Reducing the impact of HIV on men who have sex with men and transgender populations in South Asia
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Acronyms

AIDS  Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BCC  Behavior Change Communication
BSS  Behavioral Surveillance Study
CBO  Community Based Organization
CSO  Civil Society Organization
EC  Executive Committee
ED  Executive Director
GFATM  Global Fund for AIDS, TB, and Malaria
GOB  Government of Bangladesh
HIV  Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HMIS  Health Management Information System
IEC  Information, Education and Communication
KABP  Knowledge, Attitude, Behaviour and Practices (Survey)
MESST  Monitoring and Evaluation System Strengthening Tools
MP  Member of Parliament
MSM  Men who have Sex with Men
MSW  Male Sex Worker
NAC  National AIDS Committee
NASP  National AIDS/STD Programme
NGO  Non-Governmental Organization
NSP  National Strategic Plan
PLWHA  People Living with HIV/AIDS
STD  Sexually Transmitted Disease(s)
STI  Sexually Transmitted Infection(s)
TG  Transgender
UNAIDS  Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNFPA  United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNGASS  United Nations General Assembly Special Session (on HIV/AIDS)
UNICEF  United Nations Children’s Fund
WHO  World Health Organization
Executive Summary

BSWS is a National NGO working on improving sexual health and rights of sexual minority populations in Bangladesh since 1996. Currently its HIV and health services are being provided through 37 well equipped Field Offices in 22 districts of Bangladesh. With the support from The Global Fund, BSWS has also been implementing Multi-Country South Asia (MSA) Regional HIV/AIDS Program in Bangladesh since 2011. As a part of this Global Fund program, BSWS is implementing different activities and recently BSWS has taken initiatives to disseminate the project related activities/achievements to other country partners through producing narrative half-yearly report.

This half-yearly report covers the period from January-June 2015 where key activities and its achievements are highlighted under MSA project. During this period the project has faced a number of challenges - country-wide hartal and blockade - that continued for more than three months and created obstacles to meet the deadlines as well as project targets. Despite all these challenges, the MSA team was committed to implement the planned activities with success.

The MSA project conducted i) training on Stigma and Discrimination for government health service providers, ii) training on Treatment as Prevention, iii) need-based training for emergent CBOs and In-Country downstream partners, iv) launching Seed Fund Grant program, v) country wide IDAHO celebration involving 23 CBOs and public universities under Gender and Sexuality Resource Centre, vi) conducted capacity building workshop for the partner organization of STI/AIDS Network of Bangladesh (SANB), and finally vii) organized National Advocacy Program in collaboration with National Human Rights Commission. Beyond these, Arpon Manob Kallyan Society (CBO) got the registration as a part of continuous Technical Assistance by the GF country program and MSA program.

This was possible due to guidance and timely feedbacks from UNDP-BRH. We believe that BSWS will accomplish the designated activities with remarkable achievements at the policy level through the continued support in the future.
**MSA Project**

The Multi-Country South Asia Global Fund HIV Programme is a regional HIV programme operating in eight countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The overall goal of the programme is to reduce the impact of, and vulnerability to, HIV of men who have sex with men, hijras and transgender people through Community Systems Strengthening (CSS).

The programme supports building the capacity of in-country and regional community-based Sub-recipient organizations engaged in service provision (HIV prevention, care and support services), policy development and advocacy, partnership building with local governments and health departments, research related to MSM and transgender issues, and on creating stronger community systems to support and sustain this work. In order for the interventions carried out by the community-based organizations (CBOs) to be both effective and sustainable, it is necessary to build their capacity, create stronger linkages and networks between community organizations, community-led interventions and government, and provide longer-term support to these groups.

The programme is currently in Phase 2, which will run from July 2013 to December 2015, supported by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Phase 1 ran from 2011-2013). For Phase 2, the United Nations Development Programme Asia-Pacific Regional Centre (UNDP APRC) has undertaken the role of interim Principal Recipient.

To reach this goal, there are three proposed objectives:

a. To improve the delivery of HIV prevention, care and treatment services for MSM and transgender populations in South Asia

b. To improve the policy environment with regards MSM, transgender, and HIV-related issues in South Asia

c. To improve strategic knowledge about the impact of HIV on MSM and transgender populations in South Asia.

- National Advocacy Meeting was successfully conducted in collaboration with NHRC and significant decision has been taken by the Government of Bangladesh to offer jobs to Third Gender identity as Traffic Police.
- Organized the pilot training on Stigma and Discrimination for government health service providers and a resource pool has been formed consisting with government doctors.
- Conducted training to four batches on Treatment as Prevention for health service providers in Bangladesh.
- Arpon Manob Kallyan Society (CBO) got registration from Social Service Department as part of Technical Assistance.
- Five CBO’s received seed fund grants and are implementing the projects in their catchment area. A total of 155 beneficiaries were trained under capacity building trainings, 169 local level stakeholders including service providers, journalists joined advocacy meeting and 526 TG and MSM attended different awareness meetings.
- Six Resource Mobilization and Sustainability strategies are under process following the guidelines of regional workshop “Turning the Corner” organized by APCOM, Bangkok.
- Organized National Coordination and Capacity Building Workshop for the partner organization of STI/AIDS Network of Bangladesh (SANB).
- Different Day Observation programs were organized in collaboration with the Department of Clinical Psychology, Psychology and Education and Counseling under Dhaka University.
Activity (s) Updates

Training program for emergent CBOs and In-country downstream partners:

Title: Training on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)
Date: 18-20 March 2015
Number of Participant: 30

BSWS has developed a guideline on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in collaboration with RCC country program as a part of minimum capacity. Based on that guideline, BSWS organized this training to orient guideline to the community-based organizations (CBOs). Through this training, BSWS also introduced the guideline to the CBO representatives for better implementation of the program.

Objective:
The training was intended to greatly enhance the project monitoring and evaluation skills for effective and efficient project implementation.

Outcome:
Training participants were able to understand the concept of M&E, types, structure, tools and methods of M&E, responsibilities of program personnel to monitor the program, mentoring process, M&E techniques in order to address the CBO existing activities, setting indicators for projects, log frame for M&E, develop M&E plan, manage data, evaluate program and how to report properly.

