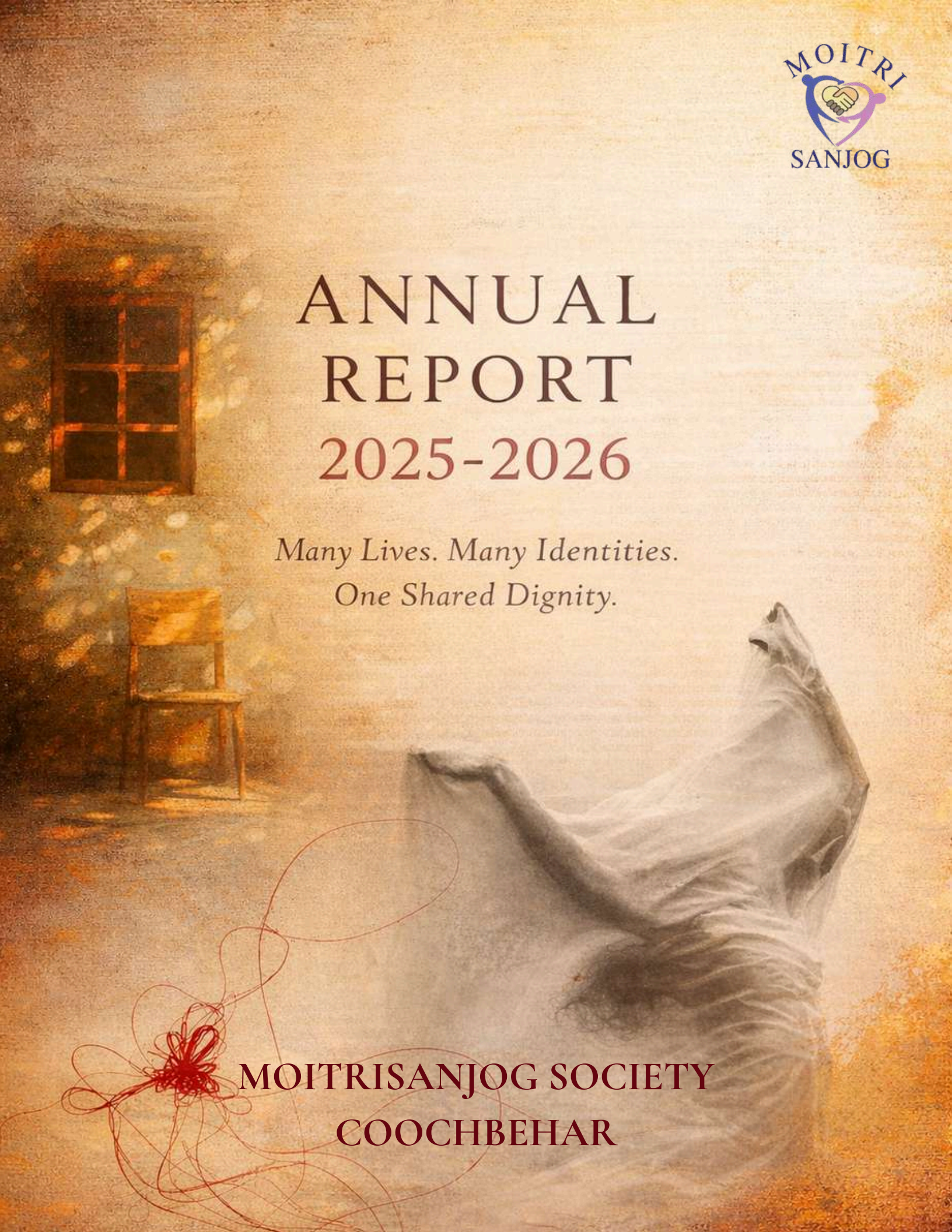


ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

*Many Lives. Many Identities.
One Shared Dignity.*



MOITRISANJOG SOCIETY
COOCHBEHAR



Over the past year, Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar has continued to engage deeply with communities through a range of interventions grounded in dignity, inclusion, and social justice. Our work has spanned emergency humanitarian response, psychosocial care, legal awareness, cultural engagement, and livelihood development—each initiative shaped by the lived realities of those we serve.

In the aftermath of crisis, particularly during flood relief interventions, our psychosocial efforts underscored a critical truth: recovery is not only material but emotional. Through counselling, safe spaces, and sustained community engagement, we have sought to address trauma, rebuild trust, and restore a sense of belonging among individuals navigating loss, displacement, and uncertainty.

At the same time, our focus on legal awareness—including engagement around the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) framework and its evolving amendments—has been central to strengthening access to rights and justice. By demystifying legal processes and promoting informed participation, we have worked to ensure that identity is recognised not as a point of contestation, but as a protected and affirmed reality.

Initiatives such as the Gender Mela have created meaningful spaces of visibility and dialogue, where identity is not only acknowledged but celebrated. These platforms have helped challenge entrenched stigma while fostering solidarity, cultural expression, and collective confidence within the community.

Across all our programmes—whether through Gurukul’s child-centred initiatives, livelihood training efforts, cultural interventions, or advocacy platforms—the thread that binds our work is a commitment to inclusion that is both practical and empathetic. We recognise that access without sensitivity remains incomplete, and that true empowerment lies in creating environments where individuals feel seen, heard, and valued.

What we have witnessed over time is not only the persistence of structural challenges, but also the remarkable resilience and strength within communities. These experiences continue to inform our approach, reminding us that sustainable change emerges through trust, continuity, and collective participation.

As we look ahead, Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar remains committed to deepening its engagement, strengthening grassroots leadership, expanding pathways to rights and services, and nurturing spaces that are free from discrimination and rooted in equity. Our journey is guided by the belief that dignity, equality, and justice are not aspirational ideals, but fundamental entitlements that must be realised for every individual.

Arindam Das (Sumi)

Acknowledgement

Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar expresses its sincere gratitude to all partners, collaborators, and supporters whose contributions have been instrumental in the successful implementation of our initiatives.

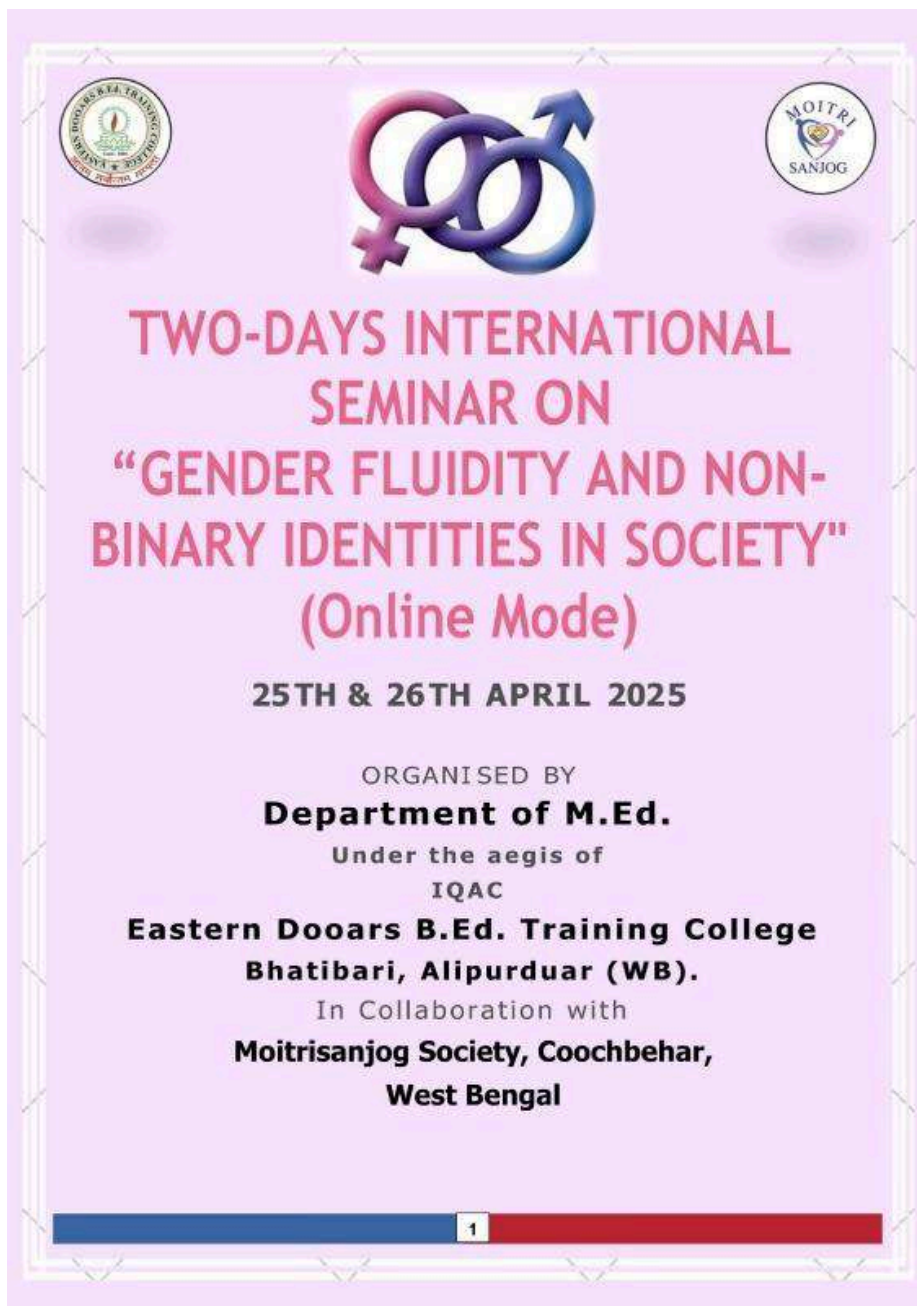
We extend our heartfelt thanks to Mariwala Health Initiative and Avaazein Foundation for their continued support in strengthening our psychosocial interventions and community-based programmes. We are also grateful to The Humsafar Trust for its valuable contribution towards livelihood and empowerment initiatives for transgender and marginalized communities.

We acknowledge the cooperation and guidance of the District Administration and concerned government officials, whose support has been crucial in facilitating effective outreach and programme implementation.

We further recognise the efforts of our ally organisations, community volunteers, and Human Warrior for their commitment and collaboration in advancing inclusive, rights-based work.

Finally, we sincerely thank our individual donors and well-wishers for their generous contributions, which have helped sustain and expand our initiatives.

Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar remains deeply appreciative of this collective support, which continues to strengthen our mission of promoting inclusion, dignity, and equitable access for all.



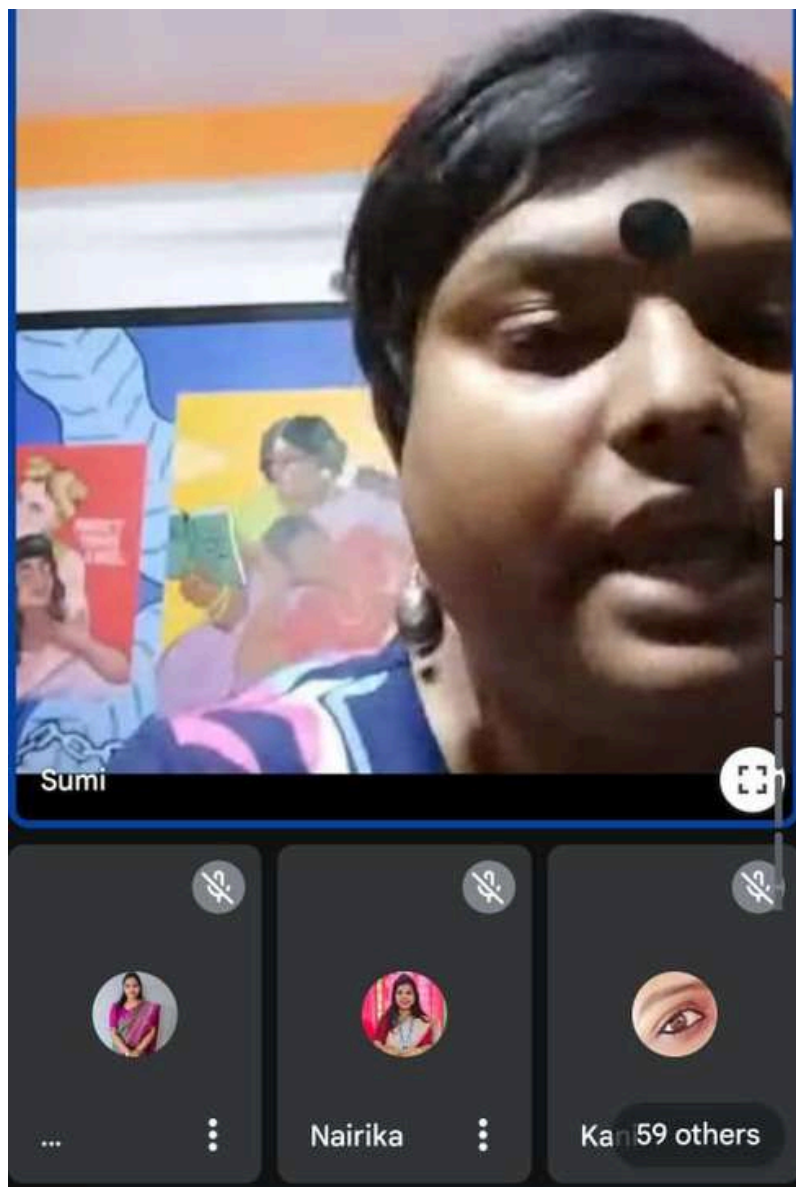
PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

THEME: GENDER FLUIDITY AND NON-BINARY IDENTITIES IN SOCIETY

DATE: 25-26 APRIL 2025

VENUE: EASTERN DOOARS B.ED. TRAINING COLLEGE, ALIPURDUAR (ONLINE MODE)

Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar participated in a two-day International Seminar on "Gender Fluidity and Non-Binary Identities in Society", organized by the Department of M.Ed., Eastern Dooars B.Ed. Training College. The seminar served as an important platform to discuss evolving perspectives on gender identity, with a focus on non-binary experiences in the Indian context.



