REINCARNATE II
Regional Art and Film Festival

March 27-29, 2019
Dhaka, Bangladesh

THE SOUTH ASIAN GENDER DIVERSITY FILM AND ART FESTIVAL

HOSTED BY

Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu)
Acknowledgement

Background

Event’s Trifles

DAY 1: 27 MARCH, 2019
Inauguration
Unveiling the logo of Reincarnate II and opening photo exhibition
Moment with Chief Guest and Special guests
Cultural event

DAY 2: 28 MARCH, 2019
Inauguration of Films Screening
Panel Discussion

DAY 3: 29 MARCH, 2019
Shivananda Duncan George Khan OBE Memorial Lecture
Closing of the Reincarnate II
Closing Performance
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu) sincerely acknowledges the support and cooperation from EMK Center, Bangladesh National Museum and Bangladesh Mahila Samity for providing their venue for hosting different events of the festival.

Bandhu thankfully acknowledges the financial support of development partners namely British High Commission, Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives of High Commission of Canada, Embassy of Switzerland and USAID for organizing REINCARNATE-II, The South Asian Gender Diversity Art Festival” during 27th to 29th March 2019.

Bandhu thankfully appreciates the unconditional and meaningful supports of its staff members for successfully and flawlessly organizing this 3-day Festival.
Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu) established in 1996 to address the concerns of human rights abuse and denial of sexual health rights and provide a rights-based approach to health & social services for gender diverse population in Bangladesh. Over the years, it has emerged as a national community-based organization currently providing social and health services across the country. One of the core objective of Bandhu is to advocate & provide an environment where the respect and dignity of all gender diverse communities irrespective of their specific gender and/or sexual identity or the lack thereof, is assured along with the creation of a supportive social, policy & legal environment to enable gender diverse communities to more effectively respond to sexual health rights & basic human rights along with increasing their health seeking behaviors.

Beside prevailing its intervention in country, Bandhu has extended its network to regional and international arenas and is now considered as one of the largest programs in regional and international showground in terms of addressing broad range of gender diverse population. These networking with different forums and platforms and its active involvement in the activities and initiatives have collectively contributed to make the organization more visible in the areas it works.
As an active member and entrusted with the responsibilities of managing the Secretariat of South Asian Gender Diverse Network, Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu) organized a three-day long Gender Diversity Film Festival REINCARNATE during February 2016 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The South Asian Gender Diversity Film Festival REINCARNATE was a Regional Festival in Dhaka held under the aegis of South Asian -Gender Diverse Community Network provided a platform for regional Gender Diverse communities an opportunity to showcase and exhibit a range of artistic work—both individual as well as collective—ranging from cinema, cultural performance, art workshop/photo exhibition. As a part of continuing the previous events, the REINCARNATE – II for the year of 2019 has been planned and accordingly hosted with the close coordination of multiplate stakeholders, communities, activists & members from the region and development partners as well.

Reincarnate II is the continuation of earlier Art and Film Festival organized by Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu) during February 2016. This initiative is committed to upholding health and human rights of gender diverse population in the country and South Asian Region. Bandhu has again organized the 3-days long Art and Film festival during 27th – 29th March, 2019 in Dhaka, Bangladesh with the support from British High Commission in Dhaka, Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives of High Commission of Canada, Embassy of Switzerland and USAID Bangladesh. Since this is the continuous of previous event so this year the Reincarnate II has presented an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the gender diversity focused initiatives of writers, film makers, photographers, human rights activists of South Asian Region. A part from some exciting feature films and short documentaries from across the South Asian Region, the festival has also emphasized on showcasing the creative works of young community members.

The entire program was designed for three days commencing from 27th March that ended on 29th March where number of activities/events hosted parallelly. The REINCARNATE II has planned comprising the following major programs/activities to accomplish:

- Inauguration
- Cultural performance by community members
- Screening of films and documentaries
- Photo exhibition
- Panel discussion
- Shivananda Khan Lecture Series
The inauguration ceremony started with welcoming everyone to the Reincarnate II event. All special guests along with the chief guest were cordially invited to the stage to take the seats. National anthem of Bangladesh was played where all the guests and audiences stood-up to pay their respect duly.