Title: Training on HIV and Human Rights for Sexual Minority
Date: 20-23 April 2015
Number of Participant: 31

Objective:
The objectives of this training were to provide information on HIV and Human Rights and to make them aware about their rights.

Outcome:
The participants were able to learn about HIV and Human Rights, improved skills on chicken HIV, Human Rights work in relation to minority work in Bangladesh, strategy of message dissemination, key elements and process of evidence-based advocacy to decrease stigma and discrimination among sexual minority and finally how to be a change-maker/advocate in the area of Human Rights.

Title: Training on Basic Counseling
Date: 11-14 May 2015
Number of Participant: 31

Objective:
The objective of the training was to generate knowledge on “Basic Counseling” and its proper implementation in local community networks.
Training on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Outcome:
The participants were able to learn the basic concept and types of counseling, basic difference of STI, HIV and AIDS, goals and objectives of counseling, process of peer counseling regarding HIV/AIDS issues, effective methods and techniques of counseling, qualities and skills of a good counselor, difference between psycho-social & psycho-sexual counseling, how to facilitate a counseling session, principles and ethics of counseling.

Objective:
The major objective of the trainings was to generate knowledge and create awareness on HIV treatment and literacy among service providers.

Outcome:
The participants were able to understand the impact of HIV on health and immune systems, importance of CD4 count and viral load test results, concept of HAART, how does HAART works, when should HAART be initiated, concept of Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and opportunistic infection (OIs), Common STI and OIs, prevention monitoring and treatment of STI and OIs. Finally they developed an Action Plan with identifying their future responsibilities.

Achievement:
- A total of 121 participants learnt current MSM, transgender (TG) PLHIV services, treatment access, treatment literacy and treatment advocacy based on Bangladeshi context and 9 participants were PLHIV group member, others from different CBO’s and RCC Country Program DIC level staffs.
Plan was developed on how the participants will provide information about PLHIV services, treatment access, treatment literacy and treatment for MSM, TG and PLHIV group.

This training also created an opportunity to transfer information about PLHIV services, treatment access, treatment literacy and treatment to MSM, TG and PLHIV group.

PLHIV members were motivated to continue their medicine and they were committed to disseminate the information to others in their community.

Both service providers and PLHIV members have achieved a clear concept about treatment and literacy.

Four (4) trainers gained skills on treatment and literacy issue.

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Title: Pilot Training on Stigma and Discrimination for Govt. Health Service Providers  
Date: 26-29 January ’2015  
Type of Participants: Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer  
Number of Participant: 26  

Objective:  
The objective of this training was to open and broaden the access to health services and provide social support to the MSM and TG by the health care providers and create a pool of Master Trainers in Bangladesh who are working as government health service providers and will provide training amongst other health service providers all over the country.

Outcome:  
The participants were able to explain the key concepts of HIV among MSM and TG people in Asia and the Pacific, definitions of MSM, MSW, kothi, panthi and other related terminologies, identified the needs of TG, MSM and setting priorities, challenges of country context addressing MSM and TG, Human Rights and how it is violating in every aspect, relevant laws and policies, MSM and epidemiological views, etc. In general, participants had moderate understanding on stigma and discrimination issue.
Achievement:
This is the first training for the government doctors in Bangladesh which created opportunities to work with them intensively. The training created awareness and sensitized government doctors on TG and MSM issues. Now, TG and MSM can regularly visit the government hospitals for services. Finally, a curriculum has been submitted to NASP for inclusion in the training manual of the government doctors and it is under process for their approval.

The pre-test score of the training on Stigma and Discrimination for Govt. Health Service Providers was 51 whereas post-test score was 90. It is evident that post-test score is greater than pre-test score for each of the trainings, so from the analysis we can deduce that after completing the training the participant’s knowledge has increased on respective training agenda.

On the other hand, according to the bar graph, it is seen that the post-test average is nearly 80 and the pre-test bar just crosses the line of 20. It is evident that their knowledge has improved after the training.

Achievement / Success:
- All trainings have been conducted as planned.
- Participants are now skilled and have learnt about the life and rights claim issues.
- Increased negotiation skills as a result of getting different types of trainings from Social Welfare Department of Bangladesh.
- Some CBO developed their monitoring system.
- Built a good networking with PLHIV members.
- Strengthened the counseling system of CBOs.

Analyzing the 9 trainings, it is clearly seen from the graph that the entire pre-test average is lower than post-test average score. The pre-test average score of training on M&E was 27 whereas post-test score was 76. If we explore, training on HIV and Human Rights for Sexual Minority, the pre-test score was 40 and post-test score was 86. The pre-test score for Training on Basic Counseling was 45 where post-test score was 83. The pre-test score of training on Yogyakarta Principle, UPR & Case Documentation Process was 35 where post-test score 80. The pre-test score of 4-batch training on Treatment as Prevention were 65,44,42,56 whereas post-test scores were 82, 84, 86, 86, respectively.
CBO on-site technical assistance and monitoring visit/CBO visit

As a part of community-based organization (CBO) on-site technical assistance and monitoring, the team of MSA project visited 6 CBOs (Setu Bandhan Kollayan Sangha, Mymensingh district, Protiva Manab Kollayan Sangha in Natore, Chattala Jubo Sangha in Chittagong, Agragami Samajik Unnyan Shongo in Sirajganj, Shopno Choa, in Barisal, and Sundarban Manob Kollan Society in Mongla) in this reporting period and provided technical supports on the following issues:

- Registration follow up
- Regular guide to implement work plan
- Assist to advocacy events and management
- Monitor documentation process
- Guide to practice good governance and assist to conduct regular EC meeting, AGM and dissemination session with EC members.
- Develop capacity development plan of CBOs identifying gaps and mentoring accordingly
- Assist to develop monthly work plan and report

Achievements:

- Good Governance tools (in EC meeting arrangement, information dissemination, decision making process) have been effectively implemented.
- Agnibina Samaj Kallyan Shongtha, Arpon Manab Kallyan Society and Agragami Samajik Unnyan Shangho have received name declaration letter from respective authority.
- Service providing organizations are becoming sensitized to the community and thus have helped to the community for taking health service facility from local public and non-governmental organization (NGOs).
- Financial guidelines are implemented in financial transactions.
- Monthly work plan developed consequently and followed with minimum competence.
- Strengthen the referral mechanism with other health service providing organizations
- Increased the significant number of referral client who received different services (HTC, counseling, GH) from health service provider.