Contribution of Moitrisanjog Society
Ms. Sumi Das, Founder of Moitrisanjog Society, was invited as a speaker and presented on “Non-Binary Identities in Rural vs Urban Contexts.” Her session highlighted the contrast between rural invisibility and urban visibility of non-binary identities, drawing on field experiences and gender theories.

She emphasized:

Gender as a fluid and socially constructed spectrum

Greater visibility and partial inclusion in urban spaces

Continued marginalization and lack of support in rural areas

The role of caste, class, and geography in shaping lived experiences

She also shared the organization’s grassroots work, including community awareness, school sensitization, mental health support, and advocacy for inclusive policies.

Seminar Highlights

The seminar brought together scholars, educators, and activists from across India and abroad, offering multidisciplinary perspectives on gender, education, and social inclusion. Participants from multiple states contributed to a diverse and engaging dialogue.

Conclusion

The seminar strengthened knowledge exchange and reinforced the need for inclusive approaches in education and community development. Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar remains committed to advancing gender inclusion through grassroots engagement, advocacy, and capacity building, ensuring that non-binary identities are recognized and respected across both rural and urban spaces.





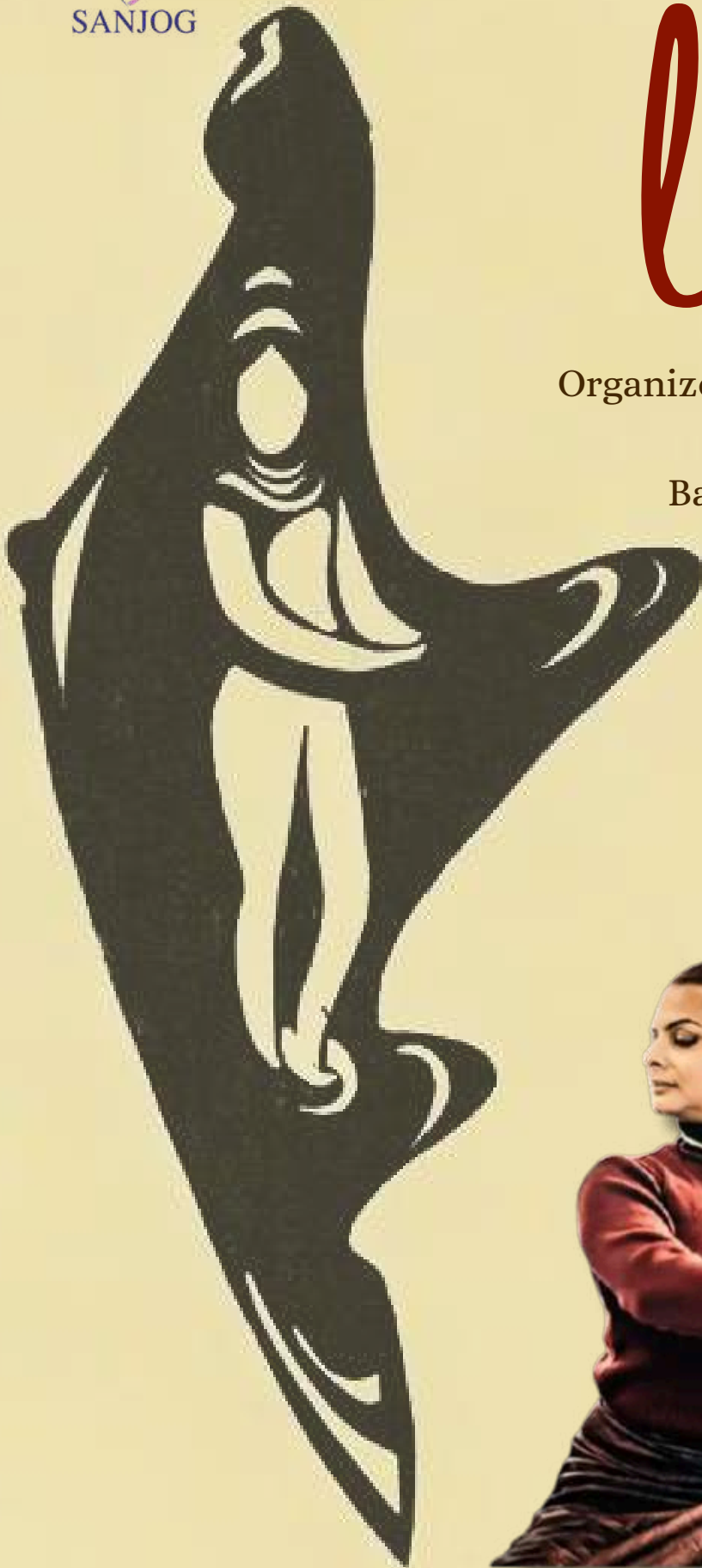
Chronicles *of* Love

Organized by Moitrisanjog Society

8th May, 2025

Basarhat, Cooch Behar

3:30 PM



Chronicles of Love

Date: 8 May 2025 | Venue: Basarhat, Cooch Behar

Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar organized Chronicles of Love, a cultural and community event celebrating identity, love, and inclusion beyond gender binaries. Inspired by the works of Rabindranath Tagore and Rituparno Ghosh, the programme created a safe space for expression, dialogue, and visibility for the LGBTQ+ community.

Participation

The event brought together community members from Cooch Behar and Alipurduar, along with representatives from the Women Cell, local Panchayat, activists, youth, and local leaders.

Key Highlights

Cultural Performances: Poetry, dance, and performance art explored themes of identity, love, and resilience.

Community Dialogue: Open discussions highlighted lived experiences of stigma, exclusion, and mental health challenges.

Advocacy & Engagement: Emphasis on mental health, inclusive cultural spaces, and sensitization of local institutions.

Outcomes

Created a safe and affirming platform for LGBTQ+ voices in rural communities

Increased awareness on mental health and identity-related challenges

Strengthened dialogue between community members and local stakeholders

Encouraged cultural expression as a tool for healing and advocacy

Fostered a sense of belonging, confidence, and community solidarity

Conclusion

The event went beyond a cultural gathering, emerging as a platform for awareness, empathy, and empowerment. It reinforced Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar's commitment to building inclusive spaces and amplifying marginalized voices.

Chronicles of Love

Community Dialogue: Voices from the Margins

A key highlight of the programme was the open community dialogue, which provided a safe and inclusive space for LGBTQ+ individuals—particularly from rural Cooch Behar and Alipurduar—to share their lived experiences.

Participants spoke about challenges such as rejection, isolation, and emotional distress, often within their own families and communities. Many expressed fear in openly sharing their gender identity or sexual orientation due to stigma, discrimination, and limited institutional support.

Mental health emerged as a major concern, with discussions around depression, anxiety, and emotional trauma. Some participants shared personal journeys of healing, emphasizing the need for accessible mental health services and stronger community-based support systems.

The dialogue also highlighted the importance of cultural expression—through art, dance, and writing—as a means of healing and self-affirmation. Younger participants particularly stressed the need for inclusive cultural spaces in rural areas to nurture identity and pride.

In addition to sharing challenges, participants offered practical suggestions, including sensitization of local authorities and educators, development of peer counselling networks, and organizing more inclusive public events.

The presence of representatives from the Women Cell and Panchayat enabled constructive engagement, with officials expressing support and commitment to raising these issues at relevant platforms.

STREET THEATRE AWARENESS PROGRAMME ON SCHOOL DROPOUT

Organised by: Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar
Location: Cooch Behar



Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar conducted a street theatre awareness programme to address the issue of school dropout among children from vulnerable and marginalized communities. The initiative aimed to engage the public directly by using creative expression as a tool for awareness and social change.

Objective

To highlight the causes and consequences of school dropout
To sensitise the community on the importance of education
To encourage collective responsibility in preventing children from leaving school

Activity Description

The programme featured a street drama performed in a public space, drawing the attention of local residents and passersby. The performance depicted real-life challenges faced by children who are forced to discontinue their education due to poverty, discrimination, family pressure, and lack of institutional support. The actors used expressive storytelling, dialogue, and emotional engagement to portray the struggles of affected children and the long-term impact on their futures. The open setting enabled direct interaction with the audience, making the message more relatable and impactful.



Community Response

The street performance successfully captured public attention, with many people stopping to watch and engage with the issue. The audience showed strong emotional connection with the narrative, leading to reflection and informal discussions around the importance of education and community support.

Outcome

- Increased awareness about the issue of school dropout among local communities
- Encouraged dialogue on supporting children's education
- Strengthened community understanding of the social and economic factors leading to dropout
- Reinforced the role of collective action in ensuring children remain in school

Conclusion

The street theatre initiative proved to be an effective medium for raising awareness and mobilising community engagement. By taking the message directly to the streets, Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar successfully highlighted the urgency of addressing school dropout and emphasized the need for shared responsibility in protecting children's right to education.



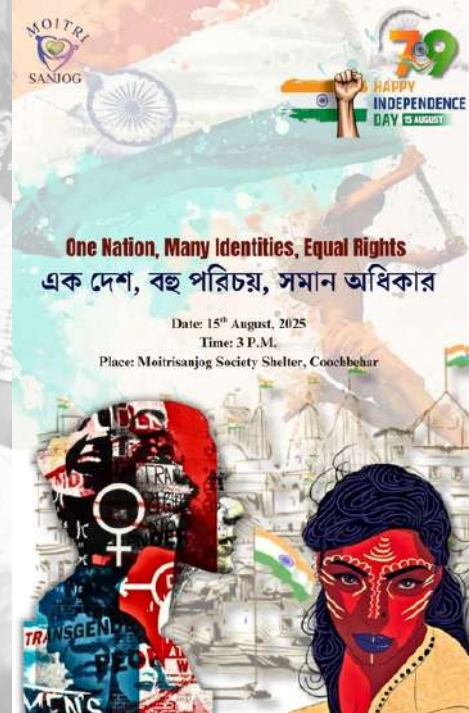
INDEPENDENCE DAY OBSERVANCE

Theme: One Nation, Many Identities, Equal Rights

Organised by: Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar

Location: Moitrisanjog Society Shelter, Cooch Behar

Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar commemorated the 79th anniversary of India's Independence with a programme centred on equality, dignity, and justice for all. The event reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to inclusive rights, irrespective of gender identity, social status, or economic background.



Programme Highlights

The programme featured a legal awareness session delivered by Advocate Sourav Das, Cooch Behar Court and Founder of Cooch Behar Law Coaching Centre. His address focused on the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act and related legal safeguards, enhancing participants' understanding of protections against discrimination.

He also addressed common misconceptions surrounding the National Register of Citizens (NRC), providing factual clarification and reducing fear and confusion within the community. The session proved highly informative and empowering for participants.

Sumi Das, representing Moitrisanjog Society, reflected on the nation's 79-year journey of independence while highlighting the ongoing challenges faced by marginalised communities. Particular emphasis was placed on economic vulnerability and the urgent need for sustainable livelihood opportunities.