After that, the community people from Bandhu were called on to the stage to give flowers and Uttoriyo to the special guests. Mr. Shale Ahmed, Executive Director of Bandhu presented his welcome remarks for the event. In his speech, he mentioned how Bandhu has been working over the past twenty-two years for the betterment of the gender diverse community people in Bangladesh. He talked about the ideas behind this Reincarnate Festival and how it is remarkable for the community people. He requested for everyone’s cooperation to make this event successful.
Chief guest Mr. Kazi Rezaul Haque, honorable Chairman of NHRC was requested to unveil the logo of the reincarnate festival. The logo was unveiled with enormous round of applause. Then five best pictures selected from the 25 pictures of the Art exhibition were brought to the stage to unveil them by the chief and other special guests as part of opening the photo exhibition that started displaying from the morning at the National Museum, Dhaka. Photographers of those pictures were invited to the stage to introduce themselves with audiences.
HE Rene Holenstein, Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh thanked Bandhu to organize this festival. This is the festival that will promote equal rights for everyone. It is the duty to every one of the society to treat every person as equal. This is the objective for both Switzerland and Bangladesh. So, they are working together to promote human rights for everyone. He talked about promoting transgender voice and rights. He wishes all the success for the next two days.

HE Harry Verweij, Ambassador of Kingdom of the Netherlands to Bangladesh believed, there should be special attention for the youth. So, they can grow up in a good equal environment. He said, we all are gender diverse person, we all go through these ideas. So, everyone should be equal. This festival would help with the tolerance of gender diverse people and this will help the youth.

HE Sidsel Bleken, Ambassador of Norway to Bangladesh said that this festival will address all the problems of the community people. This festival is really giving them and us a chance to rethink about their talents and chances.

HE Charlotta Schlyter, Ambassador of Sweden to Bangladesh, thanked organizing team for the warm welcome. She also said that now it is really important to talk about the health and other human rights for the community people. She said that acceptance should not be so difficult. If someone is not getting the rights, they deserve that then it is violation of their rights.

HE Joel Reifman, Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy said, he is very thankful that he could be present here. He himself was raised in a very old-fashioned family. He had a very little idea about the suffering of the gender diverse community people. It is really good to know about the difficulties that gender diverse people faces everyday because now he will think about it more.
Chief Guest Mr. Kazi Reazul Haque, honorable Chairman of NHRC, conveyed thanks to the guests to take out their time for this event and congratulated Bandhu for their twenty-three years of journey for the community people. This film festival will help to introduce all the talents that the community people have in them. Government is also committed to ensure the rights of marginalized people. However, government still couldn’t ensure many of the rights of the transgender people specifically in education and employment. He also acknowledged Bandhu’s hard work and contribution for their rights. He also said that how transgender people even tried to participate in parliament. It shows how their position is changing. Government is working for creating an anti-discrimination legislation. This will be out soon. He ended his speech with thanking everyone once again.

HE Benoit Prefontaine, High Commissioner of Canada to Bangladesh addressed that, discrimination and inequality for gender diverse people is nothing new in South Asia. Reincarnate-II is giving chance to the community people all over the South Asia to show their talent. He also said that Canada is always helpful towards sexual minorities so Canada always wish well for Bandhu and will continue to help them.

HE Kanbar Hossein-Bor, British Deputy High Commissioner to Bangladesh said that, it is so good to see that Bangladesh government is working positively towards community people. Presence of NHRC chairman here and declaration of third gender identity proves that. However, government should work more for legal frameworks. He also said that nobody chooses to be marginalized or to be rebellious. It is how God created them. They should be treated equally.

Ms. Eiko Narita, Officer In-charge, UNFPA, thanked organizers to arrange such festival who talks about human rights for a very special group of people. She wishes every development for the community people.
On the last part of the inauguration ceremony, a dance drama was performed by the group, ‘Essence of Soul’ and other participants from community. The name of the drama was called, “Champabatir Ghate”. This dance drama was directed by famous choreographer Kabirul Islam Ratan.

With this dance drama the inauguration ceremony was officially closed.
DAY 2 | 28 MARCH, 2019

INAUGURATION OF FILMS SCREENING

On the 2nd day of the festival, the film screening inaugurated by Kobori Sarowar, the Legendary Actress of Bangali Movie and former Parliamentary member and Sridhar Rangayan, Film Maker, Festival Director and Activist of India. After that some short films as well as documentaries of neighboring countries i.e. India, Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in relation to gender diversity particularly their straggling life with stigma and discrimination in family and society were screened where the audiences attentively watched and tried to understand as well as realize their situation.

The film screening continued till noon of 3rd day of the festival and throughout the days, following eminent films were shown:

- Frangipani
- Pahichan
- Kashish
- Birds of Paradise
- Ajay
- The Two Companions
- Gray
- Pashi
- Khwaais
- Baby Steps
At the 2nd half of 2nd day, with a major objective of deepening the level of regional cooperation between organizations working on SOGI, a panel discussion scheduled and accordingly took place with an excellent combination of actors as well as activists from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan.”

OBJECTIVES OF THE PANEL DISCUSSION

- Create a conducive network with regional actors as well as activists from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka & Bhutan for sharing learning of the development around 3rd Gender as gender diverse population.

