

KNOWLEDGE FAIR 2020 - CONCEPT NOTE

1. Introduction

Share-Net Bangladesh (SNBD) is a knowledge platform focusing on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). Each year, it brings together practitioners, activists, students, academicians, donors, policy makers, media and government officials who are working in the field of SRHR in the biggest **Knowledge Fair on SRHR** in Bangladesh. The SRHR community joins the Knowledge Fair to learn from scientific presentations as well as insightful discussions of the plenary session. They also enjoy the poster displays, stall displays and cultural session. The 5th Knowledge Fair of Share-Net Bangladesh will be hosted **virtually on 6th December 2020**.

The SRHR Knowledge Fair is an event which brings together people working in the SRHR field in one place to provide a space for interacting, learning, creating networks, sharing knowledge and taking critical issues forward. The scientific and poster presentations give the opportunity to individuals for portraying their research and findings in front of professionals. The plenary sessions give space to professionals for discussing critical issues and challenges with possible solutions. This fair is organised every year with the aim of updating the SRHR community with new knowledge.

2. Theme of 2020

The theme of the 5th Knowledge Fair is **'SRHR for Adolescents and Youth'** reflecting the SDG goal 3 - 'Good Health and Well Being'. The context is to ensure healthy lives for adolescents and youth of Bangladesh in terms of their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Our vision is to see a world in the future where men, women or people of other gender will not face any kind of shame, stigma or discrimination regarding their sexual and reproductive health and rights. The first step to achieve this vision is to invest in today's adolescents and youth by giving them the opportunity to raise their issues, to ask questions, and supporting them by fulfilling their demands according to their necessities.

One fifth of the population in Bangladesh are adolescents - about 36 million¹. Adolescence is the most vulnerable period in a person's life, as during this period they go through many changes related to physical and mental growth. However, the cultural context of Bangladesh does not allow them to ask questions about their own bodies, they have no clear ideas from where they can seek services. This leads to adolescents engaging in risky behaviour, such as practicing unsafe sex and wto browse harmful sites in the internet that may misguide them or to provide them wrong/unscientific information about their body and sexual desire. A few adolescent friendly health services are available in Bangladesh but their

¹ National Strategy for Adolescent Health 2017-2030

catchment and awareness both are limited. Therefore, adolescents suffer from lack of information and services and they fail to develop a congenial service seeking behaviour.

SRHR is an essential part of young people's lives. They are in the best position to draw everyone's attention to the most pressing concerns being faced by them, and can offer innovative practical solutions. Share-Net Bangladesh has actively involved with young people through its activities of Youth Hub, Young Researcher Fellowship and a Community of Practice (CoP) Meeting. With the central focus of this year's knowledge fair, we aim to contribute towards improving adolescents' and young people's SRHR by providing more opportunities, which will enable them to know their rights, share their knowledge, and create networks for the improvement of their own SRHR. Shortly, we want to create YOUTHPower!!

(This Knowledge Fair will focus on **adolescents and the youth aged between 11-25 years.**)

3. YouthPower

The 2020 Knowledge Fair, hosted by ShareNet Bangladesh will be about SRHR for Youth and create YouthPower.

It will result in the following outputs:

- Keynote presentation through a plenary session, presentations by scientific researchers in parallel sessions, presentations by young researchers
- Posters from different projects related to SRHR of adolescents and youth
- Summary report of the Knowledge Fair
- On-line Networking opportunities for the public, private and non-governmental organisations

4. Online Activities/Spaces

The day-long knowledge fair will have several major activities

- A virtual opening of the fair
- Plenary session starting with a keynote presentation on the theme YouthPower, SRHR and youth
- Three parallel sessions on Lifestyle, Sexuality and Skills
- An online live space for poster, art, documentary presentation
- A virtual stall exhibition by Share-Net member organisations
- Presentations by winners of the Young Researcher Fellowship
- Cultural sessions
- Closing with an award giving session

4.1. Plenary Session

Topic: SRHR Services for Youth and Adolescents in Bangladesh: Overcoming Barriers, creating youthpower

Adolescents risk falling into a policy and service delivery gap, where their specific health needs and barriers to access are overlooked². Young people in Bangladesh lack sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) information and services, putting them at risk for unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion, and maternal mortality. According to BDHS 2017-18, 28% of Bangladeshi women aged 15–19 have begun childbearing. This translates to a large number of adolescent girls becoming mothers. Then again lack of access to proper information may result in risky sexual activities by the adolescent boys and youths. The absence of open communication has been framed as a problem in previous research initiatives on youth SRHR in Bangladesh. The plenary session will dig out the solutions for these challenges and possible ways for collaboration between government and non-government organisations with the aim to encourage service seeking behavior of youth among others.

