



Innovation to Inclusion (i2i) Challenge Call: Bangladesh Mobile-powered employment opportunities for all

About

People with disabilities are creative leaders within workforces however are often unable to access employment opportunities or progress within careers. Mobile technology can act as a bridge to employment opportunities by helping people learn skills, increasing awareness of job opportunities and helping to get and retain employment opportunities.

The i2i programme, funded by UK Aid and led by Leonard Cheshire has teamed up with Global Disability Innovation Hub (GDI Hub) and SBK Foundation to launch the mobile innovation challenge for employment for all.

Up to £20,000 is available to support winning applicants in the development of employment solutions focused around mobile in Bangladesh with access to global expertise from GDI Hub and local innovation networks and support through SBK Foundation. Applications close on 14th March 2021, with projects completed by November 2021.

- **Apply by: 14th March 2021**
- **First Prize: £10,000 - £15,000**
- **Second Prize: £5,000**



Challenge Statements

Digital inclusion is essential to enable fair access to work for persons with disability. It is also a growing market. We are looking for **start-up proposals or initiatives** which address one of these challenges:

1. Pivot/adapt their mission and market offer to make it more inclusive to persons with disability
OR
2. Develop and test proofs of concepts which utilise mobile to help create or sustain employment opportunities for persons with disability in Bangladesh.

Examples may include but are not limited to access to safe transport to and from the workplace, improved ability to work remotely, improved accessibility of workplaces, digital or mobile technology approaches to support career development, access to information to support employment.

Key Details

- Deadline: 14th March 2021
- Application formats: Online applications including a 7-slide slide deck covering
 - Problem identification and proposed solution (2 slides)
 - Team and experience (1 slide)
 - Detailed plan of work (2 slides)
 - Budget (1 slide)
 - Outreach and dissemination approach (1 slide)
- Deliverables: Successful grantees commit to producing a 3-minute video and blog on their progress, alongside a short report when funding is complete (Nov 2021)
- Prize / awards available: First Prize - £10,000-15,000 Second Prize - £5,000
- Selection criteria:
 - Demonstration that solution will have a positive impact on persons with disability
 - Demonstrate how people with disabilities will be included and remunerated for being a part of the team
 - Team's experience
 - Work-plan deliverability
 - Outreach proposals for demonstrating the impact of the solution
 - Sustainability of the solution

If you have questions regarding this call please contact Nusrat Jahan on j.nusrat@ucl.ac.uk and we will aim to respond within 3 working days

Apply online now.

Background

Globally persons with disabilities have lower employment rates compared to the general population due to systemic barriers particularly in the formal sector. In developing countries, 80 percent to 90 percent of people with disabilities of working age are unemployed. In Bangladesh though there is currently a 96% employment rate for the overall 165 million population, only 1% of persons with disabilities are employed.

In the current context where the global pandemic is breaking barriers to remote working one part of the solution will be to empower persons with disabilities with appropriate access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT), assistive devices and services, digital skills, creating more accessible and inclusive digital platforms for persons with disabilities which also hold the potential to improve working conditions and productivity for the whole workforce as well as enhancing resilience to potential future shocks.

People with more disabilities have far more to gain from the use of ICTs than those who have fewer disabilities. The most marginalised groups are the least likely to gain access to ICTs but that when they do it can make the biggest difference to their lives (in terms of enhanced capabilities and functioning). Despite the great potential ICT and mobile technology has to improve the inclusion of persons with disabilities, advances in technology alone are insufficient to address all forms of inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that over one billion people, the majority of whom are people with disabilities and older people, need one or more assistive devices. The number in need of assistive devices is projected to increase to beyond two billion by 2050 as a result of rises in non-communicable diseases and the aging global population. However, evidence indicates that an estimated 90% of people who would benefit from assistive technologies do not have access to them and there is a huge unmet need for such devices.

In Bangladesh, lack of assistive devices in the country is a major barrier in the inclusion of people with disabilities in the mainstream development process. Due to a lack of assistive devices many persons with disabilities are not getting access to employment opportunities and the job market.

