2020 has passed with so many challenges and yearlong uncertainty of COVID-19, that affected the life of individuals across the globe. In Bangladesh, the situation is quite different compared to global scenario, even though it's a vastly populated country, the 'Infected v's Mortality' ratio is astonishing us. Till now there have been 514,500 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 7,576 deaths. If we calculate the ratio, 89% people had already recovered and death rate is quite low, only 1.5% according to the government's COVID-19 website.

We cannot estimate the loss during this pandemic, according to the morbidity or mortality rate. If we think from the economic point of view, the country is struggling to recover from the slowdown caused by the COVID-19. Approximately 34 million Bangladeshis or 20 percent of the population, live below the poverty line. This number has doubled by the end of year 2020.

Despite all obstacles and consequences, Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu) has raised funds from across the country and abroad for gender diverse and Hijra people to ensure health support, including mental health, and provided food and cash assistance with safety equipment across the country. Bandhu also formed Humanitarian Task Force (HTF) consisting of 7 members at central level for distributing relief and other supports to the community at the root level with the support of local coordination committees.

In this edition, we have emphasized some of significant achievements of Bandhu for the gender diverse and Hijra community in the pandemic situation. We keenly thank the writers and editorial team for their diligent effort. Also, our earnest thanks to the readers for serving as our stimulation for the publication.
BANDHU: COVID-19 RESPONSE
01 October to 31 December 2020

- Distribution of Relief: 4140 individuals
- Relief ensured through Networking and Communication: 910 individuals
- Mental Health Helpline Counseling: 550 individuals
- Awareness Program: 7,37,716 Listeners
- Safety and Security Services: 1150 Equipment’s distributed
- Doctor’s Helpline: 147 individuals
- Documentation and Monitoring

BANDHU preserved all kinds of reports, pictures, news link and expenditure related information for audit purpose. Besides, BANDHU created a photogallery where all COVID-19 related pictures and other documents are uploaded periodically.
TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP FOR GENDER DIVERSE POPULATION IN CBX

Through programme implementation over the past couple of years, Bandhu witnessed that economic crisis, social harassment, sexual identity and violence are their regular challenges thus restricted the free movements of the community people inside and outside of camp. Considering these, Bandhu believes that there should be an intensive mechanism to support the refugee at local level, therefore with the technical support from UN organizations Bandhu has taken responsibility to form a coalition naming it as Working Group (WG) for effective advocacy initiatives at local level in Cox’s Bazar.

With the continuation of that initiative an Action Plan Workshop took place on 1st October 2020 at Cox’s Bazar at ICSG conference room.

The workshop event started with a welcome remark from Shale Ahmed, Executive Director, Bandhu Social Welfare Society, Chair of the Technical Working Group on Gender Diverse Populations. He shared his gratitude to the participants who were there to take this initiative further. Mr. Shale Ahmed shared the background and objectives of forming this group. He also shared the purpose of the workshop and highlighted the importance of the group for further work.
STUDENT FELLOWSHIP AWARD GIVING CEREMONY

Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu) arranged the Student Fellowship Award Giving Ceremony to recognize the efforts of the students who conducted research around the issues concerning Gender Diverse Population (GDP). The award giving ceremony took place in two phases. A virtual ceremony was held through zoom meeting on 26 November 2020, which was followed by an award handover ceremony at Bandhu’s conference center on 07 December 2020. A total number of 14 students received the fellowship award from three different universities- University of Dhaka (Department of Television, Film and Photography), BRAC University (Department of Law) and State University of Bangladesh (Department of Mass Communication and Journalism).

The purpose of the fellowship program was to acknowledge the efforts of the fellows and build awareness among the stakeholders about the issues concerning Gender Diverse Population. The fellowship program was organized with the aim of providing financial support to the students who conducted research on the issues of Gender Diverse Population. The fellowship award was given to the students who conducted research on the issues of Gender Diverse Population in order to recognize their efforts and contributions.

Mr. Simon Girmaw, Protection Officer from the Protection Sector of UNHCR thanked Bandhu for taking the initiative for this really needed coordination forum. He mentioned, ‘We need to reach out and encourage partners to plan activities or have dedicating programs for this community. Joint responsibility to reach donors, related Working Groups so that this group can achieve the purpose it was made for.’