At a glance

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Turning the Corner: Regional Workshop on Resource Mobilization & Sustainability

Bandhu Social Welfare Society has been working in Bangladesh since 1996 for supporting the sexual minorities in Bangladesh, in particular for MSM and Hijra community. Both the MSM and Hijra community in our country are living in most vulnerable situation. They are stigmatized and they cannot practice the rights as a human being in our society. They don’t get the opportunity of right to education, right to healthcare services, right to free movement, right to choose profession and many other rights which are essential for their existence. BSWS has taken significant activities from the very beginning for development of capacity and livelihood of sexual minority people of Bangladesh and prevention of HIV/AIDS/STIs with that marginalized community and raising voice and creating space for establishes their presence/visibility in all level of society as well as country by the utilizing of their skills. Bandhu believes that without enhancing their capacity on that issue- they will not participating the society. In that situation Bandhu has felt the urgency to set with the need of their existing situation and taking some initiatives to improvement that situation.

So to ensure their participation at all level, BSWS initiated programs such as capacity development initiative through training, advocacy, awareness rising, workshop, seminar, meetings, etc. Through the continuation of the program BSWS arranged training on different issues in country and aboard for the BSWS staffs and its partner organizations as well. On the other hand as part of community capacity enhancement of BSWS there was a plan to send representatives of 5 CBOs to mobilize the MSM/TG community members and also to introduce sustainability vision and plan amongst the LGBTI community groups, networks and organizations. BSWS think that the meetings might bring together the needs and issues of concerns. It will strengthen intensive knowledge among resource mobilizing and networking area, as well as skills and information sharing and redefine the focusing areas in addressing the needs and concerns of LGBTI population. But due to denial of visa to the 5 CBO representatives BSWS re-nominated two MSA staff for this particular workshop.
Objectives
The key objectives of the workshop were:

- To understand about resource mobilizing and sustainability plan which will assist to get a clear knowledge of our responsibilities as community member.
- Develop strong network amongst the LGBTI groups and donor agency in Bangladesh and to identify the area of capacity development in relation to resource mobilizing plan and implementation.
- Sharing the concept of resource mobilization and sustainability amongst the CBO partners.
- Identify the issues, needs and concerns of the community and how BSWS can positively contribute and work in future.

Detail workshop information
Regional Workshop on Resource Mobilization & Sustainability, held from 25 to 27 May 2015 in Bangkok, was the first such workshop aimed at enabling financial sustainability among the advocacy works and service delivery on HIV and LGBT rights across South Asia. Organized by APCOM under the multi-country South Asia HIV program, the workshop facilitated 29 community advocates from 24 organizations across Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Facilitated by Barapani, a resource mobilization consultancy firm, the workshop trained the community advocates with the knowledge and skills to understanding resource mobilization, delivering effective communication and developing resource mobilization strategy.

The workshop also marks the planning for the in-country workshops in the abovementioned countries to further assist the participating community organizations in drafting and finalizing their resource mobilization plan.

Advocacy Meeting on Human Rights in partnership with National Human Rights Commission

“Third gender is not just a word, it is a Gender”
The seminar on "Recognition of Hijra Community as Third Gender and Future" was jointly organized by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) also known as JAMACON and Bandhu Social Welfare Society (BSWS) on 29 April 2015 at Abdul Karim Sahittaya Bisharod Milonayoton, Bangla Academy Auditorium, Dhaka.

Key Objectives of the Seminar

- Acknowledge, foster and advance the decision of the government of Bangladesh on third gender issue
- Determine the immediate and long term initiatives to overcome the legal and social barriers involving policy makers and civil society members
- Identify ways and opportunities to accept and include hijra community in the mainstream society
- Underline the community voices on their health care needs, human rights and social inclusion issues so as to facilitate their contribution in country’s growth

A total of 198 guests attended the workshop representing different donors, UN agencies and GOs and NGOs in Abdul Karim Sahittaya Bisharod Milonayoton, Bangla Academy Auditorium, Dhaka with Mr. Suranjit Sengupta, MP, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry as Chief Guest, Advocate Tarana Halim, MP as special guest, Mr. Rupan Kanti Sheel, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare as Respected discussant. Professor Dr. Mizanur Rahman, Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission presided the session.
The event was graced by the presence of Ms. Nirupa Dewan, Member, National Human Rights Commission, Mohammad Amjad Hossain Khan, Secretary, National Human Rights Commission, and Mr. Anisul Islam Hero, Chairperson, Bandhu Social Welfare Society. Mr. Rabaet Ferdous, Associate Professor of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka and keynote speaker and the session was compeered by the famed writer Selina Hossain, Member, National Human Rights Commission. Furthermore, honorable representatives from different institutions, NGOs, Human Rights workers, lawyers, students and social media attended. In addition, influential Gurus of Hijra community from different districts of Bangladesh also joined to share their thoughts and distress.

Ms. Nirupa Dewan, Member, National Human Rights Commission commented, in November 2013 GOB recognized hijra as a Third Gender which was a revolutionary step towards providing human rights to all citizens of Bangladesh. Besides thanking the GOB for the timely initiatives, she requested GOB not to limit the noble initiative bounded only in the paper but to proceed further with its effective implementation to attain respect for the hijra through different policies.

Mr. Anisul Islam Hero, Chairperson, BSWS welcomed all and mentioned that the seminar is a timely initiative and highlighted that it has been nearly 2 decades since BSWS has been working towards the betterment of the sexual minority population. He emphasized not to let the hijra individuals go through medical tests while seeking jobs or healthcare and treat them equally as any other individual.

He also stated to discontinue the biological testing of the hijra group as it mentally affects them. Moreover, he requested hijra community representatives to convey the message of the importance of maintaining their dignity and not to enroll in any activities that may prove to be disrespectful. It affects both the community members as well as the groups trying to help them to attain a better image among the general population. He made a notable request to Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW) to extend BSWS’s working area to serve more hijra.