Resource Distribution

As part of the initiative, a Bengali-language booklet was distributed among participants. The booklet included key information on transgender rights, legal protections, available remedies, and advocacy points, ensuring accessible and practical knowledge for community members.

Outcome

Increased awareness of legal rights and protections among participants

Clarification of misinformation related to NRC

Strengthened confidence in accessing legal remedies

Enhanced understanding of the need for economic empowerment and livelihood support

Promotion of inclusive dialogue on equality and citizenship

Conclusion

The programme served as a meaningful platform to connect the spirit of independence with the ongoing struggle for equal rights and dignity. Moitrisanjog Society Cooch Behar continues to work towards a future where every individual can live with freedom, security, and equality under the law.





MOITRISANJOG SOCIETY
COOCHBEHAR

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Website: www.moitrisanjog.org

A **TRANSGENDER-LED** COACHING
CENTER FOR ALL CHILDREN.





Moitrisanjog Society Gurukul celebrated Holi with vibrant enthusiasm, creating a safe, inclusive, and joyful space for children and community members. The celebration reflected the true spirit of the festival—unity, love, and new beginnings—while upholding values of equality and dignity for all.

At Gurukul, Holi was observed as a gender-fluid and discrimination-free celebration, where individuals were free to express themselves without fear or judgment. The event promoted inclusion across gender identities, ensuring that every child and participant felt seen, respected, and valued.

The celebration also emphasized harmony beyond religious and social boundaries. Participants from diverse backgrounds came together, reinforcing the belief that festivals belong to everyone.

Children participated in playing with colours and group activities, sharing moments of happiness in a nurturing environment. The atmosphere encouraged confidence, emotional safety, and a strong sense of belonging.

Through this initiative, Moitrisanjog Society Gurukul reaffirmed its commitment to building an inclusive and discrimination-free space where every child can celebrate with joy, dignity, and acceptance.







Support Services for HIV-Affected Older Hijra Community Members

Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar implemented a six-month targeted intervention supporting 11 HIV-affected older persons facing severe social isolation, poor health, and complete economic dependency. The programme focused on ensuring access to nutrition, healthcare, mobility, and psychosocial well-being.

Key Interventions

1. Nutritional Support

All 11 beneficiaries received monthly ration support throughout the six months, ensuring uninterrupted food security and improved adherence to ART treatment.

2. Transportation Support

Free transportation support was facilitated in collaboration with NBSTC, enabling beneficiaries to access hospitals and ART centres without financial burden.

3. Healthcare Advocacy

A total of 8 advocacy and coordination meetings (1–2 per month) were conducted with government hospitals and ART service providers to promote non-discriminatory and inclusive healthcare practices.

4. Mental Health & Counselling

Counselling services addressed anxiety, trauma, and social isolation. Sessions increased from 6 in Month 1 to 12 in Month 6, indicating growing trust and engagement.

5. Medicine Support (Field Outreach)

Medicine delivery support increased from 5 cases in Month 1 to 8 cases in Month 6, ensuring uninterrupted treatment for beneficiaries with mobility challenges.

6. Feedback & Review Meetings

Two structured feedback meetings were conducted, allowing beneficiaries to share challenges, emotional concerns, and service gaps, strengthening programme responsiveness.



Monitoring Data (6-Month Overview)

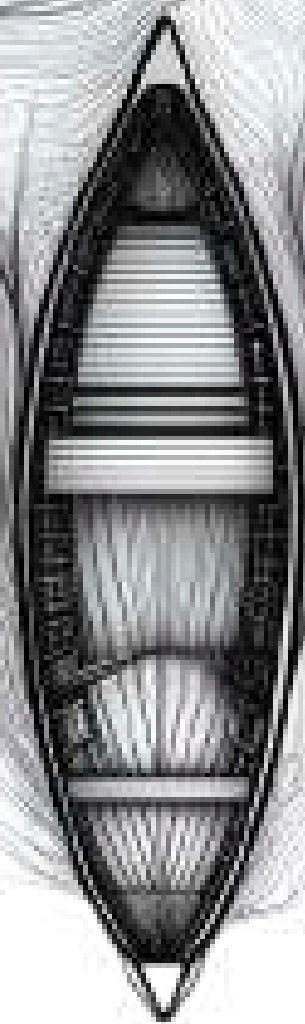
Over the six-month period, the monitoring data reflects both consistency in service delivery and a gradual increase in service utilisation, indicating growing trust and need among beneficiaries. All 11 individuals received uninterrupted monthly nutritional support throughout, ensuring food security and supporting treatment adherence. Counselling sessions showed a steady rise from 6 sessions in the first month to 12 sessions by the sixth month, highlighting increased acceptance of mental health services and the growing importance of psychosocial care among ageing HIV-affected persons. Similarly, medicine support through field outreach increased from 5 cases in the first month to 8 cases by the end of the period, reflecting heightened dependency due to mobility challenges and remote living conditions, while also ensuring continuity of ART treatment. Advocacy and coordination meetings with healthcare institutions were conducted consistently, ranging from 1 to 2 meetings per month, contributing to improved dialogue and promoting non-discriminatory, inclusive healthcare practices. Overall, the data demonstrates a stable foundation of essential support combined with increasing engagement in mental health and healthcare services, underscoring the programme's effectiveness in addressing both immediate needs and long-term care requirements.

Impact

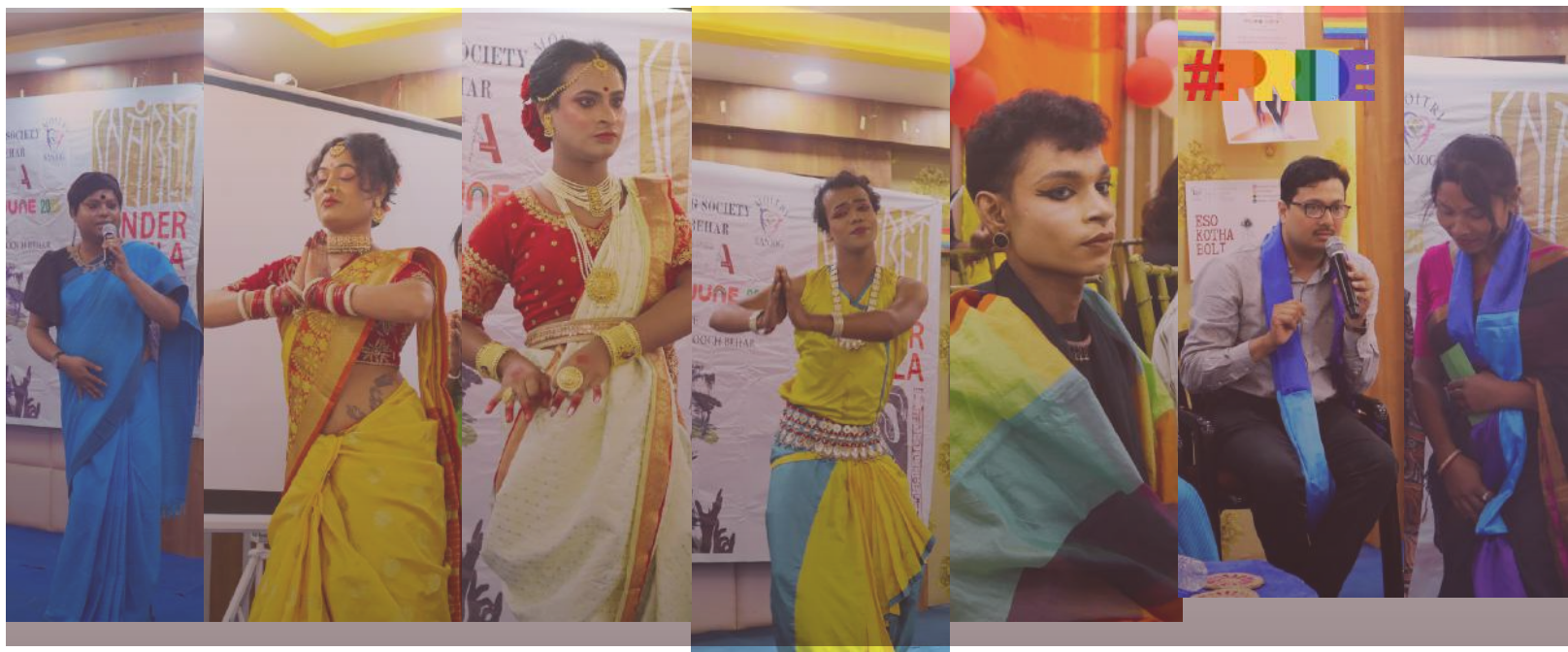
The intervention stabilized the lives of highly vulnerable older persons living with HIV. Beneficiaries who previously avoided healthcare services began accessing ART centres, engaging with counsellors, and reconnecting socially. The programme reduced risks of treatment interruption, malnutrition, and psychological distress, while building trust and dignity.

Conclusion

The data clearly demonstrate that the intervention effectively addressed both immediate needs (nutrition, treatment access) and systemic barriers (stigma, discrimination, isolation). Continued support is essential to sustain these outcomes, prevent health deterioration, and strengthen an inclusive, community-based care system for HIV-affected older persons..



GENDER MELA 2025





PRIDE MONTH



BE YOURSELF

Organized by

**MOITRISANJOG SOCIETY
OF COOCHBEHAR**

Supported by



Mariwala
Health
Initiative



MOITRI
SANJOG

LBGTQ #Pride JUNE 2025

VENUE

HOTEL JONAKI, COOCH BEHAR



GENDER MELA



Namaskar and heartfelt greetings to everyone gathered here,
It is an honour and a profound joy to welcome you all to Gender Mela 2025, on behalf of Moitrisanjog Society. Today, we open not just a festival—but a space of belonging, reflection, and collective courage.

Gender Mela 2025 is not simply an event—it is a declaration. A bold, compassionate stand that says: our lives, our identities, our histories, and our aspirations deserve recognition, celebration, and justice. In marking this Pride Month, we do more than raise flags—we uplift each other's truths, pay homage to those who walked before us, and reaffirm our shared vision of a future rooted in safety, dignity, and joy for all queer and trans people—regardless of geography, gender, or class.

This Mela is a living expression of healing, creativity, resistance, and community care. It has been lovingly shaped to reflect the vibrant realities of queer and trans lives across North Bengal. Through storytelling, performance, art, and dialogue, we are not only expressing who we are—we are healing wounds, reclaiming narratives, and building solidarity. At its heart, Gender Mela 2025 embodies pride with purpose. It brings together the urgent conversations around mental health, the economic and cultural contributions of queer artisans, the power of grassroots activism, and the need for accessible, affirming spaces that honour every person's right to rest, to be heard, and to be safe.

This space also holds sacred the memory of those we have lost—to violence, rejection, neglect, and silence. Let us carry their memories with care, and let our presence here speak for them: we remember, we resist, and we rise.

To each artist, organiser, volunteer, speaker, and participant—thank you. Your presence is not only valuable—it is vital. In showing up, you are helping to weave a larger, more compassionate fabric of community and change.

As we begin these two days of connection, creativity, and collective movement, let us commit ourselves to what this Mela represents. May we take its spirit of inclusivity, resilience, and radical love back with us—into our homes, collectives, streets, and daily lives.

May Gender Mela 2025 be more than a gathering—may it be the seed of lasting transformation, rooted in justice, care, and queer liberation.

In solidarity, gratitude, and hope,

Sumi Das

For Moitrisanjog Society

Coochbehar, June 2025





“Living on the Edge: Gender, Mental Health & Inclusivity in Contemporary India”

Event: Gender Mela 2025

Date & Venue: June 2025, Coochbehar

Overview:

As part of the vibrant and socially conscious programming at Gender Mela 2025, the panel “Living on the Edge: Gender, Mental Health & Inclusivity in Contemporary India” brought together three powerful voices—Rima Bose, Anupam Mitra, and Sajida Parveen—each illuminating critical and often neglected intersections of gender, queerness, and systemic marginalization in India. Moderated by Sumi Das, the session was both reflective and forward-looking, urging structural reform and empathetic engagement at every level of society.



Moderator’s Opening Remarks – Sumi Das:

Chairing the session, Sumi Das opened with a thoughtful reminder that while legal and cultural landscapes around gender and mental health are shifting in India, true change remains incomplete without centering the lived experiences of those at the margins. “Living on the edge,” she said, “is not a metaphor—it is a daily reality for many gender-diverse individuals in India. Our role is to listen, amplify, and push for a world where the edge no longer feels like exile.”

She emphasized the importance of intersectionality in any conversation around inclusivity—reminding the audience that gender, mental health, and class are not separate silos but overlapping terrains where identity and struggle intertwine.