Ms. Marie Sophie Pettersson, Gender and Humanitarian Action Programme Specialist UNWOMEN and Co-chair of the inter-sector Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group thanked Bandhu for organizing this event and mentioned that the violence against transgender community increased much after Covid-19. They were denied health and other services that need to be addressed.

Granar Marak Team Leader, Light House, CXB said his concern on the acceptance of transgender and different sexual oriented people. He mentioned that, transgender people do not have NID or any other government provided ID also sex work is not permitted. This can be very problematic to include them in programs. In that case we need to be extra careful on the plans what to do.

From there Mr. Shale Ahmed proposed that the participants should divided in three different groups and work with the Action Plan. Different groups will work with different thematic areas. Group 1 (GDP co-ordinations) worked on the group coordination strategies, Group 2 (Advocacy and Research) worked with the Advocacy and Research with the technical working group and Group 3 worked on Mainstreaming GDP. After completing the group work all the findings shared from the groups and some action points were finalized.

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partnership with the students for working together to protect the human rights of the gender diverse population.

LAWYERS FELLOWSHIP AWARD GIVING

Recognize and protect the human rights of the gender diverse population (GDP), Bandhu organized 'Lawyers' Fellowship Award Giving Ceremony' on 2nd December 2020. Ten lawyers received the fellowship opportunity who actively promoted and protected the rights of the gender diverse population (GDP) through legal assistance and service, counselling, support, sensitization program and other initiatives.
The fellowship opportunity was open to the Bandhu Panel Lawyers. After a screening process by jury board, only 10 lawyers received the fellowship opportunity across the country. The objectives of the fellowship programs were to make a bridge between the gender diverse populations and lawyers in order to create a better understanding, ensure legal assistance to the beneficiaries by the fellow lawyers, support the lawyers to promote and protect the human rights of the GDP and create a platform where the fellow lawyers can sensitize the local level stakeholders.

MEETING WITH BAR ASSOCIATION: A GOOD HOPE FOR CHANGE

To address the human rights and rights to justice of this gender diverse groups, Bandhu organized a consultation meeting at Chittagong with Bar Association on November 10, 2020. Bandhu through its substantive works in the area of sexual health and rights of gender diverse population has witnessed numerous complaints of persistent violence, harassment and human rights violations against the communities and the number has been increasing alarmingly in the recent time. Advocate Syed Mokter Ahmed, President, Bar Association, Chittagong was the chief guest and SM Zia Uddin, General Secretary was the special guest.

At the beginning of meeting, Bandhu shared the developments on Hijra issue, Legal Support
mechanism and the initiatives of Bangladesh government for Hijra and Transgender community. Later on, Sima Hijra a young prominent community member, shared her life straggle, social experiences, development and vulnerabilities of Hijra population in Chittagong Area. The BAR members committed to initiate job opportunity for Hijra population in BAR Association. The participants recommended Bandhu to increase the number of panel lawyers so that the support will be increased gradually. They also suggested to distribute the action-based IEC/ BCC materials among the BAR so other lawyers can be sensitized about the Hijra issues and their rights.

BANDHU'S PANEL LAWYERS RECEIVED TRAINING ON NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL LAWS

Lawyers are one of the influential stakeholders in the society who ensures that the rights of Hijra and others gender diversity population are protected and redress appropriately in case of any violations. Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu) by the support of USAID organized a training titled “Training for Bandhu Panel Lawyers on National & International Laws related to SOGI Issues” on 23-24 October, 2020 at Dhaka. The objectives of the training were to increase knowledge among lawyers about
CONSULTATION WITH YOUNG PHYSICIANS ON SOGI ISSUES

Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu) organized a consultation meeting with young physicians at Shaheed Syed Nazrul Islam Medical College and Hospital, Kishoreganj on 8 November, 2020. To promote SRHR and other health issues of community Bandhu initiated this event as a part of their services. Dr. Ehsanul Haque, Director-SSNIMCH attended as chief guest and Dr. Kamal Uddin, Deputy Director, SSNIMCH was present there as special guest. Following the welcome speech of Md. Moshuur Rahman, Manager- Policy and Advocacy, Ms. Umme Farhana Zarif Kanta shared the objectives.