In this session, four participants from Hijra community presented their experiences and challenges related to accessing health, education, and employment. Later on Ms. Labonnya hijra and Ms. Nodi hijra have been awarded with crest in the seminar for their outstanding and bravery attempt in capturing the murderers of blogger Oyasiqur Rahman Babu. Each and everyone in the seminar showed respect and acknowledged their contribution and commitment towards the society and felt proud of them. Professor Dr. Mizanur Rahman, Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission and Mr. Suranjit Sengupta, MP, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry handed over the crest to them.

Mr. Rupan Kanti Sheel, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare mentioned the immediate need for correct hijra mapping. He shared that the Ministry of Social Welfare (MOSW) took initiatives in 2011 where they found 9,285 accountable.
To help improve the lives of the hijra community based on data, MOSW initiated rehabilitation program in 7 districts initially. He showed a clear visual scenario to the audience that in the year 2012-2013, MOSW gave scholarships to 135 hijra students to sit in different levels of examination (primary level-300/-, secondary level-500/-, high school level- 600/-, college level 1000/).
The seven districts were Dhaka, Chittagong, Dinajpur, Patuakhali, Khulna, Bogra and Sylhet. Different types of training were given to 350 hijra with a total cost of 72,17,000/-. In 2013-2014, monthly stipends of Tk. 300/- were given to 1071 hijra in 21 upazillas of 7 districts, 950 hijra were trained for 50 days, and 2010 hijra were given 10, 000/- to help them start their own business. In 2014-2015, they have expanded their work to 35 Zilla and targeted to give monthly stipend of 500/-, training to be given to 50 hijra, and Tk.10,000/- start-up money to 4020 hijra. He highlighted gracefully that 18 individuals have been given employment among which 14 are working in MOSW.

He further reiterated that the 2015- 2016 budget would be double the amount of last year.

**Advocate Tarana Halim, MP and State Minister** recognized that it is her duty to establish equal rights to all. She mentioned that we usually compare the status of transgender (TG) and hijra with the western world, but to provide the facilities and rights to the targeted group, we first need to create and establish laws according to the rights and implement them effectively.

She hoped to form a wholesome law soon that would address each problem faced by the TG group individually and target to solve them. She also highlighted the increase of budget amount of MOSW and hoped to cover all the zilla in the future. She outlined that the TG group has been incorporated in the Social Safety Network and requested the NHRC to make a draft about the anti-discrimination law so that it helps her present the topic in the parliament. Furthermore, Advocate Tarana Halim appreciated the arrangement of such seminar with different governing and associated organizations, hoping to address a better approach of the issue. One very important point raised by her was to do exact mapping of the community that will create an open and safe platform for the TG members to ‘come-out’ and identify themselves, because being blind would not eliminate a group, but shun them further to darkness.

**Suranjit Sengupta, MP, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry** asked to ensure the legal rights of TG people in the state as there is no room for discrimination in the law or constitution. He admitted this inequality is created by our society. He assured that “No transgender individual should die without treatment, lack of shelter or without clothing. Hijra can take part in the development of economy and society can work correspondingly with their heads held high”. Suranjit Sen had asked Dr. Mizanur Rahman to send a request proposal to the Minister of Health and Education to allow free admission to the hijra children.

“Nowhere in the constitution is it stated that people of the transgender community are barred from getting family property. Nor is it banned in any religion practiced in our country,” said Suranjit Sen Gupta, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Law Ministry.
“It is possible to ensure their rights to inheriting family property.” Suranjit Sen Gupta urged action to promote the legal rights of transgender people in Bangladesh. “There can never be any room for discrimination. This inequality has been created by our society”.

“The National Human Rights Commission will continue our work in applying pressure on the government to enact a law so that people of the Hijra community do not face any discrimination as citizens,” said Prof Dr. Mizanur Rahman, Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission (JAMACON). He added that “Respect and dignity cannot be measured by the number of people in a group. The responsibility of the state is to ensure equal rights for every citizen. Mercy and charity funds cannot be a necessity of a citizen.” He requested the government bodies to ensure the rightful distribution of property for the hijra group from their families. Moreover, he asked for incorporating chapters in the books mentioning the existence of hijra. He further requested to train the lawyers of BSWS about human rights at the zilla that they have been efficiently working for all these years so that they can provide a better service.

**Recommendation**

The seminar concluded with discussants sharing a series of recommendations to promote the wellbeing of the Hijra community. The noteworthy recommendations are:

1. A private bill needs to be sent to the parliament for the rights of the hijra community.
2. New policy/law need to be enacted to ensure the legal rights of transgender people in the state.
3. The hijra community will maintain their dignity and integrity through well-mannered behavior that their image be positive.
4. Immediate actions are needed to be implemented to get equal opportunity in education, treatment and employment and introduction of quotas in educational institutes, public services and parliament as well.
5. A request proposal will be sent to the Minister of Health and Education by NHRC to allow free admission to the hijra children in the school.
6. Immediate measures to ensure the rightful distribution of property and include property and inheritance laws for the transgender individuals.
7. Organize accommodation for transgender people; allot property to the elderly transgender people, on a priority basis.
8. Incorporate chapters in the books mentioning the existence of hijra and their traditional cultures. Different textbooks, scientific databases should have the right information with their identity, existence, cultures and traditions.
9. Train the District Level lawyers Group (DLLG) of BSWS about human rights at the Divisional level that they have been efficiently working for all these years and can provide a better services to the community.
10. Needed exact mapping of the community through proper census that will create an open and safe platform for the TG & Hijra members to ‘come-out’.
11. NHRC will share a draft about the anti-discrimination law so that it helps Advocate Tarana Halim to present the topic in the parliament soon.
12. A wholesome law need to be formed soon that would address each problem faced by the TG group individually and target to solve them.
13. The constitutional recognition of transgender people must be established.
14. Creating new employment opportunities for the transgender individuals is necessary. Suitable employment and developing effective strategies need to be formulated.
National Coordination and Capacity Building Workshop

BSWS organized one workshop on 11-12 June 2015 on issues of MSM, TG and hijra population in Bangladesh. BSWS created opportunity to arrange the workshop inviting different NGOs and CBOs which aimed to increase the effectiveness of national response and share knowledge and skills on issues regarding MSM, TG and hijra. Thirty seven (37) individuals participated and the main purpose was to create a common understanding on emergent issues and to identify policy agenda for future policy advocacy for MSM, TG and hijra in Bangladesh.

