVID-19 was exacerbating the situation of persons with disabilities, with many losing livelihoods as they were unable to work. The pandemic also impacted their access to health services and meeting their key basic needs. As a result the OPDs in Bangladesh and Kenya carried out a survey with persons with disabilities to identify the key issues faced during the pandemic and solutions that could be used in advocacy actions. The findings from the survey were included in a short paper ([i2i-covid19-survey-accessible.pdf](#)) and ‘Disability and COVID-19 Influencer Pack: Resources to guide decisions affecting the lives of people with disabilities during and after a pandemic’ ([Disability and Covid-19. Influencer Pack \(edf-fehp.org\)](#)).



## OPDs' recommendations for successful advocacy

Through implementing data-driven advocacy strategies as part of i2i, OPDs in Bangladesh and Kenya offer the following recommendations for successful advocacy:

A group of female participants at the i2i advocacy workshop in Bangladesh pose for the camera, all making a universal sign of equality with their arms to mark International Women's Day.

**Photo:** i2i/Brett Richards



- Having clear goals for your advocacy strategy
- Being informed and having the facts and information before embarking on the process – gathering the ‘data’
- Educating rights’ holders and duty bearers as the basis of any meaningful engagement
- Engaging rights’ holders in the whole process – ensuring that persons with disabilities are part and parcel of the whole process from initial identification of issues, through planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. This will equip and build their skills
- Building relationships – for effective relationship building, OPDs stipulated that: face-to-face meetings are essential as a key foundation for advocacy activities and that one meeting is not enough.
- Supporting duty bearers to make concrete commitments, and provide tools and support to duty bearers to implement and monitor progress towards fulfilling commitments – should be shared commitments, not just holding duty bearers to account
- Recognising that the landscape of advocacy is constantly changing and evolving and plans need to be open and flexible
- Building a movement and gaining momentum.

**“You have to carry out constant follow up and review meetings to keep momentum and the fire burning. If you leave them, they forget”**  
(OPD member, Kenya).



## Data driven advocacy can only go so far – an example of mobilising rights’ holders and building a movement

In Bangladesh OPDs were advocating for ‘disability friendly’ national budgeting in the 2021-22 fiscal year. However, this was not achieved, and just before the budget was finalised in June 2021, a demonstration was initiated where more than 200 people formed a human chain to raise awareness of the importance of inclusive national budgeting. The impact was significant as the event was posted on Facebook and other social media.

**“The advocacy action should be seen not as an end point, but a starting point to build a movement”**  
(OPD member, Bangladesh).



**Key learning: Individual advocacy actions should not be seen as an end point, but as a starting point to build a movement towards change**

Throughout the discussions, OPDs from both Bangladesh and Kenya emphasised the importance of working together to strengthen and unify their voice – both nationally, and internationally between countries engaging in the project activities. OPDs recommended:

- Working together nationally as a coalition to leverage strengths and present one voice
- Sharing experiences across countries, especially during a global pandemic where OPDs in both countries have had to adapt their approach and expectations for achieving change.

Collaboration and co-creation have been part of the design of the i2i programme. In each country, planning and monitoring activities as a coalition of OPDs has been key. In the initial phases of the project implementation, meetings between OPDs from Bangladesh and Kenya were also facilitated. However, with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, opportunities for face-to-face collaboration were reduced as the OPD coalitions in each country struggled to adapt to the changing context and challenges of the pandemic. As we globally learn to live with the impact of the pandemic, the sharing of experiences and learning between Bangladesh and Kenya has been extremely useful for OPDs as they see how colleagues in other countries navigate similar challenges.



**Key learning: Support OPDs to work as a coalition to develop an advocacy strategy which leverages individual strengths with clear goals**



**Key learning: Facilitate OPDs to engage in cross-country discussion and learning opportunities**



**Key learning: Plan for ‘shocks’ in the co-creation, planning and implementation stages of any advocacy programme of activities**

## Examples of effective advocacy actions

During the process of gathering this learning, OPDs in Bangladesh and Kenya shared their individual stories and collectively agreed that the following three stories of advocacy were the ‘best’ examples of advocacy actions:

### 1. Addressing accessibility and achieving physical changes to government offices

An OPD in Bangladesh held meetings with a Ward Council Office in Chattogram to sensitise the councillors to the issues of accessibility. As a result of the meeting, one month later a ramp had been installed at the office enabling people with mobility disabilities, especially wheelchair users, to access the office and as a result access a range of services provided by the office.

The introduction of the ramp serves as an example of change that can be achieved and have a lasting impact on many people into the future.



A new ramp leads to the doors of the Ward Council Offices in Bangladesh.

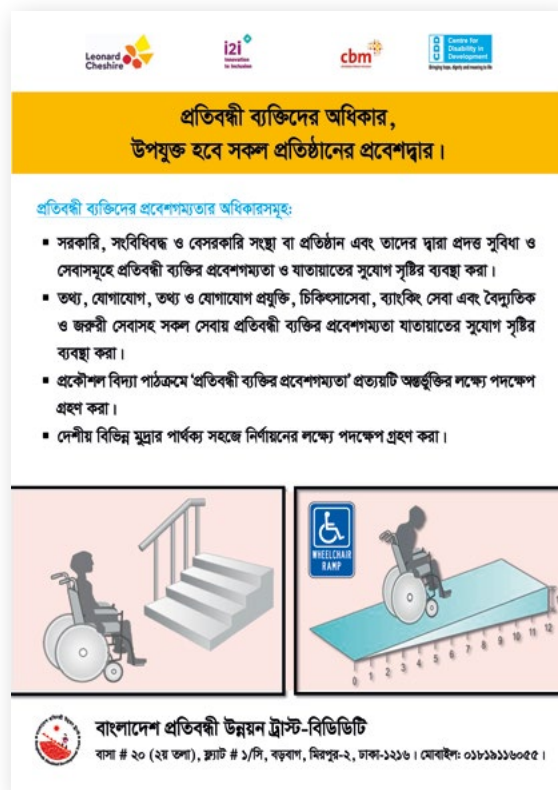
**Photo:** Disabled Development and Research Center-DDRC.