This two-day long training started with an interactive introduction among the participants and followed by the basic concepts of social gender, biological aspect, different between birth and gender, as well as Bandhu’s Legal Support Mechanism, an exclusive session Named "Gender: identity, role and transformation and our responsibilities" was on board for providing clear concept about Gender Diverse community, history of Yogyakarta principles and all the 29 principles discussed in details in the light of Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Constitution of Bangladesh, various policies about international laws, key developments in National, Regional and International area related to the Gender Diversity population, National and International human rights mechanism and international human rights framework focusing on Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and Legal Gender Recognition: Challenges and Way Forward Introduction of human rights and NHRC Bangladesh. After the training, the participants developed an action plan and committed to work on the social and legal acceptance of GDP in divisional level and arrange short awareness session with their local Union porishod chairman, member and word councilor.

national and international laws related to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. A total number of 22 Bandhu Panel Lawyers participated at the Training. The training was facilitated by Advocate Shihab Sirajee-Advocate Supreme court of Bangladesh, M. Rabiu Islam, Deputy Director, National Human Rights Commission, Mohammad Rofiqul Islam Royal-Manager- Training and Counselling, Md. Moshuur Rahman, Manager- Policy and Advocacy and Md Tanvir Islam, Assistant Manager- Legal Support and Security.

শীর্ষাব সিরাজী, জাতীয় মানবাধিকার কমিশনের উপ-পরিচালক এম. রাবিউ ইসলাম, বদুর প্রশিক্ষণ এবং প্রশাসন বিভাগের ব্যবস্থাপনা মোহাম্মদ রফিকুল ইসলাম রায়, পলীসি এবং আইনতাত্ত্বিক বিভাগের ব্যবস্থাপক মোহাম্মদ মশীর রহমান, আইন সহায়তা ও নিরাপত্তা বিভাগের সহ-ব্যবস্থাপক মো: তাহের ইসলাম এই প্রশিক্ষণ পরিচালনা করেন। দুই দিন ব্যাপী এই প্রশিক্ষণে সাধারণ ধারাগুলো যেমন জৈবিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি, জনসংখ্যা এবং জিনসংখ্যা, পাপালফি বদুর আইন সহায়তা ব্যবস্থা ধারণা দেখায় হয়।

‘লিঙ্গ, পরিচালনা, ভূমিকা, রূপান্তর এবং আমাদের দায়িত্বের’ শীর্ষীক একটি বিষয়ে একটি অধিবেশন অনুষ্ঠিত হয় যেখানে জৈবিক বৈচিত্র্যের সাধারণতায়, Yogyakarta principles’র ইতিহাস, জৈবিক মানবাধিকার ও মানুষের সুবিধার অঙ্গদের সর্বমোট 29টি নীতিমালায় বিষয়ে প্রশিক্ষণ আলোচনা করা হয়। এছাড়াও বিজ্ঞাপ্তি আন্তর্জাতিক আইন নীতিমালা, জৈবিক বৈচিত্র্যায়ন মানুষের নিয়ে স্বাধীন, জাতীয় এবং আন্তর্জাতিক পাতার উল্লেখযোগ্য পরিবর্তন, জাতীয় ও আন্তর্জাতিক মানবাধিকার সংক্ষেপ প্রতিযোগিতা নিয়ে আলোচনা করা হয় এই সভায়।

বৈজ্ঞানিক শেষে অন্তর্ভুক্তিকারী কর্ম পরিকল্পনা তৈরী করেন এবং জৈবিক বৈচিত্র্য জনগোষ্ঠীর জন্য আইন ও সামাজিক বৈচিত্র্যগুলো নিয়ন্ত্রণ করতে নিজেদের পরিবেশ এবং স্বাধীন উইন্ডার পরিষেবার চেয়ারম্যান, সদস্য ও পরিচালক কাউন্সিলরের সাথে সচেতনতা গড়ে আলোচনা করার জন্য অধিকারবাদ হয়েছে।
and present situation of transgender community of Bangladesh. Community representative Mx. Rani Chowdhury shared the struggle and challenges of getting health care in transgender community in her session named 'Unheard Voices from the Community'. In the open discussion, participants shared their views and queries towards gender diverse community. Dr. Mumtahina shared that, transgender community are making progress in the beauty industries and mainstream society. It's a good sign for the society.