The participants understood the discussed topics and got engaged in group work, large scale discussion and question/answer session on MSM/TG issues.

Achievement:

The participants are committed to ensure services for MSM/TG population. They are encouraged to work more intensely to reduce stigma and discrimination in this community. They are interested to work on MSM and TG issues in their existing program with cordial collaboration of BSWS and contribute in National Social Protection Policy and might engage in the development of the draft of this policy in a coordinated way.

Launching Seed Fund Grant program in Bangladesh

The Multi-Country South Asia Global Fund HIV Programme (MSA Programme) is a regional HIV programme operating in eight countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The overall goal of the programme is to reduce the impact of, and vulnerability to, HIV among men who have sex with men, hijra and transgender people through Community Systems Strengthening (CSS).

The programme supports building the capacity of in-country and regional community-based Sub-recipient organizations engaged in service provision (HIV prevention, care and support services), policy development and advocacy, partnership building with local governments and health departments, research related to MSM and transgender issues, and on creating stronger community systems to support and sustain this work.

Considering the need and the objective of the South Asian Regional HIV Program with a strong CSS focus and with reference to the Global Fund’s CSS Framework, one of the main components in the program is Advocacy Seed Grant which aims to provide support towards MSM and Transgender led organization on community driven initiatives in advocacy-related policy environment at local or national level. It is expected that this seed fund program will cover the following objectives:
1. Document key issues related to MSM and transgender people, in particular those who are living with HIV
2. Increase the awareness of local and/or national policy and decision-makers on issues related to MSM and transgender people, in particular those who are living with HIV
3. Highlight issues with local and/or national level policies that are in violation of human rights related to MSM and transgender people.

Under this Advocacy Seed Grant, BSWS already initiated the process in October 2014 following APN+ guidelines. A total of 30 proposals were received from different organizations against RFP. After a thorough review of each proposal and capacity assessment by the ad hoc members, top scored five (5) CBOs were finally selected for seed fund grant. The agreements between each of the 5 CBOs and BSWS were signed by 26th February 2015.

Process
BSWS circulated RFP in two national daily newspapers on 15th October 2014 and duration for submission of proposals was one month that closed on 15th November 2014. A total of 30 proposals were received the deadline. In the meantime ad hoc panel committee was formed consisting of four members as per criteria.

The first ad hoc committee meeting was held at PMO on 8th December 2014 where all panel members attended. BSWS handed over all the sealed proposals to the panel members and the panel members short listed the proposals according to their merit and following criteria:

- Meeting the deadline of proposal submission
- Follow all given guidelines as per RFP
- Category of Organization

Considering the criteria, it was observed that only seven (7) CBOs met the guidelines that were highlighted in the RFP. However, the committee decided to review the 7 proposals in the next meeting that was scheduled for 8th January 2015 at BSWS Conference Room, Kakrail, Dhaka.

The 2nd meeting on proposal review was held on 8th January at BSWS conference room where the seven shortlisted proposals were reviewed and scored by the ad hoc committee members. In the meeting it was decided that the score range above sixty (60) will be considered as qualifying marks and proposals from only 5 CBOs scored more than sixty. The CBOs are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the CBOs</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Chinnomul Manob Kallyan Society</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Sonaly Din Manab Kollayan Sangstha</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Bachar Asha Sangskritik Shangho</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Shurjer Alo Hijra Shongho</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Chattala Jubo Shongho</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the meeting it was also decided that BSWS assess the capacity of 5 CBOs and share the report with ad hoc members for final comments.

After analyzing capacity assessment reports of five CBOs submitted by BSWS, the ad hoc committee selected the following CBOs and recommended disbursement of the budget from the Seed Fund Grant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of CBO</th>
<th>Obtained score</th>
<th>Total Budget (BDT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHATTALA JUBO SANGHA, 213/A, P.D.A Avenue (Bandhu Office, Ground Floor), Asian Highway, Muradpur,</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>655,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHINNOMUL MANOB KALAYAN SOCIETY, Moon View, House # 164, Road #11, Sonadanga R/A, Khulna.</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>586,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACHAR ASHA SANKRITIC SANGSTHA, Pathia Para, Nouhata, Poba, Rajshahi.</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>576,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAJSHAHI SONAL-DIN MANOB-KALAYAN SANGSTHA, Tikkapara, Ghuramar, Boalia,</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>510,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SURJER ALO HIJRA SANGHO, Barokoyatar, Hotel Mayaman (4th floor), D.T. Road, Pahartali, Chittagong.</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>620,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction of CBOs:

Rajshai Sonali-Din Manob-Kalyan Sangstha (RSMS) is a non-government, non-political and self-help organization which has been working since 2010. They got their registration from Social Welfare Department in the year 2014. At present, they have 70 beneficiaries in their profile list and provide services through referral networks. They have started working with the views of social inclusion of MSM in the society. So far the highlighted initiatives taken by the organization are local level advocacy with the local elites and influential leaders thus helping them to get free treatment including HIV testing from government hospitals.

Main activities planned for MSA Seed Grant Programme
• Capacity building trainings for targeted beneficiaries
• Dialogue session with district HIV authority
• Dialogue session with district level health providers for treatment of MSM & TG
• Sensitization session with local elite and LGBTI
• Dialogue session with Rajshahi Medical College authority for HIV scanning
• Weekly Group Meetings for awareness MSM & TG

Surjer Alo Hijra Sangothon (SAHS) is a non-government, non-political, self-help organization that was established in 2011. This is not a registered CBO but registration is under process. Right now they have 66 hijra beneficiaries in their profile list. Due to limitation of fund, they have no direct experience to implement the programs but have developed a good network with different tiers at local level. Besides this, non-formal counseling on HIV and AIDS is one of their significant tasks since inception.

