

Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) is the concept of human rights applied to the fields of sexuality, reproductive system, and health for both men and women. In a country where basic requirements such as education, food and shelter are not met with, one's sexuality could very well be at the end of the list of priorities; but should it really?

There are many important predicaments of SRHR that are important to address in order for a person to survive, sustain and flourish in both the public and private spheres of life, to find his or her place in society. Starting from birth control options for a couple to mental health needs of garment workers, to a prisoner's living conditions (both reproductive and health wise), SRHR addresses and ensures many of life's basic fundamentals that are often shoved underneath the rug, in order to deal with other "urgent priorities".

In the context of Bangladesh, SRHR is a relevantly new area that has only been recognised by the government as well as the development sector, the latter putting much more emphasis on it, especially those working towards better living or working conditions. When it comes to minority groups, such as the disabled, SRHR becomes an unexplored territory even though people with disabilities have the same sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs as others. According to the UNFPA, an estimated 10 percent of the world's population –650 million people – live with a disability. In Bangladesh, there is no specific data on the number of disabled people in the country and some results say that it is in between 9 to 16 percent. Further research shows that 50 percent women with disabilities had never married, 72 percent lived with their parents or a sibling and 40 percent reported sometimes being mistreated by their families. The Government of Bangladesh has already taken some legislative steps towards improving situation of the disabled people. But do these steps entail SRHR? The plain and simple answer to that is a big "No" although countries around the world have taken voracious steps to incorporate SRHR needs of those most deeply affected by poverty, the disabled being one of them.

CREA, in association with ASEAN



SRHR FOR THE DISABLED

SYEDA SAMARA MORTADA
ILLUSTRATION: ATHIR RAHMAN

Disability Forum (ADF) has been advocating for disabled people's SRHR rights since the year 2015. Various publications have come out recently on the said topic, noteworthy among them being Sightsavers International's, "Disability and the SDGs: from words to action". Why are the disabled a group in dire need of SRHR rights specifically? Because they have an increased vulnerability to abuse; as one recent study estimated, persons with disabilities have 130 percent more chance of being a victim of violence, mostly domestic violence and sexual violence, than persons without disabilities. The fact that disabled people (and their families) very

often do not attribute SRHR to be a basic need is a problem. Further, challenges persist because of the stigma and discrimination, lack of social attention, legal protection, accessibility of services, understanding and support for this group. The disabled have been an excluded group for centuries now, but they have a lot to offer, to the country as well as its economy; but firstly their need and active presence in society needs to be acknowledged. In this day and age, better treatment, rehabilitation, skill development, income generating, safety net programs that the government promises will not be enough. What we can start by doing is educating the masses

on disability inclusion. More importantly, what we need to do is include the disabled and other minorities and design specific interventions for them when talking about any and all kinds of human rights, while incorporating SRHR. Inclusiveness, be it for sexual or religious minorities, is an important agenda that needs to be addressed, if we want to ensure equality for all that is coincidentally one of the goals of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs). In order to reach this goal by the year 2030, advocacy and creative as well as careful designs will be of utmost importance for SRHR of disabled people.

| AWARENESS |



PHOTO: AP

30

| NUMBERS |

Is the number of fire-fighters who have been killed when a high-rise building collapsed after it caught fire in Tehran on Thursday and injured some 75 people, as stated by the media report. The disaster struck the Plasco building, an iconic structure in central Tehran, just north of the capital's sprawling bazaar. Iran's state-run Press TV announced the fire fighters' deaths, without giving a source for the information. Local Iranian state television said 30 civilians were injured in the disaster, while the state-run IRNA news agency said 45 fire-fighters had been injured. Fire-fighters battled the blaze for several hours before the collapse. Police tried to keep out shopkeepers and others wanting to rush back in to collect their valuables.

Source: AP

PAUL JACKSON POLLOCK

(January 28, 1912 – August 11, 1956)

Paul Jackson Pollock known professionally as Jackson Pollock, was an American painter and a major figure in the abstract expressionist movement. He was well known for his unique style of drip painting. During his lifetime, Pollock enjoyed considerable fame and notoriety; he was a major artist of his generation. Pollock died at the age of 44 in an alcohol-related single-car accident when he was driving. In December 1956, four months after his death, Pollock was given a memorial retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City.

MAD GENIUS



SKETCH: YARIZ SIDDIQUI

“ Every good painter paints what he is.

Abstract painting is abstract. It confronts you. There was a reviewer a while back who wrote that my pictures didn't have any beginning or any end. He didn't mean it as a compliment, but it was.

On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be in the painting.

The modern artist is working with space and time, and expressing his feelings rather than illustrating.”

SOURCE: WIKIPEDIA AND BRAINY QUOTES

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EMPATHY

Last week, when my car was stuck in traffic on the Kakrail road, I noticed two elderly men and a middle-aged man standing over the crossing in-between the two roads. I assumed that they were trying to cross over to the other side. As usual, none of the drivers of those vehicles being driven on that road were slowing down or paying attention to the fact that there were people trying to cross. I saw the middle-aged man manoeuvre himself very cautiously amongst passing cars and reach to the other side of the road. However, the two elderly were unable to follow the younger man as their health did not permit them to walk fast enough. As I was observing all this, the signal changed from red to green, and my car started moving away. Suddenly, I realised that the drivers of our country should be taught to practice empathy more often. Most of us lack this quality, i.e., we do not tend to put ourselves in other people's shoes and try to understand their point of view. These drivers should have asked themselves, "What if I were trying to cross the road? Would I have wished for the cars to slow down? When I grow old, would I have felt scared in such situations?" Once we start considering different perspectives and put ourselves in other people's shoes, I am sure that its benefit would not only reflect on our overall road-system but also throughout our country.

Rasmia Rahman Amreen
Gulshan, Dhaka



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

FRIENDSHIP NEVER DIES

After graduating from Dhaka University (DU), one of my close friends Masud had joined a private bank for sometime and was posted in Dhaka. For sometime, we had lost contact and were not in touch. About a year back, another classmate and friend from DU informed me that both of Masud's kidneys were diagnosed to be damaged. The news came as a shock for his family and friends. Masud was brought up in a middle class family who hardly had the means for providing for his expensive treatment. Within a few days, his health deteriorated and was put under dialysis, twice every week. It was a horrible experience for Masud. We, the Dhaka University friends, really wanted to do something for Masud and ensure his recovery. So, we decided to inform all of our friends about Masud's condition and appealed for financial help through facebook and over the phone. Friends from DU Political Science department wholeheartedly offered their generosity and helping hands. I, along with some other friends took the initiative and knocked all of our other friends to help save Masud. All of us were determined in our cause to support Masud financially. We approached our relatives and acquaintances too and collected a sum of money. We had overwhelming responses from our ex-classmates as well. Due to the non-stop efforts from our friends, we managed to collect a hefty sum of Tk. 4 lac 30 thousand. We handed over the money to Masud. He was elated, but not just for the money, also for the love we hold for him. We were pleased and thankful to the Almighty thinking that we had indeed stood by our friend in his troubled time.

Masud is now a teacher of the MM College in Jessore. We hope and pray that after getting well, Masud will enlighten his students and the society again.

Md Zonaeed Emran
A Banker