Dr. Ehsanul Haque Director SSNIMCH in his speech mentioned the current treatment policy of the SSNIMCH. He appreciated Bandhu for its comprehensive approach in trying to help the community. He assured that SSNIMCH will provide discrimination free health care support towards the community. He also addressed that there is a dilemma in the treatment system that whether a transgender person will be treated as male or female and in male ward or female ward. The deputy Director of SSNIMCH wished that a different health care policy including third gender community will be developed and implemented by Government soon. Participants recommended to include some information about gender diverse population in the academic curriculum of Intern Doctors. Finally, the program has ended with the closing remarks by Dr. Emtiaze Mahmud Pathan.

"Unheard Voices from the Community" শীর্ষক অনুষ্ঠানে, বাংলাদেশের মূলধারী রূপান্তরকারী হওয়ার কারণে অন্য শ্রেণীর মাঝে পেতে কি আন্তরিক মুখোমুখি হয়ে থাকে সে ব্যাপার কথা বলেন। এছাড়াও উন্মুক্ত আলোচনায় অংশগ্রহণকারীরা লেখিকার বৈচিত্র্যময় জনগোষ্ঠীর মানুষদের প্রতি তাদের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি দিয়ে কথা বলেন।

চিকিত্সক মুমতাহিনা বলেন, সৌন্দর্য শিক্ষা শাখার মূলধারার সামাজে রূপান্তরকারী ও জিডিও তাদের জয় থেকে বেরিয়ে থেকে এদিনে চলে গেছেন। সমাজের জন্য এটা ধোঁয়া চিকিৎসক একটি পরিবর্তন।

এখন 'আন্তর্ধর' বলতে নীতির বদলে হস্পিটালে বর্তমান চিকিৎসা ব্যবস্থাপনা নিয়ে কথা বলেন। লেখিকা বৈচিত্র্যময় জনগোষ্ঠীর জন্য মেয়ের বিরুদ্ধে উদ্যোগের সাথে জানাতে তিনি। হস্পিটালে বৈষম্যহীন স্থায়ী সেবা নির্মাণ করার অহর্নিহিত করেন তিনি।

তারা, কামাল উদিন বলেন, অহর্নিহিত মেয়েরা ও জিডিও জনগোষ্ঠীর চিকিৎসা সেবা নিয়ে সরকারের পক্ষ থেকে কোন নির্দেশনা ও নীতিমালা আসুক, সেগুলো দ্রুতই হস্পিটালে কার্যকরী হবে।

শিক্ষানবিশ্ব চিকিৎসাকর্মীর পাঠানো লেখিকার বৈচিত্র্যময় জনগোষ্ঠী বিষয়গুলো অন্তর্ধরের পরমাণ দেন সত্যের অন্তর্ভুক্ত চিকিৎসক।
AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ON BREAST & CERVICAL CANCER

To raise awareness on Breast Cancer and Cervical Cancer, Bandhu Social Welfare Society with support from Mama Cash arranged an online consultation meeting under STEP project. Dr. Habibullah, Counselor & Trainer, Cancer Department of Dhaka Medical College started the session with a brief description of Breast Cancer and Cervical Cancer.

Most people are still unaware of breast cancer and cervical cancer in Bangladesh. It is very important to have idea on tumor and cancer. "A tumor is an abnormal growth of body tissue. Tumors can be noncancerous (benign) and can be cancerous (malignant)."- mentioning that he also share some other details about tumor and cancer.

He first shed light on the symptoms of breast cancer and discussed how one can examine and get treatment for breast cancer. He emphasised on getting checkup and treatment on-time. Explaining breast cancer and its treatment he requested everyone to raise awareness on this. He also explained cervical cancer that occurs in the cells of the cervix, the
lower part of the uterus that connects to the vagina. Various strains of the human papillomavirus (HPV), a sexually transmitted infection, play a role in causing most cervical cancer. He shared the signs and symptoms of cervical cancer. He also shared what are the risks factors of causing cervix cancer like many sexual partners, early sexual activity, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Having other STIs - such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis and HIV/AIDS - increases the risk of HPV. A weakened immune system, smoking is associated with squamous cell cervical cancer. One can reduce your risk of developing cervical cancer by having screening tests and receiving a vaccine that protects against HPV infection.

**Roundtable Discussion:**

**Rights of Gender Diverse Population - A Policy Brief**

Bandhu Social Welfare Society and Dhaka Tribune jointly organized a roundtable discussion in association with International Republican Institute (IRI) at Six Seasons hotel Gulshan, Dhaka. Bandhu Social Welfare Society with the support of IRI developed a Policy Brief titled "What About Us: The voices from the people of diverse gender identity in Bangladesh" to ensure human rights of Gender Diverse Community. Taslima Yasmin, Assistant Professor- Department of Law, University of Dhaka developed this policy brief after data analysis from different events, consultation etc.