Main activities planned under MSA Seed Grant Program
• Arrange orientation sessions among target beneficiaries on HIV/AIDS and SRHR issues
• Organize discussion/counseling sessions with family members of target beneficiaries
• Produce information materials to create mass awareness amongst Hijra community

Bachar Asha Sanskritik Sangstha (BASS) is a non-government, non-political, self-help organization which was established in 2006. They got their registration from Social Welfare Department in the year 2007. This organization started working to reduce stigma and discrimination amongst the Hijra/MSM people in Poba, Rajshahi. They have established a ‘Baul’ song group and are now well known at local level. Through this group, they are actively participating in different public forum and creating mass awareness on HIV/AIDS, harassment, etc., through their performances. BASS also introduced Edu-entertainment in the local area and has developed good rapport with the local influential groups. Beside this, they are also providing non formal counseling to the community.

Main activities planned for MSA Seed Grant Programme
• Capacity building training for beneficiaries
• Counseling with the family members of MSM & TG
• Arrange workshop on Human rights
• Arrange Social Day to increase group cohesion
• Sensitization sessions with local elites including Ward Commissioners, imams (=religious leaders), journalists, human rights activists and teachers
• Dialogue with District Authority on HR & HIV/AIDS and local health service providers to ensure access in mainstream health facilities
Chattala Jubo Songa (CJS) is a Non-government, non-political, self-help organization established in 2011. This is a new CBO and under process of registration. At present they have 70 beneficiaries and have been implementing limited scale activities in their local area. Though they have no practical experience to implement any project earlier, they have already developed good networking with local elected bodies and local elites.

Main activities planned for MSA Seed Grant Programme

- Capacity building training on different issues for their beneficiaries
- Regular session with cell leaders
- Meeting with local influential leaders
- Meeting with four area committees
- Arrange coordination meeting with local and religion leaders
- Round table meeting on human rights
- Publication of quarterly bulletin on SRHR issues
- Produce BCC material to create mass awareness

Chinnomul Manob Kallayan Society (CMKS): Since its voyage in 2001 as a self-help group CMKS had a great endeavor to work in particular for the well-being of MSM, MSW and their family members to make them mentally and financially solvent, to ensure SRHR & prevent HIV and AIDS as well. As a result, CMKS commenced IGA through developing a Cultural Team in 2002 with its own fund. Later on the same team prospered with the financial and technical assistance of PIACT, BWHC, Mattra & Padakhep. Since then CMKS endeavored a wider range of experience in the field of SRHR and HIV/AIDS by implementing various projects funded by different donors and dealt with different high risk groups like as Sex Workers, MSM, MSW, boatmen, ship laborers, cook, dock laborers, rickshaw pullers, truckers, etc. Later on CMKS expanded and diversified its working arena by not only involved in health-related projects, but also in areas like Empowerment and Rights, Access to Justice, Democracy, Governance and IGA, etc. CMKS became more noticed day by day by working with multiple donors. So far CMKS is engaged with implementation of 14 projects covering Khulna Division. CMKS has strategic collaborative partnership with UNICEF, UNDP, UNAIDS, ICDDR, B, World Peace and Cultural Foundation, GIZ, Care-Bangladesh, CDS, HELP, DNS and BSWS.

Main activities planned for MSA Seed Grant Program

- Capacity building training for beneficiaries and staffs
- Care and Support for HIV positive people
- Project Inception meeting at local level
- Awareness session among Target Population
- Advocacy meeting with GO/NGO representatives, health service providers, Human Rights Activists and media personnel at local level
- Round Table Conference with different Stakeholders
- Pot Song presentation on rights & other Issues
- Popular Theater/Street Drama on relevant Issue
- Day observation
- Create mass awareness engaging FM Radio & Community Radio Services at local level
- Develop BCC materials
- Regular basis MSM & TG gathering

During implementing the project, the CBOs were closely monitored through field visit and day-to-day communication over phone and email. So far, seed fund grants are helping the CBOs to provide support towards MSM and Transgender on community driven initiatives in advocacy-related policy environment at local level. This grant also helped the CBOs expand and strengthen their capacities and their relationship with community groups/participants to further advocate and support MSM and TG on HIV/HR-related issues.

Seventh CCM Regional Steering Committee Meeting, Pattaya, Bangkok

From 9-10 March 2015, the Multi-Country South Asia Global Fund HIV Programme held its 7th Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCM) Regional Steering Committee Meeting in Pattaya, Thailand. This was the second CCM Steering Committee meeting of Phase 2 of the programme, which launched in July of 2013 and is supported by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.
The bi-annual CCM Regional Steering Committee Meeting plays a key oversight role for the programme in terms of programme activities, finance, management and coordination with national Country Coordinating Mechanisms in each of the seven programme countries as well as with regional programme partners.

Fifty (50) participants attended the two-day meeting, consisting of representatives from national Country Coordinating Mechanisms, including government, civil society and national CCM coordinators and members, as well as participants from all 11 sub-recipients, the Global Fund, UNDP and UNAIDS.

From Bangladesh, Md. Azam-E-Sadat, Deputy Secretary WHO, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), CCM Alternate Member, Prof. Dr. Md. Sharfuddin Ahmed, Vice Chair –Bangladesh CCM (Civil Society), Dean-Faculty of Public Health, BSMMU, Dhaka, Bangladesh and Mr. Manaj Kumar Biswas, BCCM Coordinator/GF, BCCM Secretariat, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare along with Shale Ahmed, Executive Director, BSWS.

Sessions during the meeting included: updates to the CCM Steering Committee Terms of Reference and the draft CCM Steering Committee Coordinator Terms of Reference; programme updates from each sub-recipient; key regional level activities undertaken; progress on capacity development of sub-recipients, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge management, strategic information and communications; and the upcoming submission of the expression of interest for an extension of the programme.

As Sub Recipient representative, Mr. Shale Ahmed, Executive Director, BSWS, Bangladesh highlighted the program overview and achievements of Bangladesh program. In his presentation he also mentioned faith consultation’s updates, success story of media involvements, increasing capacity of 12 community based organizations (CBOs), first ever Hijra Pride in Bangladesh and active involvement of NHRC and Ministry of Social Welfare in Bangladesh.