Speaker 1: Rima Bose – Gender Inclusivity in the Indian Context

Rima Bose laid the foundation by tracing the historical presence of gender-nonconforming communities in India, arguing that any meaningful discourse on inclusivity must begin by reclaiming and respecting these indigenous narratives. She critiqued the dominance of western frameworks in Indian gender discourse, noting how they often overlook or erase the resilience and traditions of communities like the hijra and kinnar.

“Inclusivity,” she asserted, “cannot be borrowed—it must be grown from within our own soil.”

Rima called out the institutional barriers that continue to marginalize queer and trans people, stressing the need for reforms in education, healthcare, and employment that move beyond tokenism and actually redistribute access and power. Her presentation was a call to dismantle structural exclusion and to amplify grassroots resistance already underway.





Speaker 2: Anupam Mitra – Mental Health and the Queer Experience

Anupam Mitra's session brought attention to the mental health crisis facing LGBTQ+ individuals, especially in rural and semi-urban settings. He described how "social mental health crises" are created not by individual weakness but by collective abandonment, family rejection, and systemic neglect.

"Being unseen, unloved, and unsafe in your own society," he said, "is a kind of violence that leaves deep psychological scars."

He argued that while therapy is vital, it is insufficient unless matched with affirming communities and systemic transformation. Anupam advocated for training mental health professionals in queer-affirmative practices and making services geographically and economically accessible. He concluded with the powerful reminder: "There's no wellness without justice, and no care without inclusion."



Speaker 3: Sajida Parveen – Labour Movements and Daily-Wage Rights

Drawing from her years of grassroots activism, Sajida Parveen focused on the invisibilization of queer individuals in the labour economy. She pointed out that while women and queer people often make up significant portions of the daily-wage workforce, they remain ignored in both policy discussions and union spaces.

"Development cannot speak only in economic terms," she said. "It must speak the language of dignity, of representation, of rights for all."

Sajida called for an inclusive model of labour rights that recognizes the complex identities of workers. She pushed for unions and worker collectives to evolve in their understanding of gender and sexuality, ensuring that queer and trans voices are heard, protected, and empowered in all sectors.

Moderator's Closing Reflections – Sumi Das:

In her closing comments, Sumi Das highlighted the thematic convergence of the three speakers—each revealing how systemic erasure operates across different spheres, whether historical, psychological, or economic. She praised the panel for "not just pointing out the gaps, but showing us where bridges already exist, and where we must build more."

She concluded with a call to action:

"If we want an India that is truly inclusive, then we must reimagine every structure—our schools, clinics, workplaces, and movements—through the lens of equity, empathy, and lived experience. Listening is not enough. It's time to act."





Tejaswini Samman 2025 Honours Mithu Das: A Journey from Marginalisation to Motherhood

Born in Tapsikhata village of Alipurduar district, Mithu Das has lived a life shaped by resilience, compassion, and quiet revolution. Assigned male at birth and identifying as feminine, she faced rejection from her own family for embracing her true identity. Cast aside and left to fend for herself, Mithu found refuge among folk music groups in Alipurduar and later survived by begging on trains—an unfortunate reality for many in the transgender community, pushed to the fringes of society. It was during these difficult times that Mithu encountered a heartrending situation: a family preparing to sell their two young daughters, aged just six months and one and a half years, simply because they were girls. Moved by the injustice, Mithu stepped in and adopted both children, refusing to let them be discarded by a world that failed to value them.

That act of profound love and defiance marked a turning point—not just in their lives, but in Mithu's own. She left behind the precarious life of begging, purchased a small plot of land, began farming, and eventually opened a modest grocery shop. Today, her daughters live in a safe, loving home, and are attending school—thriving under the care of a mother who rebuilt her world from the ground up.

In recognition of her fearless determination, her commitment to dignity, and her unwavering compassion, the Moitrisanjog Society is proud to confer the **তেজস্বিনী সম্মান ২০২৫** (Tejaswini Samman 2025) to Mithu Das.

The award was formally presented by Dr. Pompi Bhattacharya, President of Citizens for Justice in Cooch Behar, in the presence of Sumi Das.

Mithu's story is a powerful reminder that strength comes in many forms, and that true courage lies in choosing compassion when the world offers none.



Moitrisanjog Society
www.moitrisanjog.org



তেজস্বিনী সম্মান ২০২৫

TEJASWINI SAMMAN 2025

An initiative launched this year by Moitrisanjog Society on the occasion of Pride Month to honour exceptional individuals.



Presented to

Mithu Das



Born in Tapsikhata village of Alipurduar district, Mithu Das faced deep personal hardship early in life. Assigned male at birth and identifying as feminine, she was rejected by her own family for embracing her true identity. Despite such adversity, Mithu found solace in folk music groups in Alipurduar and later, as part of the transgender community, sustained herself by begging on trains—a reality for many like her, pushed to the fringes of society.

During this time, Mithu came across a heartbreaking situation: a family intending to sell their two young daughters, aged six months and one and a half years, simply because they were girls. Refusing to let their lives be discarded, Mithu adopted both children. That act of love marked a turning point—not just in their lives, but in her own.

She stepped away from begging, bought a piece of land, took up farming, and eventually started a small grocery shop. Today, the two girls live with her in a safe, loving home and are attending school. Mithu's journey from marginalisation to motherhood, and from struggle to self-sufficiency, is a story of extraordinary courage and quiet revolution.

Moitrisanjog Society, which believes deeply in the power of alternative livelihoods and inclusive development, is honoured to confer the **তেজস্বিনী সম্মান ২০২৫** (Tejaswini Samman 2025) to Mithu Das—for her fearless determination, for building a life of dignity against all odds, and for shaping a future filled with hope for two young girls.

Her story reminds us that strength comes in many forms, and that true courage lies in choosing compassion when the world offers none.



Alternative
Livelihood
#P.L.E

Arundan Das (Sumi)



KUSHAN DANCE (KUSHAN NRITYA)

Kushan Dance (Kushan Nritya / Kushan Gaan)

Kushan Dance, also known as Kushan Nritya or Kushan Gaan, is a vibrant traditional folk drama of the Rajbongshi community. Deeply rooted in oral storytelling, this performance art seamlessly blends narrative, music, song, dance, and dialogue to depict episodes from the Krittivasi Ramayana. The tales are often conveyed through the voice of Kush, the son of Lord Rama, making the performance both devotional and dramatic in essence.

A significant cultural tradition in the Cooch Behar region of West Bengal, Kushan Nritya continues to thrive through community participation. One prominent occasion where this art form is celebrated is the Gendar Mela, organized by the Moitrisanjog Society, where local performers keep the legacy alive with their captivating enactments.





“Living on the Edge: Gender, Mental Health & Inclusivity in Contemporary India” (Session II)

Event: Gender Mela 2025

Date & Venue: June 2025, Coochbehar

Session II Overview:

This second session under the broader theme “Living on the Edge” at Gender Mela 2025 explored crucial yet under-discussed intersections of queerness, regional literature, education, and legal justice. Moderated by Sumi Das, the panel featured thought-provoking presentations from Riki Chakraborty, Madhabi Das, and Sourav Das, each bringing sharp insights into the lived realities and structural challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in contemporary India, especially in North Bengal and adjacent rural spaces.



Moderator’s Opening Remarks – Sumi Das:

Opening the session, Sumi Das noted that conversations around inclusion must extend beyond urban centers and mainstream institutions. “Too often, queerness is imagined only in cities, only in English, and only in elite spaces,” she said. “But what about queer lives in Siliguri, in Alipurduar, in Coochbehar? This session asks us to widen our lens—and our responsibility.” She reminded the audience that literature, education, and law are not abstract concepts, but living systems that either empower or exclude. “When these systems fail queer individuals, they don’t just lose opportunity—they lose safety, dignity, and at times, even the right to live.”

Speaker 1: Riki Chakraborty – Queer Presence in North Bengal Literature

Riki Chakraborty, a literary scholar, focused her talk on the subtle yet persistent presence of queer themes in the literature of North Bengal. She pointed to the coded language often used in regional narratives, where queer existence has been expressed through metaphor, subtext, or silence.

“Literature has always known us,” she said, “but it didn’t always name us.”

She examined several regional texts—both mainstream and lesser-known—that hinted at queer relationships, gender nonconformity, and emotional intimacy that defied heteronormative expectations. Riki argued that as queer individuals begin to write, publish, and critique, the region’s literary landscape is slowly shifting.

“Representation is not just visibility,” she explained. “It is a rewriting of who gets to be the protagonist, who gets desire, who gets justice.”

She urged readers, writers, and critics to engage with literature as a site of political imagination and cultural resistance, particularly in regional languages and grassroots platforms.





Speaker 2: Madhabi Das – Inclusive Education for School-Left Community Members

Madhabi Das, a long-time educator and grassroots worker, brought focus to the painful reality of LGBTQ+ youth who are excluded from formal schooling. Framing education as both a right and a lifeline, she described how queer and gender-diverse students are often bullied, misgendered, pathologized, or outright forced to drop out.

“Most school systems in our country are still designed around conformity—not care,” she stated.

She shared field data and firsthand accounts of students who were denied uniforms, restroom access, or simply the respect of being addressed by their chosen names and pronouns. Many of these students, Madhabi revealed, become invisible—trapped between family rejection and institutional neglect.

Her solution was multi-pronged: community-based education centers, emotional and trauma-informed teaching, curriculum reform, and robust teacher sensitization programs.

“Education must be an act of affirmation,” she concluded. “Only then can it be a vehicle of social mobility, healing, and empowerment for queer lives.”



Speaker 3: Sourav Das – Legal Help and Rights Advocacy for the Queer Community

Sourav Das, a legal activist and community advocate, brought the conversation squarely into the realm of law, justice, and protection. Speaking with a grounded and urgent tone, he described the legal vulnerabilities queer and trans individuals face—from police harassment and domestic abuse to housing discrimination and denial of identification documents.

“Even today, queer people are treated as if their rights are optional,” he said. “But the Constitution doesn’t work selectively—it promises dignity, freedom, and protection to all.”

Sourav shared case studies from North Bengal and Northeast India, where queer individuals faced legal violence and systemic apathy. He highlighted the barriers to accessing legal help—language, location, financial constraints, and fear of retaliation. “The law is supposed to protect,” he noted, “but for many queer people, it becomes another site of violence.”

His work focuses on three key areas:

Legal literacy workshops in marginalized communities,

Pro-bono legal support for victims of abuse and discrimination,

Advocacy with local law enforcement and civil bodies to push for accountability and sensitization.

Importantly, he also emphasized the importance of community paralegals—individuals trained from within the LGBTQ+ community to offer first-line legal support and guidance.

“We need queer people in legal rooms—not just as victims, but as experts, educators, and rights claimants,” he concluded powerfully.

Moderator’s Closing Reflections – Sumi Das:

In her concluding remarks, Sumi Das underscored the depth and urgency of the issues raised by the panelists. “We have seen today how queerness is not only about identity—it is about access. Access to words, to learning, to law. And when these systems shut us out, we must remake them.”

She praised the speakers for expanding the framework of inclusivity—from literary archives to street classrooms to courtrooms. “This is what radical care looks like—when we bring literature, education, and justice together in the service of real people.”

Sumi also urged attendees—activists, teachers, writers, and lawyers—to not merely support the queer community from a distance but to walk alongside them, learn from them, and co-create systems that affirm all lives, especially those pushed to the margins.



Sapno Ka Ghar

Sapno Ka Ghar Documentary Screened at Gender Mela to Commemorate Pride Month

As part of the Gender Mela organized by Moitrisanjog Society to commemorate Pride Month, the documentary Sapno Ka Ghar was screened to an engaged and emotional audience.

This powerful documentary narrates the transformative journey of Moitrisanjog in collaboration with community members, focusing on creating a safe and inclusive space for all. Through touching personal stories, the film reflects the organization's commitment to alternative livelihoods, inclusive education, and the empowerment of marginalized gender and sexual identities.

Sapno Ka Ghar—meaning “Home of Dreams”—beautifully portrays the essence of Pride: dignity, visibility, and the right to live freely. The screening served as a reminder of the importance of solidarity, acceptance, and community-led change.

The Gender Mela, with vibrant performances, discussions, and creative expressions, became a true celebration of identity, resilience, and unity.

SENSITIZATION MEETING

at

Kumtir Ghat Gram Panchayat

A sensitization meeting was recently held at Kumtir Ghat Gram Panchayat organized by the Moitrisanjog Society, with active participation from local villagers. The meeting aimed to engage the community in open dialogue about key issues affecting their development and inclusion in society.