Many honorable guests from government, national and international organizations were present in the roundtable discussion. Aroma Dutta, Member of...
On 19 November 2020, evening Parliamentarian and prominent human rights activist Ms. Aroma Dutta was present in the occasion of 'Laila Hijra Memorial Award 2020' as the Chief Guest. In the hall room of Bangladesh Girls Guide Association at Bailey Road She hand-over the award to Hijra Guru Ms. Boby. Personally, she will discuss with speaker to make the process fast of Hijra Gender bill. Mx. Boby Hijra won the first 'Laila Hijra Memorial Award 2020' for her contribution in improving the lives of transgender and Hijra community and ensuring their rights & self-acceptance.
This award ceremony was arranged by Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu) on the occasion of Transgender Day or Remembrance. Laila Hijra fought and struggled throughout her life to ensure recognition and health service of Transgender community in Bangladesh, especially in the field of Prevention of HIV/AIDS since the 90’s. She passed away on 2008. To acknowledge and respect her work Bandhu outset this award. More than two-decade Bandhu working to ensure better livelihood, human rights and sexual & reproductive health and services (SRHR) for Hijras and gender diverse community of Bangladesh. This award giving ceremony was chaired by prominent cultural activist and Chairperson of Bandhu Mr. Anisul Islam Hero.

WORLD AIDS DAY 2020
CELEBRATING
"Global solidarity, shared responsibility"-
and locally where approximate 300 people from Bandhu were participated in national program and approximate 355 people were participated to World AIDS Day celebration program at local level on December 1, 2020. At the national level, the program was organized by National AIDS/STI Program (ASP), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, The Peoples Republic of Bangladesh where Mr. Jahid Malek MP, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, The Peoples Republic of Bangladesh was the chief guest. The major features of the observation were standing rally, seminar, HIV testing booth by icddr,b, condom & lubricant distribution including information dissemination at national level. Bandhu actively participated at the national standing rally with more than 300 participants along with partners, community-based organizations; Badhan Hijra Shangha and Shustha Jibon.

A seminar was held on Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Segun Bagicha by ASP where the information about new HIV infection in 2020 and cumulative number were disseminated to the respective participants as well. Meanwhile, total 658 new HIV infected persons have been identified and 141 are dead who are PLHIV.

In the HIV testing booth, there were medical assistants from Jatrabari DIC, Darussalam DIC and Badda DIC who distributed one Hundred HIV testing kits provided by the Government. Additionally, a counsellor and some volunteers of Bandhu worked as HIV testing promoter during the campaign. During the event, there were 62 persons willingly have been come under HIV diagnosis with a view to know their HIV status.
'REJOICE LIFE' A FLAMBOYANT PERFORMANCE BY SATTAYA

9th December 2020 evening, in the main auditorium of the National Museum, a dance program 'Rejoice Life' which covered seven thematic dance performances, was held with the performance of Transgender and Hijra dancers. Artists from Sattaya (Essence of soul), a core cultural group of the Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu), took part in the dance program. Bandhu has formed the cultural group named 'Sattaya' with members of Transgender, Hijra and Gender Diverse Communities. The dance performances of 'Rejoice Life' presented seven thematic dances with Protest against Violence against Women and Gender Diversity, Rights Awareness, Covid-19 Awareness. There is no opportunity to exclude Transwomen, Hijras and Gender Diverse population as they are one of the major victims of gender-based violence in Bangladesh.

Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu) has organized this thematic dance program with the support of the International Republican Institute (IRI) to protest against gender-based violence. For more than two decades, Bandhu has been working to protect human rights, improve
livelihood and ensure health care services for Transgender, Hijras and gender diverse people.

Deputy Inspector General of Bangladesh Police, Habibur Rahman BPM (Bar), PPM, Residential Program Director for Bangladesh, International Republican Institute (IRI), Geoffrey Macdonald, and Director General of the Department of Youth Development, Akhtaruz Zaman Khan Kabir, were present in the 'Rejoice Life' event as distinguished guests.

