PRO
FILE

❤️ Bringing Changes.
❤️ Improving Lives.
❤️ Keeping Promises.

www.bandhu-bd.org
The Genesis

The year 1996, Naz Foundation International, a UK based international charity and community-based organization, led by Shivananda Khan identified some key community representatives, commissioned a study on the sexual and reproductive health needs of gender and sexual minority (GSM) communities in Bangladesh. The study was conducted in Dhaka during October 1996 – March 1997 with funding support by the Ford Foundation.

The findings of this study indicated social exclusion, marginalization, and stigmatization among the GSM communities along with a range of high-risk practices for STI/HIV infection. As Bangladesh society is non-tolerant towards gender diversity practices, the vulnerability of these population was well perceived and internalized by a group of friends. From their philanthropic notions and commitments, Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu) came into existence in 1996 to address these important but unattended issues through a concerted effort. This was the first of its kind initiative in the country to stand for the health and human rights issues of the GSM communities. This was an effort for the community, led by the community with no formal training in management of NGOs. Thus, began the journey of learning and changing lives.
Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu) is formally registered with Ministry of Social welfare and NGO Affairs Bureau since July 1997. All activities of the organization are in line with the guidance provided by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) and Ministry of Social Welfare (MOSW) of the Government of Bangladesh.

Bandhu implements essential Sexual Heath and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) activities including HIV intervention, legal support, capacity building and policy advocacy with an aim to bring positive changes in the lives of thousands of community members by addressing the social, religious, cultural and legal impediments in terms of their rights and freedom.
Bandhu works towards ensuring a dignified living for sexual minorities through protecting human rights, quality health including sexual and reproductive health, access to social security and justice.

Bandhu Social Welfare Society envisions a society where every person leads a quality life irrespective of gender and sexuality.
**ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT**

Today after 21 years, Bandhu is sincerely continuing to serve the communities with undivided commitment and is paving the way for obtaining their social justice, equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in line with its Strategic Plans designed for every five years each.

The collective outcomes of its different projects and programs supported by various development partners have been adding value to its already recognized best practice service model.

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**Values**

Cultural and religious prejudices on gender diversity issues continue to remain the biggest challenge along with existence of punitive laws that compromise the dignity and human rights of gender diverse population in Bangladesh. Again, the challenges related to financial sustainability could pose a medium to long-term threat to the very existence of the organization. Amid these, Bandhu has been advancing nurturing the organizational values as below which all staff and volunteers accept and are aware of.

- Confidentiality
- Diversity—both in terms of gender identity & sexual orientation.
- Elimination of stigma and discrimination
- Equality & human rights
- Gender equity
- Inclusiveness
- Openness
- Quality of life
- Quality of work
- Transparency & accountability
Governance and Management

Bandhu is governed by its constitution. It has a General Committee (GC) which elects a 7-member Executive Committee (EC) for every two years. The EC has a designated Chairperson and Treasurer with signatory authority. The General Secretary coordinates the activities of EC. It also has Technical Advisory Committee for strategic guidance. The Executive Director bridges the organizational activities with the EC and administers the overall operation of organization. He is assisted by Director - Health, Director - Policy & Strategic Partnership and Director - Finance & Administration. The Senior Management Team (SMT) as heads of each department remains involved in decision making process.

All projects and activities are implemented through 36 field offices in 22 districts in coordination of eight integrated departments which are managed from Central Office in Dhaka.
COLLABORATION

Bandhu implements all its works within the framework of health as a human right. It closely works with in coordination with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Welfare, City Corporations, National Human Rights Commission and civil society. It also works extensively with the police, the law enforcement agencies and the media for preventing violations of gender diversity population so that they can access to health and social services.

In the implementation process, Bandhu also gets involved with other organizations as required for steadier impacts of efforts. At the policy level, Bandhu has also been able to make some important allies. On human rights issues, Bandhu receives supports from the National Human Rights Commission Bangladesh and to surface the health needs and human rights issues, Bandhu has 89 journalists form all form different media as its fellows. It has also developed relationship with National Legal Aid Services Organization (NLASO), a wing of judicial system. To ensure access to justice, Bandhu has 208 Panel Lawyers who extend support to the legal needs of the targeted population with low or no cost.

On SRHR issues, Bandhu is the host and implementing organization of Right Here Right Now (RHRN) Bangladesh initiative which is a Platform of 10 organizations and an Alliance. As a part of Community System Strengthening (CSS), Bandhu has been extending technical assistance to 31 Community Based Organizations (CBOs) across the country in terms of Good Governance so that can mobilize and address their health care support at local level.
COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

NATIONAL
- Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)
- BRAC (Education Program)
- Family Planning Association of Bangladesh (FPAB)
- James P Grant School of Public Health (JPGSPH)-BRAC University
- Naripokkho
- Reproductive Health Services Training and Education Programme (RHSTEP)
- SERAC- Bangladesh
- United for Body Rights (UBR) Alliance
- Shustha Jibon
- Badhan Hijra Sangstha

INTERNATIONAL
- The Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), Malaysia
- HumSafar Trust, India
- Blue Diamond Society, Nepal
- Missal, Center for Equity Studies, India
- Law and Society Trust, Sri Lanka
ORGANIZATIONAL 4TH STRATEGIC PLAN (2017-21)

Bandhu operates within its own Strategic Plan (SP) designed for every five years and is currently implementing its 4th Strategic Plan 2017-2021 (4th SP). It is expected to add significant values to national response on health for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly 1, 3, 5, 16 and 17.

