

Beyond Binaries: Heal & Connect-A Journey of Care and Solidarity

This project was carried out by GenEquity through the APTN Amplify Trans Advocacy Fellowship to support trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse community leaders in Bangladesh. Through a two-day in-person workshop and an online follow-up session, we created a safe space for learning, sharing experiences, and building connections. The project focused on leadership, community safety, peer support, and responding to crisis situations. Participants worked together to map support services such as legal aid, healthcare, mental health support, shelter, and protection. Most importantly, the project helped reduce isolation, build trust, and strengthen solidarity, supporting more caring, sustainable, and trans-led community advocacy.

Hi, my name is Trishaan. I am a transmasculine person from south Asia, and this story comes from my experience as a fellow of the APTN, Amplify Trans Advocacy Fellowship 2024-2025.

I want to share a journey that started when I began working closely with trans, non-binary, and sexual gender-diverse community members through a small but meaningful project. The project was implemented in Dhaka, but the feelings and struggles behind it are shared by many trans people across the country.

This topic is important to me because I have seen how lonely activism can be. Many of us work for our communities while carrying our own pain, fear, and exhaustion. I wanted to help create a space where people did not have to be strong all the time where they could talk, learn, and support each other honestly. That is how this journey began.

My seed grant project titled as **Beyond Binaries: Heal & Connect**, which was proposed from a simple need: trans people need spaces of care, not only spaces of resistance. When participants first arrived, many were quiet and unsure. Some had never been part of a space where their identities were respected without explanation or judgment. As the sessions unfolded, people slowly began to speak about family rejection, lack of healthcare, fear in public spaces, leadership struggles, and burnout from activism. One of the most powerful moments came when participants shared why they became activists. Many said they were fighting not just for themselves, but for those who came after them. Hearing these stories together helped people realize they were not alone. We also had honest conversations about challenges within our own community organizations. People spoke about conflict, lack of transparency, limited resources, and emotional exhaustion. These discussions were difficult, but they allowed us to imagine healthier ways of working based on trust, accountability, and shared leadership.

The second day focused on peer support and crisis care. This part was deeply emotional. One participant spoke about self-harm, and the room became very quiet. Together, we learned how to listen with care, how to support without judgment, and how to refer someone to professional help when needed. We also mapped available services like legal aid, healthcare, mental health support, shelter, education, and emergency protection.

What stayed with me most was how connections formed naturally. Participants exchanged contacts, checked in on each other, and talked about working together instead of competing. From this, a small solidarity network began to grow. As a trans man, this experience reminded me that leadership is not about control, it is about care. It is about creating spaces where people feel safe enough to be honest.

Beyond Binaries: Heal & Connect reminded me that change does not always begin with loud protests or big plans. Sometimes it begins with a room, a few people, honest conversations, and the courage to care for one another. When trans people are allowed to breathe, share, and be held by community, something powerful happens, we stop surviving alone and start moving forward together.

If there is one thing I carry from this journey, it is this: Care is not the end of the work, it is the beginning. When we choose connection over isolation, we create hope not only for ourselves, but for those who come after us.