‘রিজার্স লাইফ’ নৃতাত্ত্বিকে বিশেষ হিসেবে উপস্থিত ছিলেন বাংলাদেশ পুলিশের উপমহাপরিদর্শক হাবিবুর রহমান বিপিএম (বাবর), পিপিএম, আইডিএর আরাওয়ার অফিসার এবং পরিচালক জিওফার ম্যাকডোনাল্ড এবং যুব উন্নয়ন অধিদপ্তরের মহাপরিচালক আখতারুজ জামান খান কোবার।

DOCTOR HELPLINE: COMMEMORATE SERVICE FOR COMMUNITY IN PANDEMIC

40 years old transgender Dola, from Dhaka developed fever with temperature of 102°F at home as well as having dry cough with runny
nose for 2 days during the lockdown period of May in the COVID-19 pandemic year. As belonging from a stigmatized and marginalized community, she was in stress and afraid about her health. She discussed about the condition with a friend of her who has worked as peer educator in BANDHU. She got to know from her friend about the 'Telemedicine/ Doctors helpline service' of BANDHU. She immediately contacted to the number. She was relieved after talking with an experienced physician directly. The physician prescribed some medication to her and also assured that she would get support with the cost of the medicines by BANDHU.

Some more days had passed and she was so weak. She needed get tested for COVID-19 RT-PCR test. But she was again afraid about the fact that as a transgender she would get harassed on hospital premises. So, she consulted about the matter with BANDHU’s helpline and the physician again assured her that no harm will come to her and BANDHU also provided her the money for the testing from home.

After that Dola tested positive for COVID-19. As she was a vulnerable, she needed proper nutrition and hygiene materials to get well from the deadly disease. She earns her living by singing and dancing on wedding and events. On that time BANDHU once again stood up beside her and provided her with the hygiene materials as well as the food reliefs.

Here is how BANDHU is improving life and keeping promises of its beneficiaries in this pandemic situation too.

FIRST TRANSGENDER SENATOR IN US

On November 03, 2020, Democratic nominee Sarah McBride has become the first transgender person elected to the United States senate making her the highest-ranking Trans official in the US. While she joins a handful of other transgender legislators around the country, she is the first transgender person to hold the office of state senator.
While in college at American University, she interned in the Obama White House, becoming the first openly transgender woman to work in the White House in any capacity. She became the first Trans person to speak at a major political convention when she addressed Democrats in Philadelphia in 2016.

Ms. McBride, a Trans rights activist, has played a crucial role in the fight for discrimination protections of Gender Diverse Population in her state of Delaware and has lobbied for the Equality Act to extend protections nationwide.

She released a memoir in 2018, entitled 'Tomorrow Will Be Different', which earned acclaim from Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden.

In a statement, Trans rights activists called Ms. McBride's victory "a powerful reminder that voters are increasingly rejecting the politics of bigotry in favor of candidates who stand for fairness and equality."

Her victory means there are now five Trans state legislators across the US.

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM:
A HUGE COVERAGE
OF BANDHU

Ending gender-based discrimination and violence is a global priority that requires collective action. The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an international campaign that takes place each year. It commences on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December, Human Rights Day,
indicating that violence against women is the most pervasive breach of human rights worldwide.
Every year Bandhu observes 16 days activism to express solidarity and to voice against the violation of human rights. This year, in this critical COVID-19 situation there has been many of sexual abuse and harassment, both online and offline, and domestic violence occurrences. Bandhu feels that 16-Days Campaign is one of the right provisions to raise awareness through online to sensitize the society and call for solidarity and collective standing to ending the violence against women, girls and transwomen.

Bandhu has arranged an online and offline poster campaign against gender based violence on gender diverse population. Online poster campaign has reached more than 35 thousand viewers and offline branding of poster around the country has reached among one lac people.

Bandhu has produced a Video documentary 'ADAMYA (Stalwart)' which is an endeavor to visualize life experience of some community people faced only for their gender identity. This documentary aimed to aware mass population about gender-based violence and create gender sensitive inclusive society.

26 November 2020, jointly with popular Television channel ATN Bangla, Bandhu aired a dance program 'Sattaya'. All the dancers of this program are transgender and Hijras from Sattaya (Essence of soul), a cultural group of the Bandhu Social Welfare Society.

Sattaya also performed in Jashore that organized by Bandhu and Arpon-Jashore. A large number of stakeholders attended the program and through national daily newspapers circulation, the news coverage of the event reached 5 lac people.

