# Disability Arts Redefining Empowerment (DARE) programme

Implemented by the British Council Bangladesh from 2019 to 2024, DARE was designed to build understanding surrounding disability, and bridge the gap between the arts, disability and society by making an inclusive space for the theatre sector in Bangladesh.

DARE empowered **over 200 artists**, including artists with disabilities, to become active contributors to the arts space by establishing disability arts cells in **all eight divisional cities**, and leveraging UK expertise through acting workshops and the development of theatre pieces. Over **91% of the artists with disabilities** from DARE went on to perform in theatre productions, reaching more than **6,000 live audiences** and approximately **6 million audience online**, redefining representation and inclusion in the creative sector.

## Key impacts of DARE programme

### The DARE initiative pioneered in the disability arts space by introducing disability-inclusive theatre in Bangladesh by:

- Setting up theatre players and partnerships, including the establishment of dedicated arts cells in **all 8 divisional cities**;
- **Establishing standards** for creative output in disability-inclusive theatre;
- Producing **'proofs of concepts'** in the form of **9 theatre pieces** featuring artists with disabilities.

### DARE has transformed the understanding of disability among the arts community and provided recognition for artists with disabilities in Bangladesh.

- Showcasing artists with disabilities on large, public stages and in the International Disability Arts Festival destigmatised disability: **72.9%** of non-disabled artists now have a better understanding of disability after participating in these performances or watching them as audience members.
- The opportunity to perform among peers and in public platforms also led to **100%** of artists with disabilities have a positive outlook and experience a change in their own perception of disability.

### Acting workshops and theatre productions from DARE, held over a span of four years, succeeded in building a range of skills among artists, elevating them as performers.

- **90.1%** of artists with disabilities gained significant amount of **knowledge on acting** from DARE. These artists wish to professionally work in theatre acting in the future.
- **87.5%** of non-disabled artists learned new art forms and techniques, broadening their repertoire and performance vocabulary.
- **79.9%** of artists learnt some degree of **Bangla sign language**, which was also enmeshed into the theatre performances created during DARE. This has increased awareness **of sign language as a medium of creative expression**.
- Through the workshops and theatre pieces developed during DARE, artists were familiarised to and inspired by different art forms, such as silent plays, physical storytelling, musical puppetry, and so on. As a result, **87.1%** of artists find they can more easily **come up with new, creative ideas**.

### DARE has positively impacted the sense of agency, voice and autonomy of artists with disabilities by boosting their self-confidence and encouraging them to be self-sufficient.

- Due to the high-quality standards expected from all artists, and the collaborative nature of DARE workshops, **64.9%** artists with disabilities are more confident about **taking initiatives t**hemselves and **97.1%** of them are **more confident** about their own abilities.
- This has resulted in greater agency and autonomy among artists with disabilities: **89.5%** of these artists are **making more life decisions**, and **97.8% speak up more**.

### By leveraging local and UK expertise, DARE has nurtured connections between artists and cultural professionals, increasing opportunities for future artistic collaborations.

- The involvement of experts during DARE activities and exposure of DARE artists to the wider cultural community has led to **27.5%** of artists with disabilities have forming **sustained connections with the local theatre community**.
- Directors and theatre groups involved with DARE have formed **connections with foreign cultural institutions**, and are actively leveraging these connection for funding or collaboration opportunities.

**In the emerging landscape of disability arts, DARE has been impactful as a 'pioneering programme' and can serve as an advocacy tool for policymakers. Scaling up the reach and scope of the ecosystem developed under DARE will widen the programme impacts which is necessary to firmly establish disability-inclusive theatre in Bangladesh. Furthermore, the design of DARE is a good model to replicate in countries where disability-inclusive theatre does not exist or is at its infancy.**