Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

SRHR

Bandhu Social Welfare Society
Bringing Changes. Improving Lives. Keeping Promises
BSWS on SRHR

Bandhu Social Welfare Society (BSWS) is a registered NGO working since 1996 for the sexual and reproductive health, human rights and overall wellbeing of sexual minority population of the country including livelihoods of their choices. It envisions a Bangladesh where every person, irrespective of their gender and sexuality, is able to lead a quality life with dignity and social justice.

In terms of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) of the sexual minority population, the inequalities relating to health provision are significant. In Bangladesh, it is believed within health care services that all people are heterosexual so that the specific needs of the sexual minorities are not taken into account. Being not supported and reached with proper information and education, these population clusters are vulnerable to social injustice, inequalities, sexual and reproductive health care risks including HIV.

Experience shows that recognition of the rights of people with different sexual identities; both in law and practice, combined with sufficient and scaled-up program are necessary and complementary components for a successful response to address the SRHR needs of sexual minority population.

Being the pioneer in the country to work for the wellbeing of sexual minorities, BSWS has been implementing dynamic and diverse program and project activities in the arena of SRHR and HIV prevention intervention focusing its targeted population with remarkable and recognized achievements through 34 well-equipped field offices, over 500 staffs and downstream partners including community based organizations (CBOs) across the country.

In addition, BSWS has initiated SRHR service interventions focusing exclusively Young and Adolescents who are within the age group of 15-24 years under the banner HUM. The services ranging from HTC and STI to knowledge development and life skill education have been currently covering the targeted population of two divisional cities Dhaka and Chittagong.

BSWS is working towards ensuring an environment where respect and dignity of all Sexual Minority Populations, irrespective of their gender and/or sexual identity, or the lack thereof, is assured, along with the creation of a supportive social, policy and legal environment to enable Sexual Minority Populations to more effectively respond to sexual health rights and basic human rights in Bangladesh.
Principles of SRHR

SRHR as part of human rights, have the following principles of human rights described in the Universal Declaration and outlined by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA):

**Universality:** They apply equally to all persons and they are the rights of every individual, there are no exceptions. This means that SRHR apply to everyone, including all children, adolescents and young people.

**Interdependency and interrelation:** The fulfillment of one right may depend in part or in whole on the fulfillment of other rights.

**Indivisibility:** No right is more important than another right, they are all connected and you cannot have one without the other.

**Inalienability:** This means that you can never lose your rights. You have them, from the moment you are born, because you are human.

“All adolescents and young people are aware of their sexual and reproductive rights, are empowered to make informed choices and decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health and are able to act on them.”
Components of SRHR

Reproductive Health

Reproductive Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes.

Reproductive health therefore implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so.

Sexual Health

Sexual Health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being related to sexuality; not merely the absence of diseases, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion.

Sexual Rights

Sexual rights are an evolving set of entitlements related to sexuality that allows you the ability to decide and express by our sexuality by making your own decisions about partners, privacy and pleasure.

Sexual rights are also of human rights which mean that no one should be alienated from enjoying any of his/her human rights as a citizen of the country because of his/her sexual orientation and gender identity. Moreover the WAS, at 14th World Congress of Sexology (Hong Kong, 1999): adopted the Universal Declaration of Sexual Rights, which includes the following sexual rights directly:

The rights to:

- Sexual Freedom
- Sexual Autonomy, Sexual integrity and Safety of the sexual body
- Make free and responsible reproductive choices
- Sexual Information based upon scientific inquiry
- Sexual equity Sexual Pleasure
- Emotional sexual expression
- Sexual associate freely
- Comprehensive Sexuality education.
Reproductive rights include the right to decide if and when to have children. A couple should be able to plan and make a well-informed decision about having children, yet that’s not the case in many nations due to limited education and access to family planning tools.

Reproductive rights also include freedom for discrimination, coercion, and violence when making family planning choices.