- Deepening the level of regional cooperation among the organizations working on SOGI

PANELIST AND PARTICIPANTS

The panel discussion was arranged with a blend of panelists from South Asian Regional Countries including Bangladesh. Ms. Anannya Banik from Bangladesh, Manisha Dhakal from Nepal, Satya Bashana Ramanayaka from Sri Lanka, Simran Shaikh from India and Ms. Dechen Selden from Bhutan took part as panelists.All the panelists are the pioneer example from their countries who are working for the SRHR and Human Rights Issues of the Gender Diverse population.

Abdullah Anbar Titir from Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust- BLAST was the Moderator of the Panel Discussion. A total number of 61 participants from Gender Diverse Community, Bandhu Staffs, HIM Star, guests from secondary stakeholders were present at the event.
Abdullah Anbar Titir the moderator started the panel discussion with a warm welcome. She introduced the panelists at the beginning of the session. Describing a background of the Gender Diverse Community issues in Bangladesh and the region, she offered the panelist to start the discussion.

Simran Shaikh who is a dedicated Human Rights activist for the Gender Diverse people from India started her discussion with a grateful thanks to Bandhu. She started with the history of her life and family stragglies she has passed. She acknowledged that, organization like Bandhu and Humsafar trust (India) have been able to reach that level to address these issues.

Making society understand and creating space for the community people are more challenging and in Bangladesh context, Bandhu created that family environment for the community.

In Indian Context, there is no central Law for the community till now. Transgender Protection Bill 2016 is already at the parliament as draft so there are many obstacles. Also, she addressed that they use the term Transgender as an umbrella so that all the community people can be in one row not just the Hijra, trans man or transwoman. It was not an easy walk. She finished her discussion with a significant sentence-

“Forget the Boarder and Work for Human Rights”

Satya Bashana Ramanayakawho is a positive change maker from Sri Lanka started the discussion describing Sri Lankan context. She informed the audience that like Bangladesh, India, and Nepal there is no existence of Hijra culture in their country. So, it was hard for her to raise voice for the rights regarding Trans issues. Now a day’s government in Sri Lanka started talking after long hard works. They have an existing provision for Gender Reassignment Surgery and every one can do it. But in terms of gender certificate surgery is a mandatory thing as per government rule those who don’t wanted to do that, he/she will not get the certificate. There are lots of problems like that they are facing. Sri Lanka is far behind from other countries like India, Nepal and Bangladesh. She finally acknowledges that-

“A combine Network can be a big solution to address the Transgender issues in this region as well as in Sri Lanka”
Manisha Dhakal who is involved with Gender Diverse community Rights Movement since 2001 in Nepal. She is the Executive Director of Blue Diamond Society (BDS) which is a Leading Gender Diverse community Rights organization. She described about the previous experience of working in Nepal society. A new citizenship bill is passed in Nepal recently and there the transgenders are excluded they raise their voice against that. She told that, we don’t have such platform in this region that we can raise the voice together to ensure the rights, to ensure Legal Gender Recognition for the community.

“One Meeting, One Workshop, One Seminal will not bring a Long-term Result. A Forum must need to be established”

Dechen Selden who is a community advocate from Bhutan was one of the panelists. She told that, in Bhutan there are too many discriminations and stigmas available. The society as well as the family are really stigmatized about the community issue. This is very new issue in Bhutan and we just started talking about that. She acknowledged that-

“I am feeling that; a combine approach can be a pathway to step forward”

Ms. Anannya Banika community leader and Human Rights activist from Bangladesh started giving thanks to Bandhu and the platform. She told that, Bangladeshi people knows Hijra culture and people are accepting this community day by day. If we can create an umbrella with all the community people then the next path will be easier and we will achieve our rights. Yes, we have so many in our community as the other countries but we are creating a better position. It’s really amazing to share you that, in last election we submitted our nomination paper and it’s a positive notion from the government side. We are working for change and we will continue.

“A big Umbrella with no boundary is very much needed”
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

In this session there were some questions to the panelist raised from the audiences. Here are some major questions and answers.

Q1: As the funding from different donors are decreasing day by day what’s your plan to come up from this crisis?

Replied by Manisha: As the regional countries having same concern and same issues to work so a collaborative strategy can be a solution.

Q2: Why in Bangladesh we cannot raise voice in public or step forward?

Replied by Shale Ahmed Executive Director of Bandhu: The issues around safety and security for the activities in our country is a concern. As we are living in a country with different political climate so, it creates obstacles.