## 2. Using leaflets and posters

In Bangladesh an OPD designed and printed a range of stickers, posters and leaflets highlighting issues of accessibility and the relevant parts of the Bangladesh Disability Act. They distributed more than 400, through OPDs, in public places and on vehicles. Some of the designs illustrated the difference between inaccessible and accessible buildings or transportation to highlight the change necessary and possible.

The visual illustrations of change have been received well by OPDs and other stakeholders, including government agencies, and are seen as key tools in advocacy actions to sensitise stakeholders and civil society to key issues of accessibility.

Accessibility poster designed and distributed by an OPD in Bangladesh.  
**Image:** Bangladesh Disabled Development Trust (BDDT)



## 3. Making a documentary

In Kenya, an OPD shared the experiences of the coalition of Kenyan OPDs who were working towards completing a documentary to highlight the changes achieved through the i2i project. The plan was to showcase perspectives from employees (rights' holders) and employers and other stakeholders including government agencies and institutions (duty bearers) on the changes made and achievements of the programme.

By using audio-visuals to tell the story of the programme through the eyes of rights' holders and duty bearers, the OPDs felt that the documentary would be an advocacy tool that could be used now and in the future with greater impact, as something that people can easily relate to.

OPDs are currently working together to gather video evidence to create videos documenting their lived experience. The aim of the videos is to promote advocacy messages on the key challenge they face and to build relationships of trust with both the rights holders and duty bearers.

All three of the above stories involved practical examples that highlight change that is possible. Visual, tangible illustrations of change that people can relate to – beyond data and meetings.



**Key learning:** People respond to visual, tangible illustrations of change

## Summary of learning

**Through sharing their experiences, challenges and successes, OPDs identified 12 specific learning points for other OPDs implementing advocacy activities, as highlighted in this document.**

The experiences of OPDs through the i2i programme also points to 6 key learning points for other stakeholders planning and supporting activities (including government departments, International and National Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and donors).

Below is a summary of these key learning points.



### Key learning points for OPDs

- **Educate rights' holders and meaningfully engage them in the whole process**
- **Sensitisation of duty bearers using data is an essential first step in the process leading to change**
- **Data helps build credibility which can lead to stronger relationships and greater impact**
- **Data helps target key weak or ineffective policies and provisions**
- **Data helps target key stakeholders and persons of influence**
- **Identifying key 'champions' in influential positions can help fast-track change and facilitate 'quick wins'**
- **Two-way relationship development (between rights' holders and duty bearers) is key to achieving impact**
- **OPDs need to support duty bearers to develop, implement and monitor concrete commitments – the commitments should be shared commitments!**
- **People respond to visual, tangible illustrations of change**
- **Demonstration of change can be a useful springboard but needs to be part of a wider programme of awareness and sensitisation for sustainable impact**
- **Individual advocacy actions should not be seen as an end point, but as a starting point to build a movement towards change**
- **It can be a long road to achieving change, which starts with small steps.**



Charity Wangechi at the Stepwise offices in Nairobi. Charity works at Milimani Court as an employment and relations supervisor after learning different job skills through i2i programme.

**Photo:** i2i/Leonard Cheshire/  
Patrick Meinhardt



### **Key learning points for other stakeholders supporting advocacy actions**

(including government departments, International and National Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and donors)

- **Build the development of data gathering processes and tools into any advocacy strategy**
- **Ensure ‘process indicators’ are included in Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) plans for advocacy activities**
- **Plan for ‘shocks’ in the co-creation, planning and implementation stages of any advocacy programme of activities**
- **Support OPDs to work as a coalition to develop an advocacy strategy which leverages individual strengths with clear goals**
- **Facilitate OPDs to engage in cross-country discussion and learning opportunities**
- **Explore the range of online communication tools and those that OPDs would find most useful to engage, guide and own the process, as technology has rapidly changed to support online working and collaboration through the COVID-19 pandemic.**



## Conclusion

OPDs in both Bangladesh and Kenya shared many experiences of carrying out data-driven advocacy activities as part of i2i. They observed how others in a similar context, with the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated challenges, navigated and adapted their activities. They gave and received guidance on achieving success.

Overall, three key overarching themes emerged from OPD's experiences in both Bangladesh and Kenya.

Firstly, gathering, collecting, monitoring, and sharing data on national legal and policy frameworks formed the core of OPDs advocacy strategies and formed the cornerstone of all advocacy actions taken.

Secondly, the development of relationships with key stakeholders, rights' holders and duty bearers was key, and several elements supported the success of relationship development:

- Face-to-face meetings
- Repeated meetings over a long period of time
- Using data to support credibility
- Using data to target stakeholders, and specific gaps in policy provisions/frameworks
- Sensitising and educating stakeholders and meaningfully engaging them in a two way process.

Finally, working together as a coalition to plan clear strategy and goals, to strengthen and unify their collective voice, and also leverage the skills of individual OPDs was essential to the success of the activities. Sharing experiences between the countries has also been invaluable, especially during a global pandemic where OPDs in both countries have had to adapt their approach and expectations for achieving change.

## Contact us

For more information about the data driven advocacy and the i2i programme contact [international@leonardcheshire.org](mailto:international@leonardcheshire.org)

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