International Human Rights Day is observed on 10 December. Bandhu observed this day across the country to celebrate the core theme of this year's Human Rights Day- "Recover Better, Stand Up for Human Rights." To reaffirm the importance of human rights in rebuilding the world during this pandemic, Bandhu has organized different events in different divisional cities on this day.

The key objective of all these initiatives to create mass awareness among general people about gender base violence and make a gender sensitive inclusive society.
ART THERAPY: AN ALTERNATE WAY OF SELF-EXPRESSION

HIM center of Bandhu Social Welfare Society, organized an Art Therapy Workshop aiming the National Youth Day in the Bholananda Night High School premises with the support of a volunteer group of Shahjalal University, Sylhet named Shwapnotthan. The event took place on October 29, 2020.

President Md. Mosaddeq Hassan & lead coordinator Talukder Sumon of Shwapnotthan were present at the programme. Youth link associate Mahfuz Alam from HIM center of Sylhet, Abdul Wohab and miss Shukta, president of Thirdgender Youth Welfare organization, have conducted the event.

The easiest way to express the thoughts is painting, which was the main motive of the program. Expressing the untold thoughts painting is an old process.

In that event 15 working children took part. In the art therapy they were told to depict whatever they have in their minds.

Later a discussion session was held to talk about the paintings. There participants also discussed about mankind, races, gender differences as well.

The volunteer group Shwapnotthan basically works for the wellbeing of deprived, poor & street children, they...
LIFE CHANGING STORY:
SHEWLY HIJRA

I am 45 years old Shewly Hijra, born in Chandnaish, Chittagong. Like any other man in my family, I was born biologically as a man. When I was getting older, my differences continued to grow. After uncountable attempts, I could not change my behavior and disposition nor could I explain my feminine nature to family and society. In return, I got nothing but slander, discrimination and hatred. As a result, I was deprived of my basic rights and education.

The unbearable stigma made me left home in the dark of night and moved to Teknaf, Cox's Bazar to survive. There, I met my guru mother who gave me the courage to pull myself back.

Meanwhile, I started begging but again got people's slander, hatred and being discriminated. Even there is no room for sympathy. One day, I heard about Bandhu office at Kutupalong, Ukhia from a friend of mine who works there for Gender Diverse Population. She told me about Bandhu's health care facilities and a like-minded environment that I could hardly believe. Finally, I went to the Bandhu office with my
STORY OF POLOK

I am Samsul Islam Polok. I finished my BSc Engineering degree a few days ago. I belong to one of the most gender diverse population in Bangladesh. When I was living in despair about my gender identity, when I didn’t have a chance to talk about myself, I found a friend by my side which is Bandhu Social Welfare Society. Here I discovered myself in a new aspect.

From him, I got to know that like every human being Hijras also have sexual feelings from a certain age. But most of Hijras are not aware of that unprotected sex can lead to HIV or Sexually Transmitted Infection or Diseases (STI/STD). I was amazed to his words and thought that everything he said was the subject of our education and correction. From then on, I used to go to my Bandhu office and do whatever I need to know for education. Finally, today I am working as a Link Associate in the Bandhu Office and working for the wellbeing of Hijra/Transgender Community. At present, I know about my rights to my healthcare. I can also talk about my rights and discrimination as well as GBV and SRH in which sector I have been discriminated at different times due to lack of knowledge. Now I am so glad and grateful to Bandhu Social Welfare Society. Before doing job at Bandhu, my livelihood depended on begging and now I am living with dignity and respect. I feel so happy that I’m doing something for my beloved community.


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Bandhu Social Welfare Society made me realize that I am a human being. I have a mentor whom I dearly call Royal Bhai. He has always helped me by giving me advice when I was frustrated. He helped me get fit and gave me the opportunity to work with organizations like Save the Children and the MenEngage Alliance. The project I worked on was Engage Men and Boys Network, a project formed by 43 organizations of which the secretariat is Save the Children, Bangladesh. My mentor has helped me with all the information for applying in this project and throughout the whole process, he kept encouraging and helping me. Today, in the blink of an eye, I am now working as a youth change maker. Like my brother and mentor, I want to build myself as a social worker. I hope Bandhu Social Welfare Society will help me in this process so that I can build myself as a successful representative of Bandhu Social Welfare Society.

WRITERS OF THIS EDITION