One of the central concerns raised was the pervasive sense of social isolation experienced by many community members, especially in this rural area. Although they are physically part of the neighborhood, many expressed feeling emotionally disconnected and unheard. This lack of acceptance was particularly highlighted in discussions around gender identity and the rights of transgender individuals.

Participants shared that while their presence is acknowledged, their voices often remain suppressed, leading to emotional alienation. Moitrisanjog took note of this pressing issue and committed to initiating deeper engagement with various stakeholders—community leaders, local governance, and civil society organizations—to foster inclusive and empathetic dialogue moving forward.

The meeting also touched upon challenges related to accessing government facilities and a lack of awareness about legal rights. Many were unaware that free legal aid is available through the court system. As part of the sensitization process, Moitrisanjog informed the attendees of their legal entitlements and guided them on how to access such services to resolve disputes and protect their rights.

In conclusion, the meeting was a vital step towards building awareness, fostering inclusion, and empowering community members with the knowledge and confidence to claim their rightful place in society. Moitrisanjog Society will continue its efforts to bridge the gap between marginalized voices and mainstream society through ongoing support and advocacy.



The sensitization meeting at Kumtir Ghat Gram Panchayat was held in observance of Pride Month and marked a significant moment in Moitrisanjog Society's ongoing, year-round efforts toward inclusive community development. This gathering also formed part of the organization's annual commemorative event, aimed at recognizing the voices of marginalized groups and reinforcing the commitment to equality and social inclusion. Through this event, Moitrisanjog renewed its dedication to building a more just and connected society, where every individual is acknowledged, supported, and empowered.





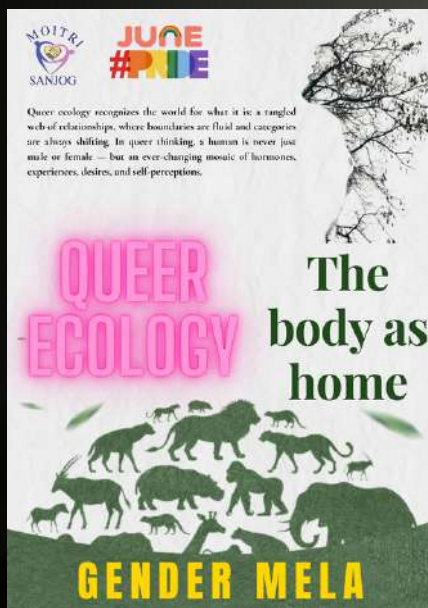
Roots of Pride A Queer Ecology Gathering

As part of our ongoing celebration of Pride Month and in connection with our Gender Mela 2025, Moitrisanjog Society organized a symbolic and meaningful tea plantation ceremony on the morning of 23rd June at Panishala Gram Panchayat, Cooch Behar. This event was not only a celebration of identity and inclusion but also served as the inaugural program of the Gender Mela, extending its spirit beyond traditional venues into the realm of nature and community.

With the active participation of local community members, this gathering reflected our commitment to inclusive development and celebrated the powerful intersection of queer ecology and grassroots community engagement. Queer ecology—an evolving field grounded in queer theory and ecological thinking—challenges heteronormative and anthropocentric views, emphasizing the need to recognize diverse identities in harmony with the natural world.

By integrating the principles of queer ecology into our community development work, we aim to create safe, affirming, and equitable spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals and other marginalized groups. This event not only marked a symbolic step in reclaiming nature as a shared, inclusive space but also reinforced our belief that sustainable development must include voices that are often left unheard.

Moitrisanjog Society remains dedicated to building a society where diversity is celebrated, and nature and community thrive together in mutual respect and solidarity.



Roots of Pride: A Queer Ecology Gathering was a vibrant and symbolic celebration where the act of planting became a powerful expression of identity, unity, and renewal. Organized by Moitrisanjog Society as part of Pride Month and the opening of the Gender Mela, the event brought together community members to connect with the earth and with one another. The simple gesture of placing saplings into soil represented a deeper commitment to nurturing inclusive spaces where all identities can flourish. Inspired by the spirit of queer ecology, the gathering challenged traditional boundaries and celebrated the interconnectedness of nature, culture, and queer existence. It stood as a reminder that every root planted in acceptance helps grow a more just and diverse world.



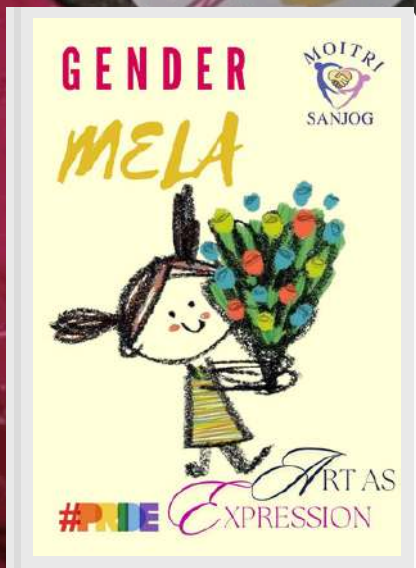
ART AS EXPRESSION



On the evening of the Gender Mela event on 23rd June, as part of the ongoing Pride Month celebrations, Moitrisanjog Society hosted a heartfelt and imaginative session titled "Art as an Expression." This unique event created a safe and joyful space where children from villages and nearby communities came together to express their thoughts, emotions, and dreams through drawing and painting.

The initiative recognized that art can be a powerful tool for communication—especially for young minds who may not yet have the words to articulate their experiences. Through vibrant colors and creative imagery, the children shared their perspectives on identity, inclusion, nature, and community. Some drawings reflected everyday life, while others explored themes of freedom, friendship, and self-acceptance.

"Art as an Expression" not only encouraged creativity but also fostered empathy and understanding among participants. It was a gentle yet impactful reminder that inclusion begins with listening, and sometimes, the most honest voices come from the youngest hearts. By giving children a platform to express themselves freely, Moitrisanjog continues to plant the seeds of a more inclusive, expressive, and compassionate future.





FILM FEST

On the evening of 23rd June, as part of the Gender Mela and the wider Pride Month celebrations, Moitrisanjog Society organized a thoughtful and engaging film screening aimed at raising awareness and fostering dialogue around queer and LGBTQ+ issues within the local community.

This screening served as a powerful medium to introduce complex themes of identity, gender diversity, acceptance, and social justice in a way that was accessible and relatable to villagers. Carefully chosen, the film portrayed real-life stories and challenges faced by queer individuals, highlighting both the struggles of marginalization and the strength of resilience and love. It opened a window for many attendees into experiences they had never encountered before—or perhaps never understood fully.

Following the screening, an open discussion was held where community members shared their reflections, asked questions, and engaged in conversation with Moitrisanjog facilitators. This exchange helped to break down stereotypes, dispel myths, and build empathy around the lived realities of LGBTQ+ individuals.

The event was more than just a screening—it was an invitation to see, to feel, and to understand. By using cinema as a tool for sensitization and awareness, Moitrisanjog took another meaningful step toward bridging gaps, encouraging acceptance, and creating an environment where diverse identities can be seen, heard, and respected.



The Need for Safety, Dignity, and Rights for All

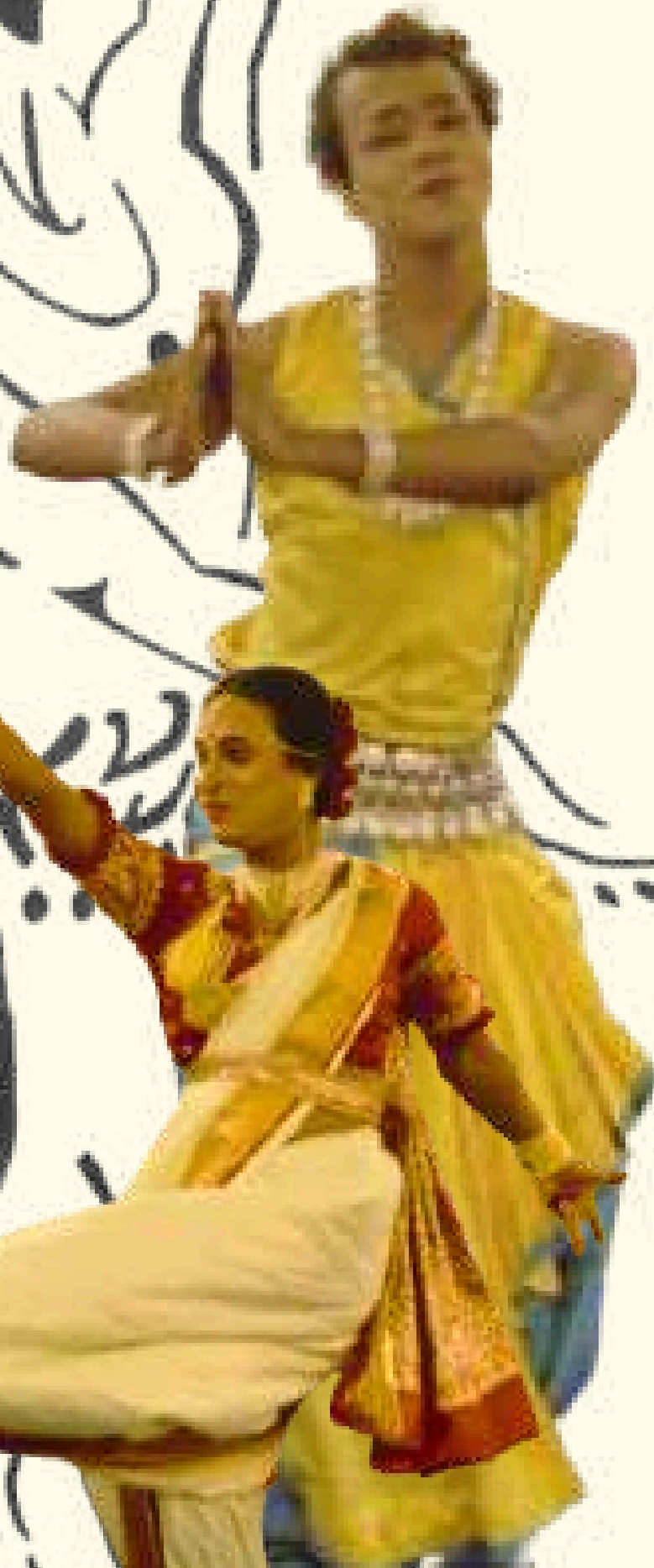
Speaking at the event, Arpita Mallik, Protection Officer (Domestic Violence), District Social Welfare Section, Office of the District Magistrate, Cooch Behar, underlined the urgent need to uphold the rights and safety of every individual, especially those from marginalised communities.

She pointed out that violence—whether domestic, social, or emotional—not only causes immediate harm but often leads to prolonged mental trauma, physical abuse, and social exclusion.

“Violence in any form—be it inside the home or in society—strips individuals of their dignity and isolates them,” she said. “We must work together to ensure that every member of our community feels safe, valued, and protected.”

Her remarks served as a strong call to action, highlighting that true social justice can only be achieved when all individuals are free from fear and treated with respect and compassion.





Pride Month 2025 – Community Rebuilding in Darjeeling

In Collaboration with Gender Mela

Organized by Moitrisanjog Society, Cooch Behar

As part of our Pride Month 2025 celebrations, and in heartfelt collaboration with Gender Mela, Moitrisanjog Society organized a community engagement program in Darjeeling focused on healing, reconnection, and regeneration within the LGBTQIA+ community. This initiative was more than a single event—it was a moment of return, a reclaiming of space, and an invitation to rebuild together after years of disconnection and silence.

Pride Month is a time of visibility, resistance, and joy, and this year, we chose to carry its spirit to the hills of Darjeeling—where queer histories have long existed but have often gone unheard. In the cool air of the mountains, voices warmed each other through sharing, listening, and imagining what could be possible when we come together in solidarity.

Background and Purpose

Darjeeling has a deep and layered queer history, shaped by the courage and care of local individuals and groups such as Mijju, who once led visible and community-rooted organizing. However, over time, these efforts slowly faded as community members migrated in search of livelihoods, institutional support waned, and social marginalization deepened. The absence of structured, long-term support has left many feeling isolated and disconnected, even as their will to survive and support one another remains intact.

Moitrisanjog Society, with its decade-long relationships across North Bengal, has remained connected to individuals from Darjeeling over the years. Our decision to return during Pride Month was both symbolic and strategic—recognizing that now is the time to listen again, rebuild together, and support the community in reclaiming its own narrative, space, and strength.