Why SRHR is Essential for Sexual Minority Populations?

The sexual minority populations are socially discriminated due to their sexual and gender roles and desires for which they often experience greater vulnerability to SRHR related health services than other people. In most of the hospitals or health complexes, there is a very limited or no environment and facility where the sexual minority people can access SRHR services.

In most cases, health service providers and related people are also found not to provide them a friendly and reliable space where these people can share their health issues and seek solution or treatment confidentially. But these people are also human beings and therefore, in need of health services and as the citizen of the country they should also have Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and access to related services.

Moreover, the majority percentage of the sexual minority population have to carry various risk factors because of their professional pattern, unhealthy accommodation and way of living for which they require significant unmet needs for SRHR.

Related Concepts need to know

To know the SRHR, we need to know the concepts on Sex, Safer Sex, Sexuality, Sexual Diversity, Gender, Gender Diversity, Masculinity and Femininity, Gender Equality, Gender Equity etc.

Sex: Sex is either of the two major forms of individuals that are distinguished respectively as female or male especially on the basis of their reproductive organs and the structural, functional, and behavioral characteristics of organisms that are involved in reproduction. In a word, Sex could be defined as the biological identity of a person.

Safer sex: Safer sex is taking precautions to reduce the risk of acquiring sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, during sexual activities. To have safer sex it is important to either use a condom or to make sure you and your partner are not infected with an STD.
Sexuality

Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout:

- Life and encompasses sex
- Gender identities and roles
- Sexual orientation
- Eroticism
- Pleasure
- Intimacy and reproduction
- Fantasies
- Desires
- Beliefs
- Attitudes
- Values
- Behaviors
- Roles and relationships

While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by (World Health Organization, Draft Working Definition and October-2002).

Interaction of biological | Psychological | Social | Economic | Political | Cultural | Ethical | Legal | Historical and religious and | Spiritual factors.

Sexual Diversity

Human sexuality, especially sexual orientation and gender identity are not static. Sexual orientation is changing with the growth and development of human being. So, it can be expressed as person's sexuality is not one hundred percent Heterosexual (interest to the opposite sex) and not one hundred percent Homosexual (interest to the same sex). Today, someone can be interested to the opposite sex, but the next few years he/she could be interested to the same sex. Sexual diversity is not a disease or disorder!

Gender

Gender can be defined as the behavioral differences between men and women that are socially constructed. These differences are not biological but human creation. Gender is not permanent; it can be changed or switched. Gender identity is different from the biological or sexual identity. If the biological identity is physically visible externally, gender identity is an internal emotional or psychological or individual taste. A person who is born male or female are biologically could identify themselves. Otherwise, the evidence shows that gender identity now is no longer limited to women and men only.

There are now other gender identities all over the world but those are indicated with different names in different countries.
Gender Diversity

Gender is grown historically and is socially constructed and can, therefore, be changed. Gender refers to socially and culturally dominated gender roles. Gender Diversity includes the further differentiation including age, ethnicity, physical ability, sexual orientation, class, etc. which are also social constructs and therefore changeable. It also means to consider and to promote different skills, different resources and potentials of women and men in their diversity as equivalent.

Masculinity (also called manliness or manhood) is a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles generally associated with boys and men. Masculinity is made up of both socially defined and biologically created factors. This makes it distinct from the definition of the biological male sex as both men and women can exhibit masculine traits and behaviors. Traits traditionally cited as masculine include courage, independence, and assertiveness.

Femininity (also called feminity, girlishness, womanliness or womanhood) is a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles generally associated with girls and women. Femininity is socially constructed, but made up of both socially defined and biologically created factors. This makes it distinct from the definition of the biological female sex, as both men and women can exhibit feminine traits. Females are expected to be more passive, sensitive, and supportive.

Gender Equity

Gender equity is a set of actions, attitudes, and assumptions that provide opportunities and create expectations about individuals.

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