

Global Disability Summit (GDS) 2025: BYAN's Participation, Contributions, and Reflections

1. Introduction to the Global Disability Summit (GDS)

The Global Disability Summit (GDS) 2025 was held in Berlin, Germany, from April 1–3, 2025, co-hosted by the International Disability Alliance (IDA), the Government of Germany, and the Government of Jordan. As a global convening of governments, development partners, civil society organizations, and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), the summit aimed to strengthen implementation of the



UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and secure new commitments for disability-inclusive development.

The 2025 Summit focused on:

- “Nothing About Us Without Us” – ensuring the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making
- Rights Implementation – through inclusive policies, legal reforms, and adequate resource allocation
- Global Cooperation – fostering cross-border partnerships for sustainable inclusion
- Data and Evidence – promoting the use of disability-disaggregated data in policymaking

For BYAN (Blind Youth Association Nepal), GDS 2025 offered an invaluable opportunity to share our work, advocate for youth-led disability inclusion, build networks, and align with global disability rights movements. Mr. RamChandra Gaihre, President, Mr. Nir Bahadur Shrestha, Director, Ms. Nilu Maharjan, Project Coordinator, and Mr. Jiwan Acharya, Former Program Officer, participated in the Conference as delegates representing BYAN.

2. Pre-Engagement Phase: Laying the Groundwork

BYAN began engaging with the GDS process as early as September 2024, starting with an initial meeting with the International Disability Alliance (IDA) team to explore potential areas of involvement and align activities.

Key Pre-Summit Activities:

- Strategic consultation with the International Disability Alliance (IDA) on youth engagement in GDS 2025
- Launch of a social media awareness campaign focusing on inclusive development
- Organization of the National Conference of Youth with Disabilities, which concluded with the endorsement of a 36-point Lalitpur Declaration by young persons with disabilities from across Nepal
- Submission and approval of BYAN's exhibition booth proposal
- Scholarship award for Mr. Jiwan Acharya, who represented BYAN at the summit
- Participation in webinars and consultation events organized by the GDS secretariat, where Jiwan contributed as a presenter and was later selected to join the Youth Call to Action drafting team
- Advocacy and lobbying with the different government agencies for submitting commitments in GDS, 2025
- Participation in various national-level consultations and events for the preparation, consultation, and advocacy ahead of the GDS

This phase helped BYAN prepare meaningfully for its representation at the global level and ensured our participation was grounded in collective, youth-led priorities.

3. Engagement During the Summit

a. Exhibition Booth and Outreach

At GDS 2025, BYAN set up a dedicated exhibition booth, which became a hub of interaction and knowledge exchange. Over the course of the summit, we engaged with more than 1000 visitors, including donors, policymakers, academics, youth activists, and other OPDs.

We showcased Inclusive Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials, such as:

- A fact sheet highlighting BYAN's key achievements
- Books in accessible formats for blind and low-vision users
- A disability-friendly family planning board



- Simulation tools such as pseudo-materials
- An accessible family planning booklet
- Reports on:
 - Political participation of youth with disabilities
 - Guideline on Disability-Friendly Safe-Motherhood and Reproductive Health Service
 - Status Paper of sexual and reproductive health rights of persons with disabilities
- Picture exchange communication tools of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for individuals with learning disabilities
- Inclusive stickers and accessible videos developed by BYAN
- Call to Action on Advancing SRHR for Individuals with DeafBlindness in Asia and 36-point Lalitpur Declaration of National Conference on Youths with Disabilities

This exposure offered a platform for BYAN to share our approaches and best practices in promoting disability rights and inclusion in Nepal.

b. Networking and Partnerships

Throughout the summit, BYAN engaged in high-level networking that laid the groundwork for future collaborations and regional influence.