Community Engagement and Insights

The gathering in Darjeeling, held as part of Gender Mela and our broader Pride Month program, brought together a diverse group of LGBTQIA+ individuals from across the hills. It was an emotionally resonant space—one that blended conversation with celebration, reflection with laughter, and storytelling with strategy.

Through open dialogues, sharing circles, and informal group conversations, community members spoke of the pain of invisibility, the impact of long-term neglect, and the urgent need for connection and care. Yet, what emerged most powerfully was a sense of readiness—a quiet but unwavering belief that it is time to rebuild, to reconnect, and to reclaim the vibrant community that once existed and still lives within the memories and hopes of many.

The program also surfaced a strong desire to form local groups, nurture leadership from within the community, and revive a culture of mutual support that is rooted in lived experience and collective resilience. Despite years of silence, the embers of past organizing are still burning—waiting to be reignited.

Looking Forward: A Year of Reconnection and Rebuilding

Building on the energy and insights of this gathering, Moitrisanjog Society is preparing to initiate a year-long engagement in Darjeeling, with the vision of walking hand-in-hand with the community as it rebuilds itself—on its own terms, at its own pace, and in its own voice. This journey will focus on reviving peer networks, fostering local leadership, creating accessible safe spaces, and ensuring that essential information, services, and support reach those who have remained at the margins.

We understand that real change comes not from outside interventions, but from deeply rooted community processes that are inclusive, accountable, and empathetic. Our role will be to accompany, to support, and to help hold space for new and old connections to take root and grow.

A Call to Collective Action

This Pride Month initiative would not have been possible without the solidarity and spirit of collaboration shared with Gender Mela and our extended networks of allies. As we look ahead, we invite all those who care about justice, equity, and community-led transformation to walk with us. Whether you are a community member, an ally, an organization, or someone who simply believes in the power of inclusive development—we welcome your voice, your energy, and your support.

Let us continue to turn Pride into practice. Let us keep building spaces where everyone—regardless of gender identity, sexuality, or background—can live with dignity, safety, and pride.

In solidarity and hope,

Sumi Das

On behalf of Moitrisanjog Society

Cooch Behar, West Bengal



The Gender Mela, organized by Moitrisanjog Society, became a vibrant platform where community members proudly showcased their handmade crafts as part of an alternative livelihood initiative. With sales reaching an encouraging ten thousand rupees, the event not only celebrated creativity and resilience but also sparked hope and motivation among others to join future endeavors and pursue economic independence with confidence.



545+

**FAMILY WERE
GIVEN RELIEF**

1500+

**PEOPLE
BENEFITED**

FLOOD RELIEF DRIVE

The floods of October 2025 were among the most devastating disasters our district has faced in recent years, destroying homes, livelihoods, and a sense of security. The scale of loss highlighted the vulnerability of communities in the face of natural calamities.

Through the Flood Relief Drive, Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar provided essential support such as food, tarpaulins, and basic supplies. However, it became clear that recovery required more than material aid. Many affected individuals, especially women, children, the elderly, female sex workers, and members of the LGBTQ+ community, experienced deep psychological distress.

Recognizing this, the initiative integrated psychosocial support through counselling, group activities, and safe spaces for dialogue. This approach helped restore confidence, dignity, and hope, reinforcing the importance of mental health in disaster response.

The intervention brought both immediate relief and long-term impact, reaffirming that compassion and emotional care are central to resilience. Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar remains committed to strengthening preparedness and including mental health in all future responses.



INTERVENTION

Target Beneficiaries

A total of 545+ families, covering approximately 1500+ individuals, were supported through the relief initiative.

Relief Kit Composition

Each family received a carefully designed kit to meet one week of essential food and hygiene needs.

Shelter Support

In addition to relief kits, 40 high-quality tarpaulins were distributed to families whose homes were completely destroyed, providing immediate temporary shelter.

Introduction & Background

In October 2025, severe floods and landslides in Coochbehar and Alipurduar caused widespread destruction to homes, farmlands, and infrastructure, leaving thousands without shelter, food, and basic services. Vulnerable groups such as daily wage earners, small farmers, women-headed households, and the elderly were the most affected.

In response, MOITRISANJOG SOCIETY COOCHBEHAR launched an emergency Flood Relief Drive to address immediate needs and provide psychosocial support to affected communities.

Objectives

Ensure short-term food security through distribution of essential supplies.

Provide temporary shelter materials to displaced families.

Offer psychosocial counselling to address trauma.

Support vulnerable families lacking identity documents.

Promote community resilience through inclusive action.

Implementation Strategy

A dual approach combining relief distribution and mental health support was adopted, with strong involvement of local volunteers.

Rapid needs assessments identified the most affected areas and vulnerable families.

Relief materials were procured locally for timely distribution.

Kits were distributed in small groups, ensuring dignity, transparency, and inclusion.

Beneficiary lists were verified to prioritize the most vulnerable and avoid duplication.

The floods of October 2025 left not only visible destruction but also deep emotional and social impacts that continue to linger. The following reflections, gathered during relief distribution and psychosocial support sessions, capture the lived experiences of those affected—their loss, resilience, and gratitude.

Rekha Das (Khagrabari Block 2)

Rekha recalls how the floodwaters rose suddenly, sweeping away essential belongings including clothes, documents, and household items. With no food and no shelter, her family struggled to cope. She shares that the support provided by Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar—food supplies and a tarpaulin offered immediate relief and restored a sense of dignity, as her family could once again sleep under cover.

Abdul Karim (Natabari, Small Farmer)

Abdul Karim describes losing his farmland and home, built over years of hard work. Prolonged exposure to floodwater left his wife unwell, and the loss of important documents added to his distress. He reflects that the encouragement and guidance from volunteers, who helped him reconstruct basic records from memory, gave him renewed strength during a time of uncertainty.

Riya (10 years old, Khagrabari)

Riya shares her experience of losing her school books and belongings to the flood. Living in temporary shelter was difficult, but she found comfort in the care extended by volunteers. Through drawing activities, she was able to express her emotions, illustrating her home as it once was an exercise that brought her a sense of joy and reassurance.





Sunita Roy (Palpara, Homemaker)

Sunita shares that the most distressing experience was seeing her children panic every time it rained, fearing another flood. Through gentle counselling, creative activities, and open conversations, they were able to express their fears. While relief materials supported their survival, she emphasizes that emotional care played a vital role in their healing.

Impact:

Psychosocial support for children helped reduce fear and anxiety among young survivors.

Haripada Mondal (Alipurduar, Elderly Beneficiary)

Haripada recalls losing his medicines and enduring the cold floodwaters alone, believing help might not reach his remote home. The arrival of the relief team, with essential supplies and reassurance, restored his sense of dignity and belonging.

Impact:

Targeted outreach ensured that elderly and less mobile individuals were not left behind.

Sabina Khatun (Ghughumari, Widow with Two Children)

Sabina describes losing her home and sustaining an injury while trying to protect her children. Without documents, she was excluded from formal aid. She expresses gratitude that Moitrisanjog Society provided support without requiring proof, prioritizing her needs with empathy and respect.

Impact:

Inclusive relief efforts ensured assistance reached women-led and document-less households.



Coverage and Locations The psychosocial support initiative covered approximately 800+ individuals, including men, women, and children from the most severely affected areas.

Camp Locations: Block 2: Natabari, Khagrabari AND Block 1: Palpara, Ghughumari. These locations were strategically selected based on the concentration of displaced families, accessibility, and availability of community spaces such as schools and local clubs that could serve as safe gathering points.

The psychosocial support camp made a meaningful difference in the affected communities. Participants reported reduced fear, better sleep, and a renewed sense of hope. Group activities helped rebuild social connections, while awareness sessions encouraged individuals to take care of their emotional well-being and support others. Special attention to women and children helped restore their sense of safety and trust.

Impact Assessment

Over 545 families received essential food and shelter support, while more than 1500 individuals benefited from counselling and emotional care. Communities reported improved stability, and beneficiaries valued the transparent and empathetic approach of the volunteers. The initiative played a key role in easing anxiety and rebuilding social bonds.

Focus on Vulnerable Populations

Particular emphasis was given to families who had lost identity and land documents and were excluded from formal compensation. The initiative ensured their inclusion, addressing a critical gap in relief support.



Outcomes and Observations

The psychosocial support camp had a significant impact on the affected communities. Participants reported reduced fear, improved sleep, and renewed hope. Group activities helped rebuild social bonds, while awareness sessions empowered individuals to manage their emotional well-being. Focused engagement with women and children restored a sense of safety and trust.

Impact Assessment

545+ families (1500+ individuals) received food and shelter support.; 680+ individuals accessed psychosocial counselling and emotional care.; Communities reported improved stability and a restored sense of security.; Beneficiaries appreciated the transparent and compassionate approach of volunteers.;The intervention helped reduce anxiety and rebuild social connections.

Ranjita Case Support Initiative

The case of Ranjita from Alipurduar reflects vulnerabilities linked to livelihood insecurity, caregiving responsibilities, and gender-based violence. After an incident of domestic violence that caused a fractured hand, she was unable to continue her work as a traditional Bishohori dance drama performer, her sole source of income. As the primary breadwinner and caregiver to her visually impaired mother, this led to immediate household distress.

In response, Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar undertook a timely intervention. Members conducted a field visit, provided immediate financial assistance, and mobilized community support for medical care, food and ration supplies, and caregiving needs. Efforts also focused on creating a supportive environment for her recovery and stabilizing the household during the income loss period.

This initiative reflects the Society's commitment to community-led action, combining emergency relief with sustained support, while prioritizing dignity, safety, and resilience.



DISTRIBUTION OF NEW CLOTHES TO CHILDREN ON THE OCCASION OF DURGA PUJA

To make the joy of Durga Puja more special, Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar organized a distribution of new clothes for children at Gurukul. The initiative brought smiles and excitement to the children, making the festive spirit even more meaningful.

Moitrisanjog Gurukul, a coaching centre led by the transgender community, was established during the COVID period and has since grown into a nurturing space that provides not only education but also care, support, and a sense of belonging for children.

The organisation believes that Durga Puja is a festival of joy that transcends religion, caste, and social identity. With this spirit, the celebration is shared with children every year to ensure they feel included and valued.

The happiness of receiving new clothes, combined with the festive atmosphere, made the day truly memorable for the children, reflecting the essence of inclusion, compassion, and community celebration.







TRANSCEND INITIATIVE ADVOCACY SEED GRANT TWO-DAY RESIDENTIAL CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOP

Session 1: *Inaugural Session*

Welcome Address

Introduction to Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar
Workshop objectives and expectations
Participant introductions and ice-breaking activities

Session 2: *Leadership Development & Self-Awareness*

Understanding leadership within marginalized communities
Qualities of inclusive and community-based leadership
Group discussion on personal leadership experiences
Interactive activity: “My Leadership Journey”

Session 3: *Understanding Identity & LGBTQ+ Realities*

Discussion on gender identity, sexual orientation, and expression
Sharing lived experiences and challenges
Activity: Identity mapping / storytelling circle

Session 4: *Mental Health & Emotional Well-Being*

Mental health challenges faced by LGBTQ+ communities
Stress, stigma, trauma, and coping mechanisms
Guided activity: Emotional expression through play/art
Group reflection

Session 5: *Cultural Evening / Community Play*

Short play or role-play on discrimination, acceptance, and resilience
Open mic / poetry / storytelling
Informal bonding and trust-building

Session 6: *Recap & Reflection*

Review of Day 1 learnings
Participant reflections and feedback

Session 7: *LGBTQ+ Rights & Legal Awareness*

Overview of constitutional rights and legal protections
Discussion on access to health, education, employment, and justice
Case studies and group discussion

Session 8: *Advocacy, Awareness & Community Mobilisation*

What is advocacy and why it matters
Role of community leaders and peer educators
Activity: Designing awareness messages and campaigns
Group work and presentations

Session 9: *Skill-Building Activities*

Communication and public speaking exercises
Conflict resolution and negotiation skills
Team-building games and leadership tasks

Session 10: *Action Planning & Way Forward*

Identifying community needs and priorities
Preparing individual and group action plans
Discussion on networking, support systems, and sustainability

Session 11: *Valedictory Session*

Sharing of key learnings
Participant feedback and evaluation
Distribution of certificates (if applicable)
Closing remarks

Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar organized a two-day residential workshop to empower LGBTQ+ community members, youth leaders, and grassroots allies through focused learning and dialogue. The programme aimed to build leadership, strengthen awareness of identity and rights, and promote emotional resilience in a safe and inclusive environment.

Recognizing challenges such as stigma, discrimination, limited access to services, and mental health concerns, the workshop provided a platform for participants to share experiences, learn collectively, and develop strategies for empowerment and advocacy.