CLOSING REMARKS

At the end of the question answer session, the moderator finished the panel discussion thanking all the panelists and audiences.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PANELISTS

- A collaborative strategy should be on board to ensure the human rights of the Gender Diverse Population.
- There is significant level of knowledge gaps about Trans Issue so there should be a knowledge sharing platform among the regional countries.
- Initiative can be taken on regional legal gender analysis so that both community and policy makers can update them about regional progress on trans issues.
- There are shadow reports and universal findings on trans issues so that regional organization can work in a coordinated way on those issues and push respective governments for policy review.
- South Asian countries can work on self-stigma and discrimination also discrimination among the community issues.
- If a group of organization with the same target work together then it will change and empower the community.
- More events like REINCARNATE creates collaborative approach so it’s necessary to arrange this event in a regular basis.
In 2005, he was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his services in HIV prevention and care for men who have sex with men in the region. He reinforced the importance of having HIV related issues discussed and included in all relevant public health and social agendas. Khan was excellent in bringing people together around justice and managed to get governments, the UN system, civil society and grassroots organizations to make headway on many contentious issues. Khan also had a critical role at international AIDS conferences as a fierce and passionate spokesperson for Key Affected populations. Khan set an example in his everyday life and he was truly inspirational. He was also a leading and inspiring advocate, who spoke clearly and forcefully and worked tenaciously for those populations who have been disproportionally stigmatized.
"Bandhu is deeply honored to have known such a compassionate and committed man and having worked with him. Through the institution of this Lecture series, Bandhu wishes to ensure that his legacy will go on and for the honor a session on memorizing Shiv was took place under the Reincarnate II event at the last day i.e. on 29th March, 19. The international community activities respectively from India and Thailand opined their remarks memorizing the Shiv and his contribution in the area health and Human rights issues of MSM as well as gender diverse population."

MR. NEHAL BIPINCHANDRA RAVAL, COMMUNITY ACTIVIST, INDIA

He remarked and memorized about the Shiv and his contribution for upholding the human rights and health issues of gender diverse community in regional and international arenas. He spoke in relation to his scope to work with Shiv introducing himself through a meeting hosted by NFI held in Delhi, India in 2003. He found Shiv as a renowned activist who dedicatedly works for the wellbeing of gender diverse community and contribute lots in terms of establishing the human rights. The contribution of Shiv never be ignored from community and today we all are here together just for Shiv that he opined too.

MR. PAUL CAUSEY, MODERATOR, MSM ASIA GROUPS

He expressed about Shiv by preparing a history and how he involved to work with gender diverse population. He met Shiv in 2005 in a gathering and noticed his voice around gender diverse community while speaking as guest. A hand sheet/note highlighting the contributions of Shiv was served to all guests joined in the session. He gone through the full note in form of the audiences where he focused the areas of remarkable contributions form Shiv in the Asia pacific region and the world. Involving multiple development partners/donors to support, Shiv worked hard in the field of preventing the HIV/AIDS and STIs and including community building to uphold their human rights. Shiv Straggled a lot to raise voice for this community in different regional and international forums even he had to fight to create space for this community to get access of health care service and protecting the violation of human rights in many countries in the region.

His hard work and straggle never be elapsed from people minds specially the community and the activists.
CLOSING OF THE REINCARNATE II

The closing of the Reincarnate II made with the remarks form HE Julia Niblett, High Commissioner of Australia to Bangladesh and Mr. Randall Olson, Office Director, USAID/DRG. The Australian high commissioner thanked Bandhu for their tremendous works in relation to Human Rights of gender diverse community and the embassy as part of Bandhu felt glad to support from DAP funding under Australian embassy. In her remarks she also stated the situation of Australia around the gender diverse community which is similar to Bangladesh and people of their country remain under stigma and discrimination. The Reincarnate made a platform for the Gender Diverse community creating space to share the issues particularly needs and concerns. Australian Embassy will look forward to work in coming days with Bandhu.

In the remarks from Office Director of US Embassy, he also thanked Bandhu for inviting him in this closing ceremony. He opined that it is not easy to work with this gender diverse community considering the social and country context that Bandhu is straggling from its beginning. The community activist even though killed in country where he referred the killing of two community members/activists in 2016 where one of them was employed in US Embassy. USAID support in RGDP project being implemented by Bandhu which is basically focuses on policy and advocacy for the gender diverse community that he also highlighted in his speech. He expressed his sincere gratitude for working with Bandhu on the area of Human rights of gender diverse community and the support that are providing from USAID.

Mr. Golam Ahmed, the honorable General Secretary of Bandhu finally thanked everyone for extending necessary support to successfully accomplish the three days long festival. He also thanked the speakers, representatives from community members as well as the activists and guests who took part in in Reincarnate II.
At the end of closing, a cultural dance drama called "Chitrangada" was performed by the renown artists of Bangladesh that demonstrated the expression of love, illusion, conquest and one of the strongest gender statements ever made in Bangla literature.

"Chitrangada", as a Tagorean heroine is a strong woman who chooses to establish her identity risking losing the man she desires. Though she had been raised as a prince, but in course of time she broke free of this bondage and asserted her feminity. She spent her life estranged from her beloved, raising her child on her own.
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