The Seed Funding program is being rolled out in seven countries under MSA programme, where Bangladesh is one of them. Under the MSA grant, Seed Funding shall be treated as sub-sub (SSR) recipients’ modality under each country SR. For this, UNDP as Principal Recipient (PR) already visited Bangladesh from 28th June to 2nd July 2015 and assessed the capacity of BSWS. Ms. Nunlada Punyarut, Program Analyst, UNDP and Mr. Vipat Kuruchittham, Monitoring & Evaluation Analyst were assigned to carry out the task. During the visit the following key issues were assessed:

- Governance
- Collecting and Recording programme data
- Infrastructure and Communication systems
- Risk management
- Sub- sub recipient management
- Recording of transactions and balance
- Disbursement of fund to CBOs/ sub- sub recipient or suppliers
- Preparations of Financial systems
- Safe guarding of assets

During the visit, the UNDP team also visited 4 CBOs in Bangladesh. The major objective of this visit was to observe and review the documents of ongoing seed fund program and generate knowledge about CBOs activities.

After a long assessment, BSWS received A2 rating and got approval from UNDP to carry out the seed fund program for 10 SSR in Bangladesh.
“The Time has Come” – submitted to NASP for adaptation

The Regional Training of Trainers “The Time has come: Enhancing HIV, STI, and other Sexual Health Services for MSM and Transgender People in Asia and the Pacific” was organized by UNDP from 19-22 November 2014 at Bangkok. The overall package was developed by UNDP and WHO-SEARO to support the implementation of the Multi-Country South Asia Global Fund Programme (MSA) in eight South Asian Countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka). The regional Training of Trainers (ToT) was jointly organized by UNDP and WHO and the objective of the training was to produce a group of master trainers that can train the national trainers among the health care providers in the seven countries. As a part of this, BSWS nominated 4 health service providers from Bangladesh.

After the training, the ToT team already developed the training curriculum and arranged training for Govt. Health Service providers in Bangladesh from 26-29 January 2015 in collaboration with NASP where a total of 26 participants attended the training program.

During development of curriculum, BSWS involved all stakeholders including NASP and UN agencies in Bangladesh had formed a core team consisting potential stakeholders to review all the necessary documents on The Time has Come. After the review process, BSWS received number of recommendations and finalized the process incorporating all the comments. On 17 June 2015, BSWS has submitted the package to the NASP.

BSWS acknowledge the efforts of NASP to organize the training and facilitate the process of National Curriculum in Bangladesh.

Extending our support to the Nepali LGBTI friends

Two earthquakes of moderate intensity jolted the Nepalese capital Kathmandu on 25th April 2015, triggering panic among people who rushed out of buildings.

A 4.3 magnitude aftershock was recorded at 10.24 am local time, with epicenter near Kathmandu. Another one of 3.7 magnitudes was felt at 4.20 am in the capital’s Kirtipur area, according to the National Seismological Centre.

A total number of 378 aftershocks with 4 or more magnitude were recorded since the devastating temblor on that day and that killed some 9,000 people. On the other hand, around 300 Trans women/metis in Kathmandu have survived through sex work. There were no ways for LGBT people to earn money. The Blue Diamond Society’s (BDS) main building, its care and support buildings were cracked and damaged. Most of LGBTI people spent nights under some tents with BDS banner for security and identification. There were shortage of gas and food and the BDS has run out of food for the care and support and hospice for HIV positive LGBTI. Management of BSWS had felt the necessity to support LGBTI people in Nepal as BSWS believes in working for the community by the community and of the community. Same request had been appealed by the Blue Diamond Society.

Considering the overall situation and particularly for our LGBT community people lives saving issues, BSWS management has called a meeting and all the member of BSWS family had decided to donate their one day’s salary as immediate support for helping them to continue their daily life.

Ms. Umme Farhana Zarif Kanta and Md. Masbah Uddin Ahmed Biraj handed over USD 1000 to Ms. Pinky, Chairperson, BDS-Nepal during the APCOM workshop at Bangkok, Thailand.
Short course on Human Rights and Asia in National Seoul University (SNU), Seoul, Korea

The Seoul National University Human Rights Centre (SNU HRC) was established in 2012 with the purpose of fostering a culture of mutual respect in the SNU community and furthermore to the promotion of Human Rights through academic research, education and consultation. The Human Rights Centre strives to provide quality research and teaching in the area of human rights. Upon its establishment the SNU Human Rights Centre has participated, created and led various activities for the promotion of human rights.

In every year, SNU HRC offers short course on Human Rights and Asia with the objective to allow participants and think about the Universality of Human Rights in particular context of Asia and gain a deepened understanding about human rights issues in this region. It offered both general sessions on the international human rights norms and human rights protection mechanisms and thematic sessions to discuss themes such as labor rights, peace and human rights etc.

In 2015, a total of 49 participants attended from 24 Countries. Most of the participants got full scholarship through a fair selection process by the SNU authorizes. From BSWS, Ms. Farhaha Zarif Kanta, Program Manager was selected with full scholarship by the SNU for the short course. The contents of the course were:

- The United Nations Human Rights Institutions and Process
- The promotion and protection of Human Rights in authoritarian and regimes
- Poverty, development and Human Rights
- Labor Rights in Asia
- Emerging regional Human Rights systems in Asia
- Peace Building and Human Rights
- The Role of Civil Society in the promotion and protection of Human Rights
- Burma/Myanmar: Moving Forward
- Confucianism and Human Rights
- Business and Human Rights
- Cold war, Anti communism and Human Rights in Asia
- Human Rights and Constitutional Law in East and South East Asia
- Gender and Human Rights

Learning of the short course:

What measures are possible under International law, How can we identify the turning points in human rights development, how does poverty affect the enjoyment of human rights, relationship between civil and political rights & development, how can we overcome child labor exploitation, commitment of Asian Countries related to international labor standards and related implementation. feasible idea to campaign Asian human rights convention, contribution of civil society to the development of Human Rights to Peace, major effects of cold war, most important things need to be done to overcome the discrimination and violence faced by women.

After the course a certificate was given by Chung Chinasung, Director of the course.
Knowledge Management and Resource Center

Resource Centre
The resource center of BSWS is now fully functional and accessible to all, especially for the young MSM/TG population who are unwilling to disclose their identity. During the reporting period (Jan-June 2015) a total of 373 visitors including adolescents, students, teachers, like-minded organizations and community-based organizations (CBOs) employees visited the resource center for different purposes. During their visit most of them were interested to read books, research, take consultation, use computer and enjoy video documentation.

