



Report on
Advocacy Dialogue on GBV, Trans and Gender Justice



“Strengthening the Feminist Movement to Fight Against Violation of Rights”

Organized by: Nice Foundation

Supported by: FON, CREA

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Venue: Conference Room of Nice Foundation

Date: 19 July 2025

Introduction:

On 19 July 2025, an important Advocacy Dialogue on Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Trans Issues, and Gender Justice was convened, bringing together 27 participants, including lawyers, law enforcement officers, professional groups, service providers, journalists, as well as representatives from the transgender and hijra communities. There was one Hijra and one Trans who participated in the dialogue session. The Program Director of the FON Project, Rabeya Sultana, moderated the dialogue session. The event aimed to deepen understanding, raise awareness, and promote collaborative actions to address the challenges faced by women, trans individuals, hijras, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities in Bangladesh. In addition to this core dialogue, six Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) network conducted seven parallel



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advocacy dialogues with 120 participants in total (20 participants from each CSO). These dialogues further amplified the discussion, focusing on localized challenges and solutions.

The Advocacy Dialogue on Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Trans Issues, and Gender Justice was convened to foster understanding, awareness, and collaborative action among key stakeholders including lawyers, law enforcement officials, professional groups, service providers, journalists, and members of transgender & hijra communities. This initiative aimed to address systemic violence, social stigmatization, and legal challenges faced by women, transgender people, hijras, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities.

Participants:

Total number of participants: 147 (27 from the Nice Foundation and 120 from the 6 CSOs, e.g., Aid Comilla, SKUS, SUVVO, Bonchita, Prerona and WE).

Participant's Category: Lawyers, law enforcement officers, professional groups, local political leaders, service providers, representatives of Hijra & Trans communities, journalists, and Midea personnel.

Objectives of the Dialogues:

- To raise awareness on GBV and gender justice with a focus on transgender and marginalized communities.

- To discuss social, legal, and institutional barriers faced by women, trans persons, and hijras.
- To encourage collaborative advocacy between legal experts, law enforcement, service providers, journalists, and community groups.
- To foster family and community awareness and support for vulnerable groups.
- To promote equal rights and access to services across all gender identities.

Key Discussion and Highlights:

1. Understanding Feminism and Gender Justice:

The Executive Director of Nice Foundation emphasized that feminism is about respecting and supporting women without being anti-men. The dialogue reinforced that gender justice involves equal rights and freedoms for all, including trans and ethnic minority communities. GBV is recognized as an ongoing social issue that manifests in evolving forms due to better communication and awareness. The focal of the FON project, Rabeya Sultana told, “We will discuss GBV and trans issues, and contribute from our respective roles”.

2. Family and Social Awareness:

Advocates stressed the importance of raising family awareness, especially in contexts where boys receive more social and religious recognition than girls or trans children. Social stigmas around transgender births and disabilities require active interventions to foster acceptance and inclusion. Advocate Popy Banerjee mentioned, “Families must become conscious when giving birth to daughters or trans children”. Tamanna from the Hijra community said, “From childhood, families impose a **structure**: ‘You are a boy’, ‘You are a girl’.” Ajonta Das, Secretary, Mohila Parisad, mentioned, “In Bangladesh, women are not treated as human beings, let alone as equal citizens”.

3. Cultural Identity and Community Structures:

Participants from the hijra community described their identity as a distinct culture with hierarchical structures governed by gurus. The differences between transgender individuals and hijras in terms of social mobility and cultural expectations were highlighted. Tamanna (Hijra) said, “Trans individuals live independently; Hijras, however, must follow the instructions of their Guru-Maa (mentor/mother figure in the community).

4. Legal and Institutional Barriers:

Discussions addressed the gaps in inheritance laws, discriminatory marriage customs (especially within Hindu communities), and the need for legal recognition and enforcement of rights for marginalized groups. Ajonta Das, Secretary, Mohila Parisad, said, “In the Hindu community of Bangladesh, Women do not even have rights to their father’s property. Often, even mothers do not want daughters to inherit property”. Advocate Mominul mentioned, “Trans individuals should first be seen as human beings, and then the law should support them”. Mamun Akhtar, Assistant Director, Bangladesh Betar, said, “Even when Muslim men give inheritance to sisters, it is not from the heart”.

5. Economic Empowerment:

The lack of economic opportunities and access to financial services for trans individuals was underscored. Participants emphasized the importance of economic education and inclusion in banking and social welfare programs. Anwar Zahid, Bank Official, mentioned, “Trans people do not have personal savings accounts or access to banks”.

6. Education and Social Services:

Challenges in accessing education and social services for hijras and persons with disabilities were highlighted. Despite some stipend programs, social stigma and exclusion in educational institutions persist. Subroto Biswas, Social service officer, said, “In religious institutions, though equal rights are said to exist, they are not truly accessible to all”. He also mentioned, “Hijras are often not admitted to educational institutions, so how can they receive stipends?”

7. Law Enforcement and Humanitarian Approach:

Police and law enforcement representatives acknowledged the need for a humane approach to gender-based violence cases and the importance of addressing corruption and informal fees that prevent victims from accessing justice. Saidul Islam, a member of the Police, said, “Academic knowledge and legal rules are not enough. We maintain discipline in mosques and temples, but we ignore basic humanity.”



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8. Role of Media and Advocacy:

Journalists present stressed the power of media in promoting gender equality, breaking stereotypes, and supporting social movements against child marriage and discrimination. Journalist Gouranga Nandi also said, "To claim their rights, women must build a fighting spirit from within".

Recommendation:

- Strengthen family and community sensitization programs on gender diversity and inclusion.
- Enhance legal literacy among marginalized groups to empower them to claim their rights.
- Increase access to economic resources and financial services for trans and hijra communities.
- Ensure inclusive education by removing barriers for hijras and disabled persons in schools.
- Promote collaboration between CSOs, law enforcement, and legal professionals for better protection and support systems.
- Encourage media to play a constructive role in shaping public opinion and policy advocacy.

Summary of CSO Network's Advocacy Dialogues:

In parallel to this central dialogue, seven partner CSOs conducted their own advocacy dialogues involving 140 participants (20 from each CSO). These sessions reinforced the key themes of:

- Awareness raising on GBV and gender justice.
- Legal rights and access to justice for marginalized communities.
- Economic empowerment and social inclusion strategies.
- Grassroots community mobilization for sustained change.



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These decentralized dialogues enhanced outreach and created a broader base of informed advocates across various districts and communities.

Conclusion:

The Advocacy Dialogue on GBV, Trans, and Gender Justice successfully brought together diverse stakeholders to discuss pressing issues and identify actionable pathways toward a more inclusive and equitable society. The engagement of legal experts, law enforcement, civil society, and media professionals fosters a multi-sectoral approach necessary for systemic change.

The continuation of these dialogues through our network of CSOs demonstrates a commitment to scaling awareness and advocacy efforts at the grassroots and institutional levels.

Prepared and submitted by:

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