4.2. Parallel Scientific Sessions

4.2.1. Parallel Session 1: Life Style

During adolescence Young people undergo physical and mental changes while they are facing more responsibilities in their lives. They sometimes feel uncertain, they undergo bodily and mood changes, as well as they experience sexual feelings. Their new responsibilities, such as marriage, earning money, new feelings such as love towards the other sex, bodily changes, shortly they enter the life of an adult. Some want to try out many new things in life such as smoking cigarettes, drugs, gaming, drinking alcohol, drive a car and because all is new it is difficult to assess what the risks are. The consequences in the SRHR area could be STI's, unhealthy bodies, unwanted pregnancies, early marriages and even suicides. A lack of information about SRHR and access to youth friendly services cause negative consequences such as unsafe abortions/MR, unhappy marriages, gender-based violence etc.

This parallel session focuses on the challenge of what is needed to create a happy sexual and reproductive healthy lifestyle for adolescents and youth. It includes for example information about puberty, nutrition, mental health, digital life and sports for a good physical and mental health, hygiene, contraception, MR and post MR and rights, issues related to GBV, marriage and divorce and places to find all this specific information.

4.2.2. Parallel Session 2: Sexuality

Not only young people, but also parents, teachers, religious leaders consider it as difficult to talk/communicate about sexuality. This is not only a fact in Bangladesh, in many countries it is considered as a taboo to talk about sex and it is surrounded by social myths and misconceptions. So the adolescents and young people do not get the needed proper information about reproductive and sexual health and rights. Although some schools provide Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), teachers are not well trained to inform their students and therefore many adolescents find, not always safe and true information through the internet.

² Weiss, H. A., & Ferrand, R. A. (2019). Improving adolescent health: an evidence-based call to action. *The Lancet*, 393(10176), 1073-1075.

This parallel session focuses on the challenge of how to communicate about these sensitive topics. It will be helpful to share experiences, exchange methods as well as materials to equip youth, parents, teachers and health service providers with powerful tools.

4.2.3. Parallel Session 3: Skills

Young people, on the doorstep to adulthood, need beside a huge quantity of knowledge and information, an enormous amount of skills to be able to manage their upcoming SRHR life in a proper way. So many issues are popping up during this important part of their lives. For example, young people get confronted with lots of stressful situations such as their bodily changes, the first love feelings, the stress to get married, to find a job to contribute to the family's income, to start a new study and meeting lots of new persons, being pregnant during COVID-19 etc.

Therefore, Parallel session three will be a webinar, with a focus on the learning of new skills, divided in social skills and digital skills. The webinar will be divided into three parts. In the first part, three young panelists will share their own thoughts on the problems they experience. Thereafter will be two presentations on skills. The Participants of this parallel session will receive an e-learning experience about social skills or about digital skills. (The third part will be an open floor discussion among the participants, panelists and presenters.)

Social skills will be focused on the management of stressful situations in young people's life: how to defend sexual attacks, how to manage double burdens stressed

Digital skills will be focused on how to protect yourself from digital attacks, where to find the right information on the web, how to use and secure your computer, etc

An expert will be invited to conduct a session on each specific theme so that the young participants can join into a discussion, gather certain knowledge and skills that will help them to address that specific SRHR component in a skillful way that will make them more able-bodied.

5. SRHR Awards

5.1. Introduction

Many individuals are working already for years in the SRHR sector to contribute to the improved sexual and reproductive health and rights for the people of Bangladesh. In order to honour the hard work and dedication of these individuals, for the first time, Share-Net Bangladesh will present an award to one person who is doing extremely good work in the SRHR field. The awardee will be selected by a panel of judges after a rigorous review process on an individual's work, activities, achievements and public contributions in the SRHR sector. The award will be announced and handed over in the closing session of the Knowledge Fair.

The SRHR sector is a vast sector in Bangladesh with people belonging to different age groups, different levels of experience and different areas of expertise (within SRHR). A committee will ensure that the nominated individuals belong to a similar level to make the judgement fair and impartial.

5.2. Selection Process

The following are the options that we can use to get nominees for the SRHR award:

1. We will send emails to the Share-Net member organisations and individuals asking them to nominate a person from their organisation (one nomination per organisation) who made valuable contribution in the field of SRHR, with a strict deadline
2. The selection committee will shortlist/select a pool of nominees from among people who they know have made immense contributions in the field of SRHR. In the next step, one person will be selected as the winner.

5.3. Nomination Criteria

In order to be eligible for nomination, the individual must fulfil the following criteria:

1. The nominee must be a Bangladeshi national
2. Must be working in the rural areas of Bangladesh
3. Must be more than 30 years of age
4. Has more than 5 years of contributions in the SRHR area of Bangladesh: and has clear results/achievements in the SRHR area
5. The nominee could be working/volunteering in an organisation or an individual who contributes towards SRHR
6. The nominee submission should require to have a nomination motivation letter undersigned by 5 colleagues/co-workers/supporters

5.4. Selection Committee

The Selection Committee will consist of 3 experienced individuals from different national organizations working on SRHR issues.

6. Stall Exhibition

Display of knowledge products, project successes, playing activities for adolescents. We are expecting 15-20 stalls from related organisations.

7. Venue

Knowledge Fair 2020 will be a virtual event.