Key Engagements Included:

- Strategic meetings with partners such as CBM Global Disability Inclusion, Save the Children International, the Zero Project Team, FCDO, and diplomats from various countries
- Discussions with university professors and international OPDs to explore research and programmatic collaborations
- Participation in side events, bilateral dialogues, and knowledge exchange forums
- Leadership in Sessions and Thematic Contributions



These interactions deepened BYAN's global connections and opened up possibilities for technical support, funding, and shared advocacy.

BYAN delegates contributed meaningfully to core summit sessions and thematic discussions.

Mr. RamChandra Gaihre, BYAN President:

- Presented at the World Bank and Scottish Government side event titled “How to Pursue Systemic Change for Inclusive Education?”
- Advocated for inclusive education reforms embedded within national policy frameworks

Mr. Jiwan Acharya, Youth Delegate: A key figure throughout GDS 2025, Jiwan wore many hats:

- Panelist – Inclusive Education: Shared BYAN's role in designing, implementing, and monitoring inclusive education systems in Nepal.
- Briefing Leader – Education Hub: Presented Nepal's inclusive education context and discussed challenges with global leaders, including the German Chancellor and the King of Jordan.
- Youth Call to Action Drafting Committee Member: Played an integral role in drafting the global Youth Call to Action and encouraged government endorsement during side events.
- Representative– Inclusive Political Participation: Shared perspectives on civic and electoral participation barriers faced by youth with disabilities in Nepal.
- Representative– Banking Accessibility Side Event: Highlighted financial service gaps for blind and low-vision users and exchanged good practices globally.
- Contributor – Amman-Berlin Declaration Consultation: Offered youth-specific insights to ensure the declaration meaningfully included OPDs and youth priorities.
- Representative – Nordic Embassies Event: Advocated for human rights-based disability inclusion and explored collaboration opportunities with Sightsavers' youth delegates.

4. Reflections and Learning: Elevating Youth Leadership Through Global Engagement

The Global Disability Summit (GDS) 2025 served as more than just a moment of international exposure for BYAN, it was a critical platform for learning, reflection, and advancing youth-led disability rights advocacy. Engaging in such global forums reinforces why representation of grassroots voices, especially of young persons with disabilities, is not optional but essential for inclusive development.

For BYAN, GDS 2025 offered a rare opportunity to move beyond national boundaries, connect with global movements, and validate our work through meaningful dialogue and collaboration. Each interaction, session, and side event was a learning moment, shaping not just our organizational strategies but also deepening our collective vision of inclusion.

Why Global Platforms Like GDS Matter

These summits offer more than symbolic inclusion. They serve as spaces where:

- Local innovations are amplified on a global stage
- Youth-led solutions are taken seriously
- Knowledge is exchanged across borders
- Commitments turn into collaborative actions

What BYAN Learned Through Engagement

a. Youth Leadership Can Influence Policy, Not Just Participate in It

BYAN's active involvement in shaping the Youth Call to Action, facilitating sessions, and advocating in thematic hubs showed that youth voices can contribute to policy-level outcomes. Participation in high-level consultations, such as the Amman-Berlin Declaration review, demonstrated that when youth are given the platform, they step up with clarity, vision, and purpose.

b. Inclusive Communication Breaks Barriers

Through our exhibition booth, BYAN learned firsthand how accessible formats and inclusive IEC materials can bridge communication gaps and spark deep conversations across languages and cultures. Visitors engaged not just with what we displayed, but with how we presented inclusion as a lived, practical, and empowering concept.

c. Meaningful Preparation Equals Meaningful Participation

Our early planning, national-level mobilization, and preparatory webinars allowed us to arrive at the summit with clarity and purpose. This translated into informed participation in side events, stronger networking, and contributions rooted in our realities back home.

d. Global Recognition Inspires Local Action

Being part of panels with international experts, interacting with dignitaries such as the German Chancellor and the King of Jordan, and collaborating with OPDs worldwide brought home a powerful realization: our grassroots advocacy in Nepal resonates globally. That recognition fuels our motivation to keep pushing for change at the local level.

e. Learning Is a Two-Way Exchange



The summit reminded us that learning is mutual. While we shared Nepal's experiences in inclusive education, SRHR, and political participation, we also absorbed good practices from others, whether it was digital accessibility models from Europe or youth empowerment tools from Africa. These lessons are not souvenirs; they are seeds for future innovations in BYAN's programming.

