

## New beginnings

Abul Kashem's story is one of patience and determination. Not only did he create a better life for himself, but he is also giving others a chance to rebuild their futures.

Abul Kashem, 53, lives with his family in Dhaka. In 2001, he had a stroke, which left him paralysed on one side of his body. After years of treatment his condition improved, but he was still unable to take on physical work. The experience left him mentally distressed.

Action on Disability and Development (ADD), a well-known organisation working for differently-abled people, helped Abul Kashem to return to his normal life through various forms of support. Once he regained his strength and confidence, he started looking for financing options for a business. The Social Welfare Department of Bangladesh gave him a grant of USD 147 with which he started a small vending business. After seeing his hard work and dedication, the community gave him a small space to rent where he started a small restaurant of his own. However, after some years, the space was taken from him by the local leaders and again, he lost everything.

A member of ADD's community group, Abul Kashem came to know about BRAC's special loan project, 'engaging people with disabilities' when he went to their office to seek help. He took the first loan from BRAC in 2013, and bought a two-wheeled cart to sell *chatpati* and *fuchka* (popular street food). He used his loan to purchase the cart, utensils and ingredients. He runs the business with his wife, Maneeta. Maneeta prepares the food at home and Abul Kashem sells them in his cart, which is located near a school and a market. They have not only recovered their start-up cost but have also managed to repay the loan.

To motivate others like him, in 2012, Abul Kashem established an informal organisation named *Modhho Badda Durjoy Protibondhi Unnoyon Shangstha*. The organisation connects differently-abled people with different government and private organisations to help them receive training, awareness and livelihood development.