Adolescent initiative for knowledge generation
A video competition for young adolescents, ‘Bandhu Mane Ki? (What is the meaning of friendship?) was organized in collaboration with Resource Center. The objectives of this program were to generate knowledge and flourish the capacity of youth and encourage them to be creative. A total of 28 young adolescents participated in the program and finally 04 were nominated to be awarded.

Workshop on Youth and HIV/AIDS as a part of networking and collaboration
A workshop was arranged on 19 March 2015, in collaboration with Noterdame College at Resource Center. A total of 19 participants including students and teachers of Noterdame College attended this workshop. The objectives were to make the students aware on gender, sexuality, HIV/AIDS along with SRHR issues and increase the involvement of students from different institutions in our project activity.

IDAHOT celebration
BSWS Gender and Sexuality Resource Centre celebrated the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) 2015 in partnership with UNAIDS Bangladesh. BSWS arranged series of activities that included:

- Photo Exhibition “Youth Yearm"
- International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) celebration by CBOs at Divisional Level, Bangladesh
- LGBT dialogue session, role of creative media and community accountability for social change

The NO H8 Campaign was a part of IDAHOT 2015 which started from 1 May-31st May 2015. On May 07, 2015, BSWS organized a film screening “IDAHOT & Identity” as a part of IDAHOT along with the Department of Clinical Psychology, Dhaka University. More than 100 participants gathered at the RC Mazumdar Auditorium, Dhaka University including community people.

On May 14, 2015, BSWS organized a photo exhibition “Youth Yearm” along with UNAIDS. More than two hundred and fifty individuals including His Excellency the High Commissioner of Australia, Mr. Greg Wilcock, USAID Mission Director, Ms. Janina Jaruzelski Nahiyan Saha Representative of UNAIDS Country Director, Bangladesh, Mr. Leo Kenny, Honorary Executive Director of BLAST and Barrister Ms. Sara Hossain had gathered at the EMK Center, Midas Center Building, Dhaka.
Film Screening
During this period (Jan-Jun 2015), six film screenings were arranged by the Resource Centre. The objectives of the film show were to create an open space for sharing experience and views with each other through an informal interaction. A total of 155 viewers enjoyed those film shows. The following films were shown in the period:

1. “I am”
2. Abong Bewarish in Bangla
3. Ghetu Potro Kamala (Bangladeshi film on Sexual Minority)
4. Chitrangada in Bangla
5. Protibimbo in Bangla
6. Are we so different?

Initiatives to enrich BSWS Resource Centre

BSWS developed a plan during this period and started book cataloging system from June 2015.

Press release: 11 press releases were published in UNDP teamwork, BSWS website and face book page. In addition, one achievement story was produced in UNDP quarterly newsletter.

BSWS staff took initiative to enrich BSWS resource centre by their own contribution. A total of 30 new books on different issues were handed over to the resource center. Most of the books are related to gender, psychosocial issue, science fiction, romantic story, legal laws & rights.

Achievement Stories

“Hearing the unheard voices” of MSM of TG

Bandhu Social Welfare Society (BSWS) with the leadership of National AIDS/STD Program (NASP) had arranged a training program on stigma and discrimination for government health service providers from 26-29 January 2015 at NASP. A total 26 doctors from the government health service providers joined the program. The objectives of the training were:

- To open and broaden the access to health services and providers social support to the MSM and TG by the health care providers.
- To create a pool of master trainers in Bangladesh who are working as government health service providers and will provide training amongst other health service providers all over the country.

The training was an eye opener for the doctors. Most of them did not have any idea about the existence of MSM in society. One doctor admitted, “I learned the definition of MSM and TG for the first time”.

MSA six monthly report: BSWS initiated to produce 6 monthly reports for the first time focusing MSA activities from June–December 2014. The report was shared with UNDP and its all partners in the reporting.
This training created a service-door for MSM and TG to the government health service. A doctor said, “The time has come to help me change my views and extend services to the MSM and TG.” Through this training the attitude of the doctors towards TG and MSM had changed and they realized that TG and MSM also have the right to health and proper treatment and services from government hospitals.

The doctors now consider the sexual minority as a part of society. A doctor said, “MSM, MSW, hijra should be treated cordially in our facility to prevent HV/AIDS and STD”. Considering their rights and vulnerability, doctors acknowledged their right to health, emphasized on their human rights and their right to live with dignity.

As there was no provision of site visit for the doctors, they wanted to talk with BSWS’s HIM members who are young MSM and TG. At the end of the training they came down to BSWS office and discussed with MSM and TG about their unheard frame of mind. Through the intensive discussion they realized the pain and challenge faced by young MSM and TG in their daily life.

"Coming-out with self-identity in the family"

‘From my personal experience I can state that coming-out with your self-identity in the family still poses a severe challenge to overcome for most kothis and hijras as they have to persistently fight with their friends, family and society’.

Ankita - her fascinating eyes, illusive sights and innocent face brought delight to her mother when she was born. In the later stages of Ankita’s life, her behavioral patterns started to frustrate her parents. Her strong determination to her aim to be a good dancer allowed her to ignore the negative comments thrown at her by her relatives and neighbors. She continued to study at home and practiced dancing. Meantime, she continued to convince her family and friends that she has a passion for dancing and wishes to contribute and change the economic status of the family through her work. Unfortunately, all she received were crude comments like ‘you are like a hijra’. She dealt with the discrimination and mental trauma silently for many years.

After receiving the “Life Skill” training from Training unit of MSA she had the capability to make her parents realize the harsh treatment they imposed on her was wrong. As she was earning and continued to support her family through her dancing skills, she asked her parents to rethink who was ensuring their respect and honor in the family and society.

Ankita’s father finally realized that and felt proud when her dance teacher acknowledged her as the best student. He realized that a child is more dear and important than Ankita’s self-identity as a transgender.

Ankita’s father embraced her and says “from today you can grow up with your freedom and will continue your dance”. Now, Ankita is happy and satisfied with her life as she is positively recognized by everyone in her surroundings.