Objectives

Build leadership skills among LGBTQ+ individuals and youth leaders

Increase awareness of gender identity and sexual orientation

Educate participants on legal rights and protections

Promote mental well-being and self-care

Strengthen communication and advocacy skills

Encourage peer support and community networking

Target Participants

The workshop included LGBTQ+ individuals, youth leaders, grassroots volunteers, social workers, and mental health advocates from diverse backgrounds, enabling rich and inclusive discussions.



Day 1:

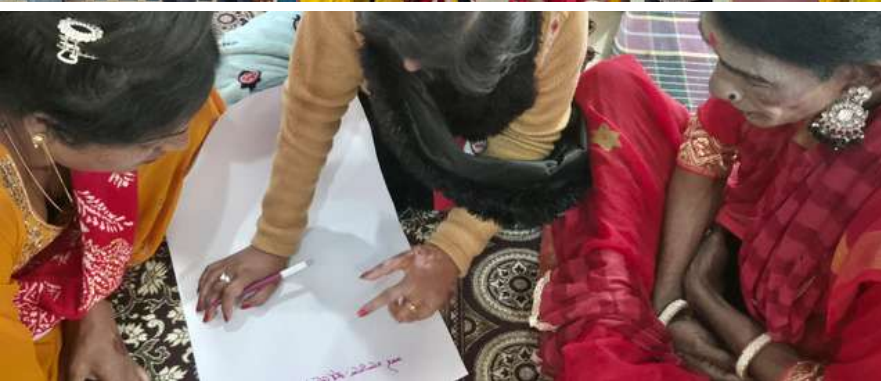
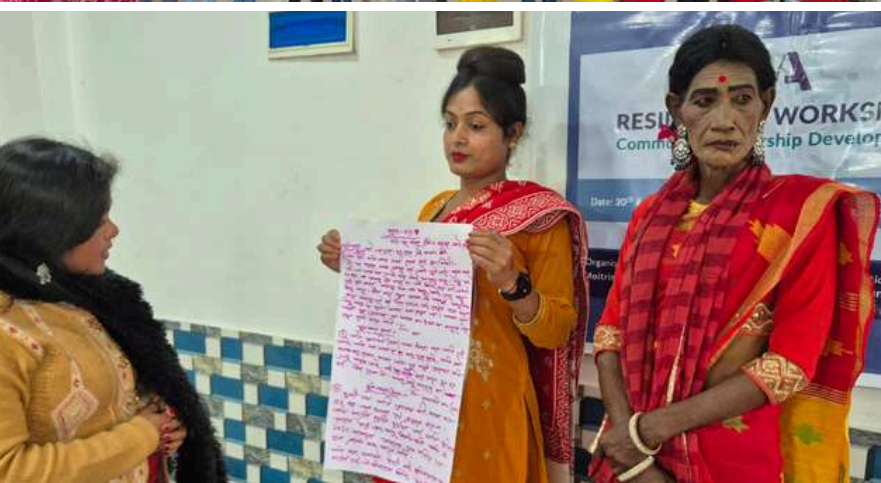
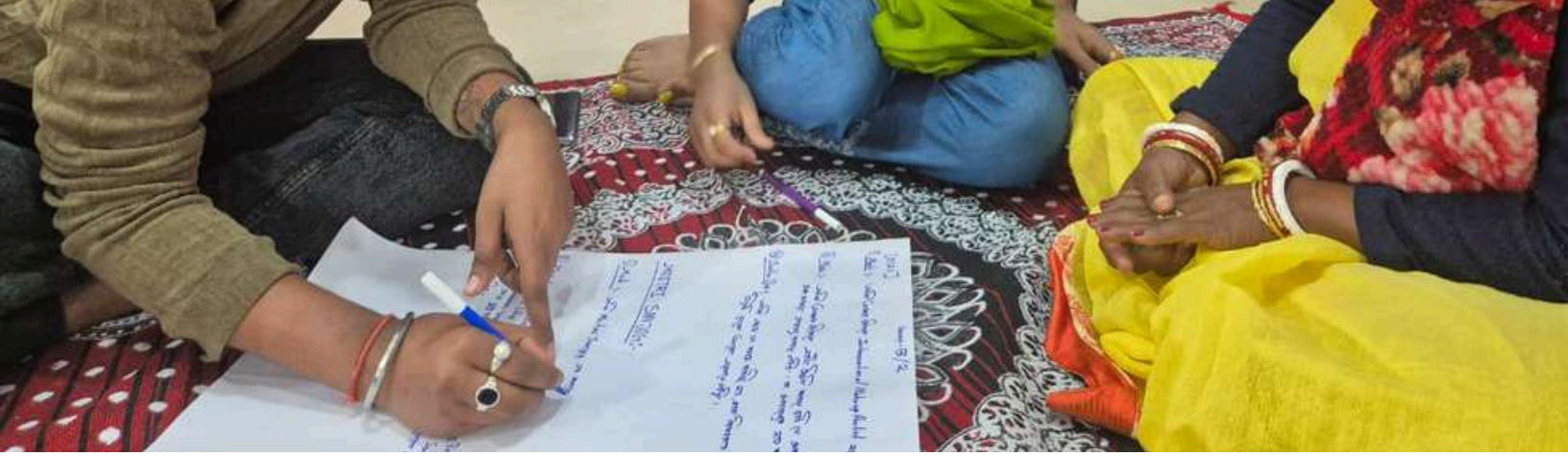
Understanding Self, Identity & Leadership

The first day focused on self-awareness, identity, and leadership within marginalised contexts. Participants engaged in ice-breaking and reflective activities that created a safe, open environment. Sessions on leadership and identity helped them recognise personal strengths, challenge stereotypes, and share lived experiences. Mental health discussions addressed trauma, stigma, and coping strategies, while a cultural evening fostered expression, bonding, and solidarity.

Day 2:

Rights, Advocacy & Collective Empowerment

The second day emphasized legal awareness, advocacy, and practical skills. Participants learned about rights and protections, explored advocacy strategies, and engaged in communication and leadership exercises. Group activities encouraged teamwork and confidence, while action planning enabled participants to identify steps for community engagement. The workshop concluded with reflections and a shared commitment to continued collective action.



Key Outcomes

Increased leadership confidence among LGBTQ+ participants

Improved awareness of rights and legal protections

Better understanding of mental health and coping strategies

Strengthened communication and advocacy skills

Enhanced peer networks and community solidarity

Development of actionable community plans

Conclusion

The two-day residential workshop proved to be a transformative initiative, combining leadership development, emotional well-being, legal awareness, and community empowerment. It fostered confidence, visibility, and resilience among participants, reinforcing the commitment of Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar to inclusive and rights-based community work.

From Workshop to Movement: Year-Long Leadership Initiative

Building on this momentum, Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar launched a year-long Leadership Development Initiative to nurture emerging leaders from LGBTQ+ and allied communities. Moving beyond one-time training, the programme focuses on continuous learning, mentorship, community engagement, and peer support.

Participants will gradually evolve into community leaders and advocates, contributing to inclusive spaces and grassroots change. This initiative ensures that the impact of the workshop continues as a sustained movement toward visibility, empowerment, and long-term social transformation.



SKILL TRAINING IN SITAL PATI WEAVING & HANDICRAFT PRODUCTION FOR INCLUSIVE LIVELIHOODS

Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar implemented a short-term skill development initiative to promote inclusive livelihoods for transgender persons and underprivileged rural community members. Through training in traditional Sital Pati weaving, the project enabled participants to acquire marketable skills, enhance confidence, and gain social visibility. The initiative concluded with a community exhibition that generated initial market linkages and recognition.



Key Activities

Skill Training (7 Days): Seven participants were trained in Sital Pati weaving and handicraft production, creating products such as mats, bags, and décor items using locally sourced materials.

Livelihood & Financial Literacy Sessions (2 Days): Participants received basic training in pricing, branding, financial management, and awareness of government schemes. A community artisan collective was also initiated.

Community Exhibition & Advocacy: Over 50 handcrafted products were showcased, attracting local stakeholders, government representatives, and SHGs. The event strengthened visibility and market opportunities for participants.

Key Outcomes

- 7 participants successfully trained in Sital Pati weaving
- Improved confidence, skills, and financial awareness
- Formation of a community artisan collective
- 3 initial market linkages established (SHGs and Welfare Department)
- Increased visibility and recognition of transgender artisans

Conclusion & Way Forward

The project demonstrated how skill-building and cultural heritage can enable dignified livelihoods and social inclusion. Moving forward, Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar will focus on strengthening market linkages, formalizing the artisan collective, and expanding training opportunities to ensure sustainable income generation.



DISCUSSION ON TRANSGENDER LEGAL RIGHTS AND THE TG CARD & SIR PROCESS



17 November 2025
Rashmani Bhawan, Cooch Behar

ORGANISED BY:
MOITRISANJOG SOCIETY
SUPPORTED BY:
THE HUMSAFAR TRUST & DORF KETAL





Speaker: Sourav Das

Legal Awareness Address on Transgender Rights and Electoral Inclusion

The speaker began by acknowledging the presence of community members, activists, and representatives of Moitrisanjog Society, emphasizing the importance of the programme in advancing awareness on transgender rights, legal identity, and electoral inclusion. The session highlighted that legal discussions must go beyond technical language and focus on real-life impact, especially for communities historically denied their rights.

Referring to key legal frameworks such as the NALSA judgment and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, the speaker reaffirmed that gender identity is a matter of self-identification and a legally protected right. It was stressed that no authority has the power to question an individual's gender identity.

The process of obtaining the TG Certificate and TG Card was explained in clear terms, emphasizing that self-declaration is sufficient and no medical or surgical proof is required. The role of the administration, particularly the District Magistrate, was described as facilitative rather than investigative. The speaker also highlighted that these documents enable correction of name and gender across official records, including Aadhaar, Voter ID, and bank documents.

The discussion further addressed challenges faced during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. It was clarified that Aadhaar is not mandatory for voter registration and that transgender individuals have the right to be included in voter lists irrespective of living arrangements. The responsibility of Booth Level Officers to conduct respectful and inclusive verification was emphasized, along with grievance redressal mechanisms in cases of discrimination.

The importance of voting as a tool of visibility and democratic participation was strongly underlined, encouraging community members to actively engage in the electoral process.

The address concluded by reaffirming solidarity with the transgender community and emphasizing that rights, once recognized in law, must be ensured in practice. The role of organizations like Moitrisanjog Society in supporting access, awareness, and advocacy was acknowledged as crucial in building a more inclusive and equitable society.