The 4th SP revolves on a Theory of Change considering the facts that gender and sexual minority communities need

(i) access to comprehensive and high-quality health care services
(ii) access to social entitlements and social protection services; and
(iii) to live in an environment where their human rights are protected in order to have a minimum acceptable quality of life with dignity and respect like any other human beings.

To achieve this, Bandhu structures and strategizes its response around three main development pillars:

- Improved access to quality health services
- Protection of human rights and access to justice
- Access to social entitlements and social protection
To achieve the results in the three main development pillars of Bandhu’s Theory of Change, there are four key enablers without which the change cannot take place. They are:

- Capacity building of communities and stakeholders
- Advocacy for affirmative action to create or strengthen an enabling environment for sexual minorities, mainly via policy change
- Organizational strengthening in terms of development and sustainability
- Knowledge Management
Some Key Achievements and Impact

Being the pioneer to working on the health and human rights of gender diverse communities in Bangladesh, Bandhu has distinct uniqueness and innovative approaches towards creating significant positive impacts on overall policy environment contributing to the wellbeing of the communities.

Bandhu ensured the inclusion of MSM and Hijra issues in the first ever Strategic Plan of the National AIDS/STD Program, Bangladesh in 1997. Since then Bandhu has played an instrumental role in increasing the sensitivity of the government, different ministries and national institutions/agencies like the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and law enforcement. Few of the achievements of the organization are:

★ Obtaining the recognition of hijra population as third gender by the Government of Bangladesh with collective supports of other organizations.

★ Scaling up of HIV/AIDS Prevention intervention and SRHR services in terms of area and population coverage.

★ The identity recognition of 3rd gender population (TG) in Bangladeshi passport as the letter “X” is a milestone – an impact of organizing countrywide Hijra Pride and policy advocacy of Bandhu with rights-based organizations and civil society members.

★ The persistent and sincere efforts of Bandhu to mainstreaming HIV/AIDS services in public health facilities yielded a desired result through adoption of ‘Stigma Training Package’ by the government for emboldening the government doctors to provide STI and HIV services to gender diverse population in health facilities. The modules were developed by UNDP and Bandhu as the implementer of GFATM MSA regional grant, advocated for this.

★ Bandhu with likeminded organizations has been able to include a separate section covering the mental health needs of gender diverse communities in National Psychosocial Counseling Policy 2016 (section 8.3 Stigmatized population: Psychosocial Counseling for Special Population).

★ Successful organizing of countrywide ‘Transgender/Hijra Pride 2014 by Bandhu begot a kinetic momentum at policy level to consider a space to bringing this community under social safety net through Ministry of Social Welfare. Some such instances are:

- Under social safety net, Ministry of Social Welfare is providing educational stipends for Hijra and TG communities, elderly allowance, Vocational training and Grants to Hijra to start small scale business/enterprise (SME)

- Bangladesh Bank, the central bank of Bangladesh has issued a circular instructing all banks of the country to make provision for "financial inclusion" for SME loans to facilitate entrepreneurship among all minority groups including third gender population (Transgender/hijra).

- NHRC has now included human rights issues of sexual minorities as Strategic Priority-4 (Strategic objective-4) of their Strategic Plan 2015-2018.
The National Curriculum and Textbook Board of Bangladesh has agreed to consider the incorporation of 3rd gender issues in the Supplementary Reading Material for the students of class IX and above.

Eighty-nine journalists from national level media including dailies, online newspapers, radio and television were awarded fellowships through seven fellowship programs.

Bandhu now has 20 lawyer fellows and 208 panel lawyers across the country with district representation to extend legal support to gender diverse communities with no or low cost.

Gender and Sexuality Resource Center was established as a part of knowledge management.

The outreach approach of Bandhu's young and adolescent focused 'HIM' initiative was appreciated and recognized by UNICEF as effective and innovative method to include young and adolescent community in the service safety net.

After working towards recognizing the existence of gender diverse population in UPR 2013 by the government, Bandhu as a part of its International advocacy, took steps in preparing gender diverse inclusive CSO report for the 3rd cycle of UPR and submitted jointly with Human Rights Forum of Bangladesh (HRFB). Bandhu as the host organization of RHRN Bangladesh Platform, submitted another youth-led youth SRHR focused CSO report in collaboration with the Asian –Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW) and the Sexual Rights Initiatives (SRI).

