

Subregional Conference



GENDER EQUALITY &
SOCIAL INCLUSION

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in South Asia: Reflections and Way Forward for ADB

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Session # 3: Persisting Gender Inequality Issues Faced by Women and People with Diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Express Sex Characteristics

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CSO Initiatives for the Empowerment and Inclusion of People with Diverse SOGIESC in Bangladesh

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SOGIESC Inclusion and Empowerment in Bangladesh

- Facts & Figures
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 - ✓ Initiatives by the GoB
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The Journey and History of SOGIESC programme in Bangladesh

- 1996: Bandhu started its journey ensuring HIV prevention services to MSM and Hijra and Transgender community in Bangladesh
- Other parts of the diverse SOGIESC community started meeting and greeting through some help groups, non-registered small network to build the community (i.e., Shustha Jiban, Badhan, Shoprovo, BOB, Rupbaan and others)
- Bandhu has started policy advocacy for rights of Transgender and Hijra community implementing a small project funded by the World Bank in 2003
- Other CBOs mostly formed by Bandhu and led by Hijra people started working along with Bandhu
- Currently a large number of CBOs and platforms from different intersection emerging in the country.



Initiatives to diverse SOGIESC inclusion

Bandhu initiated and later led the inclusion of the diverse SOGIESC population in the SRHR area, HIV/STI prevention and care to be specific.

- Reached out and collaborated with CBOs to provide HIV/STI services across the country
- Established drop-in centers (DICs) to reach to the grassroots levels
- PLHIV community individuals were brought under the treatment program under the global fund project through National Health Strategies
- Medical professionals and health service providers are being sensitized on gender diversity issue through many CBOs (registered and unregistered) by capacity bundling, awareness raising and consultation meetings



Initiatives to diverse SOGIESC inclusion

- Hijra and Transgender people are getting social recognition by mass awareness and sensitization by the Bandhu and other CBOs
- Diverse SOGIESC people are getting access to justice through a network of Bandhu, other CSOs (BLAST, NLASO, ASK) and lawyers Community.
- Religious schools specialized for Hijra and Transgender community for mainstreaming



Initiatives to diverse SOGIESC empowerment

- Legal empowerment of the diverse SOGIESC community through ensuring access to justice by sensitized networks
- Networking through private sector corporations to hire SOGIESC individuals.
- Capacity Building of CBOs through support in constructing the organizational structure (constitution, registration, technical aid) by Bandhu and Others CSOs.
- Building networks across CBO with GO and other CSOs.
- National and International level advocacy for ensuring rights of the SOGIESC population in Bangladesh i.e. UPR



Facts and Figures

Initiatives by the GoB

- Recognition of Hijra as a separate sex/gender category in 2013 and inclusion in the National Census-2022
- Tax rebate by National Board of Revenue for companies hiring Hijra and Transgender people on 2021-2022 fiscal year budget declaration.
- Inclusion of Hijra people in the social safety-net projects by the Ministry of Social Welfare
- Lands and houses provided to the Hijra people as part of the village program
- Participation of Hijra individuals on union-level local government elections and being elected
- Inclusion of Hijra in legal and official GOB documents.
- Collaboration of Bandhu, NHRC and the Ministry of Social Welfare to draft Transgender Person Protection Bill-2022



Challenges

- Misconception, prejudice and stigma towards the diverse SOGIESC community due to lack of holistic awareness and sensitization
- No scope for SOGIESC community for access to comprehensive health care services including mental health counselling.
- Continuous surveillance and threats from antagonist groups restricting the area to work for overall SOGIESC community
- Highest risk of hatred and stigmatization from social, political and religious perspective
- Inflexibility of decisions of the national level stakeholders restricts the scope of policy advocacy
- Squeezing funding opportunities due to several approval issues from government (NGO-affairs Bureau)
- Alarming rate of cyberbullying and digital threats to the community individuals & CBOs
- Lack of housing and shelter homes for the diverse SOGIESC community individuals in necessities.
- Lack of inclusive legal assistance for the community



Way Forward

- Educating the mainstream youth about diverse SOGIESC community and identities
- Ensuring mainstream education (till graduation) to the diverse SOGIESC people free of stigmatization
- Digital and legal empowerment of the community people through digital and legal literacy
- Provision of inclusive shelter home for the abandoned/endangered SOGIESC member with mental health support and IGA training support
- A countrywide inclusive legal support system specialized in combatting GBV and HRV against the community
- An inclusive law and its implementation to protect SOGIESC population
- Reformation of colonial draconian laws
- Preventing misuse of Digital Security Act-2018 against the community
- Holistic recognition of the entire SOGIESC community in all kinds of legal and official documents