Employment of persons with disabilities is one of the most powerful indications of social inclusion. It is the most effective and efficient way of eradicating poverty among persons with disabilities and ensuring their participation in mainstream development activities. Equal access to employment has benefited both from advances in accessible technology and disability rights policy.

ICT enables and empowers persons with disability to do almost all types of work and contribute to society. In particular, advances in technology, including mobile connectivity,

have increased opportunities for persons with disabilities to be included in employment. While mobile phones are ubiquitously used for communication, for persons with disabilities they become essential assistive technologies that bridge barriers to opportunities which are not accessible otherwise.

In the current context where the global pandemic is breaking barriers to remote working there is a need and unique opportunity for meaningful research and piloting of solutions. Including how to promote and facilitate remote working for persons with disabilities and what are the important aspects that need to be considered for this to be effective. One part of the solution will be to empower persons with disabilities with digital skills, along with creating digital platforms that are more accessible and inclusive for persons with disabilities. ICT integrated training, with access to education in various social development organizations, would provide opportunities for the majority of PWDs to be empowered, in both urban and rural areas.

About the Innovation to Inclusion (i2i) Programme

Innovation to Inclusion (i2i) is a three-year programme focused on technological initiatives that directly improve access to paid private sector work for people with disabilities in Kenya and Bangladesh. Funded by UK Aid and managed by a consortium of partners including Global Disability Innovation Hub (GDI Hub), i2i seeks to improve access to waged employment for 10,000 women and men and benefit up to 50,000 family and community members.

i2i has been designed to show the impact that digital and tech-based solutions can have in strengthening disability inclusion. The programme specifically emphasises digital and technological innovations along the DEP [Disability Employment Pathway] to increase persons with disabilities' confidence, soft skills and digital literacy while finding solutions to address barriers in employment and retention such as additional cost of transportation, accommodation and lack of assistive technologies.

The Innovation to Inclusion programme (i2i), in partnership with Bdjobs.com, has developed a digital employment pathway (DEP) for persons with disabilities, this includes the i2i Career advisor (www.i2i.net.bd) and the newly accessible an inclusive Bdjobs portal. The DEP consists of several components that will support the journey of people with disabilities (PWD) as they are placed into employment. The i2i Career Advisor currently, registers candidates to assess their skill level and career interest to provide guidance to possible career paths, as well as signposting to training opportunities to improve their skills or be matched with jobs. In Bdjobs.com, candidates can search and apply for available inclusive jobs. Applications for innovations that can further enhance the digital employment pathway are also encouraged.

GDI Hub will identify and select innovative ideas that will address solutions to barriers for women and men with disabilities to access and retain waged employment in the private sector (specifically technology) in Kenya and Bangladesh.

GDI Hub - innovation expertise

GDI Hub is a research and practice centre driving disability innovation for a fairer world. Operational in 41 countries, and delivering 35 projects across a portfolio of £50m, GDI Hub has reached 4m people since its launch in 2016, developing bold approaches, partnerships and ecosystems to accelerate change.

Solutions-focused experts in Assistive Technology, Inclusive Design, and Culture and Participation, GDI Hub supports and delivers world-class Research, Teaching, Innovation, Programmes and Advocacy.

Using community-led solutions to shape mainstream programming GDI Hub addresses disability challenges by co-designing solutions and sharing knowledge. More than a product, service, or policy, we see disability innovation is a way of thinking to address disability challenges by co-designing solutions [SEP] and sharing knowledge.

SBK Foundation

The SBK Foundation is a woman-led, woman-only, not-for-profit organisation that has established 64 Tech Hubs in the 64 districts of Bangladesh.

Rural communities often lack access to basic health, financial, legal and other crucial services due to poor infrastructure and insufficient resources. The Tech Hubs provide on-the-ground solutions to integrate rural communities into the digital society and ensure that their basic needs are met.



Global
Disability
Innovation
Hub