For outstanding services to the HIV/AIDS response and its dedicated efforts towards ensuring Equality and Rights of the gender diverse population, Bandhu received ‘Hero Award’ in 2017 from APCOM, a coalition of organizations working in Asia and the Pacific region.

Bandhu also received “Ardhanareeswara Award” in the category of Human Rights Defender from Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand in 2017.

Bandhu scored outcome ‘A’ (outstanding) in organizational assessment conducted by Rutgers, The Netherlands and selected as Host Organization and Implementing agency for ‘Right Here Right Now’ (RHRN) initiatives through Bangladesh Platform consisting of 10 organizations and an alliance.

Bandhu also scored top in organizational capacity assessment conducted by KPMG for RFSU/SIDA.
NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Bandhu has extended its network to regional and international arena and is now considered as one of the largest programs in regional and international showground in terms of addressing broad range of sexual minority population.

Bandhu is now the secretariat of South Asia Network for gender diverse population and is also an integral part of number of regional and International initiatives such as

- AIDS Society of Asia and the Pacific (ASAP)
- International AIDS Society
- MSM Global Forum (MSMGF)
- Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health (APCOM)
- Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW)
- South Asia Human Rights Commission of Marginalized Sexualities and Genders (SAHRA)
- Coalition of Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR)
- Commonwealth Equality Network

Apart from this, Bandhu is an active member following national body/forums

- STI/AIDS network of Bangladesh
- Human Rights Forum Bangladesh
- SRHR and Advocacy Forum.
- Network for Ensuring Adolescent Reproductive Health, Rights and Services (NEARS)
TOWARDS 2021

The United Nation’s fast track strategy to end the global HIV/AIDS epidemic by 2030 is guiding the world towards this much anticipated outcome. However, the window to achieve the strategy’s 2020 objectives in Asia and the Pacific is closing rapidly and the commitments made by governments across the region to their citizens, particularly, sexual and gender diverse persons, will not be realized if efforts to respond to HIV remain at present level. Without strategic programmatic scale-up, Bangladesh will fail in its response to sustainable development.

- Over the next couple of years, Bandhu will build on its track record of delivery and results, using a strategic approach to capacity development, campaigns and prevention. At every opportunity, Bandhu will work with local communities as a part of its community system strengthening approach to ensure their capacity development, resilience and greater results. Bandhu will continue this leadership role to bond beyond boundaries and invest in innovation!

- Programmatic partnerships are the key to Bandhu’s mission achievement. Therefore, organizational attention and focus will continue to be on these areas through nurturing the existing and fostering new partnerships, both traditional and non-traditional, across Bangladesh and South Asia for ensuring the effective and efficient harvesting of results.

- Bandhu will have focus on its organizational sustainability and the progresses it made towards its mission. Along with ensuring sustainable and increased international financing, Bandhu will further pay attention to organizational capacity development and explore domestic resources including CSR provisions.

- Bandhu’s will continue to invigorate its drives towards ensuring the compassionate health care services and promoting and protecting the human rights and dignity of gender diverse communities to which they are entitled to as citizens and also as human beings.
THE FOCUS AREA OF WORK

Bandhu over the years has successfully collaborated with the Government of Bangladesh and development partners to ensure appropriate sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) based services including HIV prevention intervention for gender diverse population who are marginalized in terms of getting social justice, equality and freedom based on their Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI).

The activities and services are being implemented countrywide through 36 well equipped field offices with clinical facilities. Its activities are grounded at the grassroots level, involving emergent CBOs across the country (31 CBOs so far). Bandhu’s service model is recognized as a best practice model by UNAIDS and Amfar Foundation USA.

Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and HIV/AIDS prevention services:

- Outreach and networking
- Drop-in services
- STI and general health treatment HTC
- Care and support services
  - Free medical consultation
  - Free medicine
  - Referrals for ARV access and other health services
- Psychosexual, psychosocial and Mental health counseling
- Health and rights education
- Capacity building
- Knowledge generation
Community System Strengthening (CSS)
- Help establishing of CBOs
- Ensure Technical Assistance to achieve Minimum Capacity
- CBO sustainability and Resource Mobilization
- Networking and Referral with GO and NGO
- Local level advocacy
- Organizational Policy development
- Registration process
- Seed Fund Grant

Legal Services
- Legal counselling
- Legal support through Ain Alap
- Document harassment and violation cases
- Refer cases to the appropriate authority Legal Helpline counseling
- Monitoring progress of the cases
- Networking

Policy Advocacy
- Promote and Protection of Rights
- Create livelihood opportunity for mainstreaming
- Orient for relevant stakeholders for effective awareness, response and responsibilities
- Sensitization Meeting/workshop/consultation at policy level for conducive work environment
- Sensitize local level administration, social elites, Lawyers, Journalists and Local elected bodies

Knowledge Management
- Sexuality and Gender Resource Center
- Research and produce innovation
- Learning session with different audience
- Film screening
- Essay competition
- Fellowship to students of different public and private universities
- Internship
Some of the development partners of Bandhu over time
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