Reflections from the Team

"Attending GDS was not just a platform to gain global exposure, it was a space to interact with disability rights professionals from across the world, exchange ideas, and understand different perspectives. Having a dedicated exhibition booth allowed us to attract attention, share our best practices, and build meaningful networks. This platform contributed greatly to expanding our visibility and creating connections with advocates, researchers, and organizations committed to disability inclusion." - Nir Bahadur Shrestha, BYAN Director

"Managing the exhibition booth was a powerful opportunity for us to show how inclusive materials can make a real difference in empowering youth with disabilities. The fact that over 1000 people visited our booth and engaged with our resources was a testament to the growing global interest in disability inclusion. It made me proud to see that our work is being recognized and valued on such a large scale." - Nilu Maharjan (reflecting on the exhibition booth)

"For me, the summit wasn't just about attending international events, it was about sharing what we've been doing in Nepal and learning how others are approaching similar challenges. Facilitating a panel on the role of OPDs in inclusive education, speaking in side events, and contributing to the Youth Call to Action helped me grow not only as an advocate but also as a listener. I came back with fresh ideas, inspiration, and a renewed sense of responsibility. It reminded me that our efforts at the community level are part of something bigger, and that change is possible when we come together and keep pushing." - Jiwan Acharya, BYAN Delegate.

5. Alignment with Global Commitments

a. Amman-Berlin Declaration

A major outcome of GDS 2025 was the Amman-Berlin Declaration, which calls on governments and development actors to ensure that 15% of international development programs explicitly target disability inclusion, a goal coined as "15% for 15%", reflecting the estimated global disability population.

This declaration also emphasizes:

- Meaningful participation of OPDs
- Investment in inclusive policies and programs
- Accountability through public reporting

BYAN strongly endorse the Amman-Berlin Declaration and is committed to advocating for its effective implementation in Nepal.

b. Youth Call to Action

The Youth Call to Action, co-developed by the IDA Youth Committee, UNICEF, and Sightsavers, outlines concrete recommendations to ensure that young people with disabilities are actively engaged in shaping inclusive policies.

BYAN's delegate, Mr. Jiwan Acharya, served as a presenter in pre-summit webinars and later joined the drafting team, directly contributing to the Youth Call to Action. BYAN is committed to integrating its principles in our future programming, particularly in:

- Youth leadership development
- Inclusive SRHR advocacy
- Participation in policymaking processes

6. Looking Ahead

Post-summit, BYAN will continue building on the momentum gained at GDS 2025 by:

- Scaling up inclusive education, inclusive SRHR, and inclusive political participation interventions in Nepal
- Following up on partnerships initiated during the summit
- Promoting the Aman-berlin Declaration, GDS Youth Call to Action, and 36-point Lalitpur Declaration endorsed by youth with disabilities at the regional, national and local level
- Continuous advocacy, collaboration, and engagement for the effective implementation of commitments made in GDS, 2025.
- Strengthening youth-led monitoring and accountability mechanisms in disability-inclusive development

7. Acknowledgements

BYAN extends heartfelt thanks to the entire organizing team for creating space for youth-led OPDs. We deeply appreciate the support of our team members and everyone who contributed to the success of our participation.

We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to Right Here Right Now, CBM Global Disability Inclusion, Amplify Change, MyRight, and other partners for their generous funding and continued support, which enabled our meaningful engagement at the Global Disability Summit 2025. Their contributions played a crucial role in ensuring that youth with disabilities, particularly

from Nepal, could actively participate and contribute to global conversations on disability rights and inclusion.

We return from GDS 2025 more inspired and determined than ever to advance inclusive development by youth with disabilities, for youth with disabilities.