Community Address on Identity, Legal Rights, and Electoral Inclusion

Speaker: Sumi Das, Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar

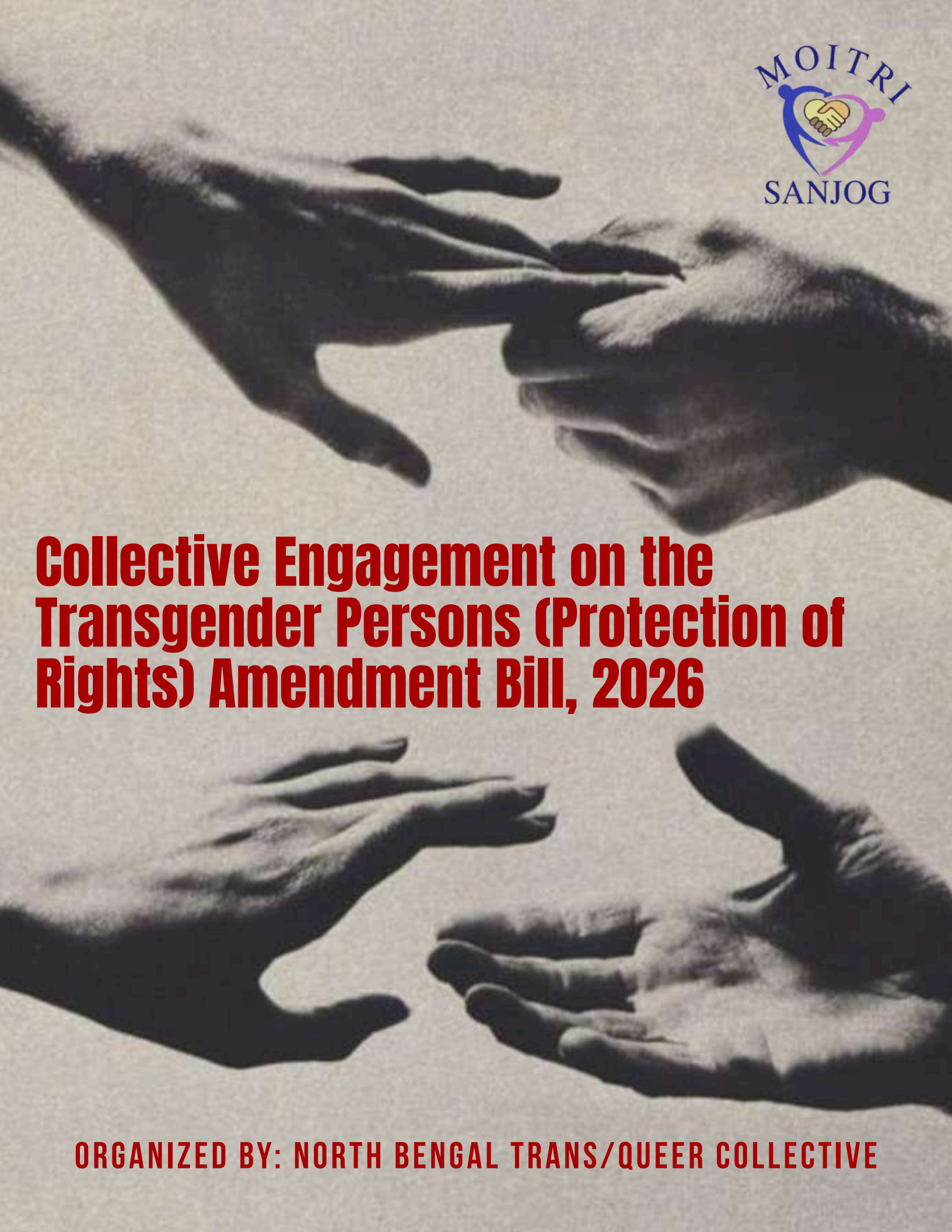
Sumi Das welcomed guests, Advocate Sourav Das, community leaders, and members of Moitrisanjog Society, emphasizing that the gathering marked an important step toward dignity, identity, and justice for the transgender community. She highlighted that processes such as TG Certificate, TG Card, and electoral registration are not merely administrative, but essential for recognition, inclusion, and equal citizenship.

Reflecting on the lived realities of transgender persons, she acknowledged the long history of discrimination, rejection, and struggle faced by the community. She reaffirmed that gender identity is a fundamental right, supported by the NALSA judgment and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, and cannot be questioned by any authority.

Sumi Das emphasized the importance of TG Certificates and TG Cards as key tools for accessing rights, updating official documents, and ensuring respectful recognition across institutions. She clarified that self-declaration is sufficient for obtaining these documents, without the need for medical or surgical proof, and encouraged community members to apply with confidence.

She also addressed the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, stressing the importance of inclusion of transgender persons in voter lists. She noted that chosen families are valid households and highlighted the right to report any discrimination during verification. The right to vote was emphasized as a powerful expression of visibility and participation.

Sumi Das acknowledged the resilience and strength of the community and reaffirmed Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar's commitment to supporting members through documentation processes, awareness programmes, and advocacy efforts.

The background of the entire page is a high-contrast, black and white photograph of four hands. Two hands are at the top, reaching towards each other, and two hands are at the bottom, also reaching towards each other, creating a sense of collective action or support.

Collective Engagement on the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026

ORGANIZED BY: NORTH BENGAL TRANS/QUEER COLLECTIVE



Over a period of three consecutive days, the North Bengal Trans/Queer Collective, in collaboration with representatives and community members from all seven districts of North Bengal, organized a series of structured engagements to deliberate upon and critically examine the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026. The objective of these engagements was to create a unified platform for dialogue, articulate community concerns in a legal and constitutional framework, and initiate broader public awareness regarding the implications of the proposed amendment on the rights, dignity, and identity of transgender and queer persons.

STAKEHOLDER INTERACTION AND REPRESENTATION OF CONCERNS

The first day commenced with a formal interaction with Shri Gautam Deb (Former Minister and Former Mayor of Siliguri). A united delegation representing seven districts of North Bengal participated in this engagement.

The discussion was grounded in constitutional principles, with references to the right to equality, dignity, autonomy, and privacy. The delegation also highlighted the inconsistency of the proposed amendment with the Supreme Court's recognition of self-determined gender identity. The interaction served as an important step in placing community concerns before a key public representative and seeking institutional support for further advocacy.





On the second day, a press meet was organized in Siliguri to communicate the collective position of the transgender and queer community to the wider public and media.

Representatives from the collective addressed the press, outlining the key legal, social, and human rights concerns associated with the amendment. The discussion emphasized that the proposed changes signify a departure from a rights-based approach and may adversely affect the lived realities of transgender persons.

The press meet played a crucial role in amplifying community voices, fostering informed public discourse, and ensuring that the issue receives broader attention at regional and national levels.

Press Meet and Public Articulation



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH



The third day was marked by an extensive public engagement initiative across the streets of Siliguri. Members of the transgender and queer community, along with allied participants, came together to initiate open discussions with the general public.

Through slogans, street lectures, and interpersonal interactions, participants actively engaged in awareness-building activities aimed at explaining the implications of the amendment. Community members shared their lived experiences, highlighting how legal recognition and protection directly impact their dignity, identity, and access to rights.

Participants also used expressive forms of representation, including attire and symbolic acts, to assert visibility and identity. This approach transformed public spaces into sites of dialogue, education, and collective reflection.



রূপান্তরকামীদের নিরাপত্তায় নজর পুলিশের

শিবশংকর সূর্যবর

কোচবিহার, ৮ অগাস্ট : কোচবিহারের যৌথবাহারের শুভ দাস তখন জুল পড়ছেন। পরিবারের সদস্যরা বুঝতে পারেন, শুভ ছেলে হলেও তার আচরণ মেয়েদের মতো। বন্ধুসমূহ, প্রতিবেশীদের কাছ থেকে চিঠিনী যেমন উড়ে আসছিল, তেমনভাবেই হেনস্তার মুখে পড়তে হওয়ায় একসময় বাড়ি ছাড়তে বাধ্য হয় শুভ। একই ঘটনা ঘটছে যুগ্মমারির ঠিকের কোচবিহারে। কোচবিহারের যৌথবাহারের শুভ দাস তখন জুল পড়ছেন। পরিবারের সদস্যরা বুঝতে পারেন, শুভ ছেলে হলেও তার আচরণ মেয়েদের মতো। বন্ধুসমূহ, প্রতিবেশীদের কাছ থেকে চিঠিনী যেমন উড়ে আসছিল, তেমনভাবেই হেনস্তার মুখে পড়তে হওয়ায় একসময় বাড়ি ছাড়তে বাধ্য হয় শুভ। একই ঘটনা ঘটছে যুগ্মমারির ঠিকের কোচবিহারে।

রূপান্তরকামীদের নিয়ে কাজ করা বিভিন্ন সংগঠনের সদস্য ও পুলিশ আধিকারিকদের উপস্থিতিতে একটি কর্মশালা হয়। উপস্থিত ছিলেন খোদ জেলা পুলিশ সুপার সুকুমিন ভট্টাচার্য। পুলিশ লাইনে তারোচিত

ছেচিবেনা সেকেন্ড ট্রান্সজেন্ডারদের একটি সমসার মধ্যে পড়তে হয়। যে কারণে পারিপার্শ্বিক কটকটি ও নিরাপত্তার অভাবের জন্য পড়াশোনা কিংবা স্বাভাবিক জীবন থেকে সরে আসার উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ করছেন। শুভ পুলিশই নয়, সাধারণ মানুষকেও এবিষয়ে সচেতন হতে হবে।

সুমি দাস
সমস্যা, মৈত্রী সংযোগ

কর্মশালায় সবচেয়ে বেশি গুরুত্ব পেয়েছে রূপান্তরকামীদের নিরাপত্তা ও তাদের অধিকার।

এরপর বারের পায়ে

রূপান্তরকামীদের নিরাপত্তায় নজর পুলিশের

প্রথম পাতার পর

করছে 'মৈত্রী সংযোগ' নামে একটি সংগঠন। সংগঠনের ভূগুণে সুমি দাস কর্মশালায় উপস্থিত ছিলেন। এখানে তিনি বিভিন্ন সমস্যার কথা তুলে ধরেন। ছোট থেকে সঠিক নিরাপত্তা ও গাইড পেলে যে একজন রূপান্তরকামী অন্যের উপর নির্ভরশীল না থেকে নিজে কর্মস্থানের পথ বেছে নিতে পারেন, তা তুলে ধরেন সুমি। সুমির বক্তব্য, 'ছেচিবেনা থেকেই ট্রান্সজেন্ডারদের একটি সমস্যার মধ্যে পড়তে হয়। যে কারণে পারিপার্শ্বিক কটকটি ও নিরাপত্তার অভাবের জন্য পড়াশোনা কিংবা স্বাভাবিক জীবন থেকে সরে আসার উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ করছেন। শুভ পুলিশই নয়, সাধারণ মানুষকেও এবিষয়ে সচেতন হতে হবে।' পুলিশকর্তাদের বক্তব্য, রূপান্তরকামীদের নিরাপত্তা ও তাদের অধিকারের জন্য ডিফেন্ড ট্রান্সজেন্ডার প্রোটেকশন সেন্স রয়েছে। ওই সেন্সে রূপান্তরকামীদের প্রতিনিধিও রয়েছে। যৌথভাবেই কাজ করা হচ্ছে এবং হবে।

কোচবিহার জেলায় গায় ১৫০ জন রূপান্তরকামী রয়েছেন। তাদের কেউ শীতলপাটি বুন জীন্সের নিষেধ করেন, কেউ আবার কাপড়ের ধালা-বাঁটি বানান। আবার কেউ ট্রেন বা অন্যত্র থেকে অর্থ উপার্জন করেন। তাদের কথা, ছোট থেকে নিরাপত্তার মধ্যে সচেতনভাবে বেড়ে উঠলে, কর্মস্থানের পথ বুঝে পাওয়া সহজ।



এই সময়

5th July, 2025

জেন্ডার মেলা

২৩ জুন 'জেন্ডার মেলা'র আয়োজন করেছিল কোচবিহারের মৈত্রী সংযোগ সোসাইটি। এই মেলা উত্তরবঙ্গের প্রান্তিক লিঙ্গ পরিচয়ের মানুষের একটি মুক্ত মঞ্চ যেখানে তারা নিজেদের অভিজ্ঞতা, সংগ্রাম ও স্বপ্ন ভাগ করে নিনেন। মিলনমেলায় আলোচনা-আলোচনার সঙ্গে ছিল তথ্যচিত্র, গান, নৃত্য, ভিসুয়াল আর্ট যা সমাজ ও সংস্কৃতির প্রেক্ষিতে তাদের আত্মপ্রকাশের ভাষা হয়ে উঠেছিল।



প্রান্তিকদের প্রতিবাদ মঞ্চ

প্রান্তিকদের প্রতিবাদ মঞ্চের উদ্বোধন করেছেন জেলা প্রশাসক।



আলোচনা সভা

শিলিগুড়ি, ২৬ এপ্রিল : ইস্টার্ন ডুরাস বিএড প্রশিক্ষণ মহাবিদ্যালয়ের উদ্যোগে 'জেন্ডার ফ্রাইডিটি অ্যান্ড নন-বাইনারি আইডেন্টিটিস ইন সোসাইটি' নিয়ে আলোচনা করা হয়। কোচবিহারের মৈত্রী সংযোগ স্বেচ্ছাসেবী সংগঠনের সহযোগিতায় আয়োজিত এই অনলাইন আলোচনাচক্রে প্রধান অতিথি হিসেবে যুক্ত হয়েছিলেন সৌদি আরবের জাজেন বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের অধ্যাপক ডঃ বিপিন শর্মা। এছাড়াও পঞ্জাব, তামিলনাড়ু, ওড়িশা সহ বিভিন্ন রাজ্যের বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের অধ্যাপকরা এই আলোচনাচক্রে যুক্ত হন।

হাত না-পেতে কাজে বিশ্বাস করেন সুমি

সুমি দাস
হাত না-পেতে কাজে বিশ্বাস করেন সুমি দাস।



কোচবিহার
সুমি দাস
হাত না-পেতে কাজে বিশ্বাস করেন সুমি দাস।

Future Plan

Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar aims to build on its current initiatives by expanding its reach, deepening community engagement, and strengthening sustainable impact across all programme areas. In the coming year, the organisation will prioritise strengthening psychosocial support services through regular counselling, peer support groups, and community-based mental health initiatives, with a focus on trauma-informed care and emotional well-being.

Advocacy and rights-based initiatives will be further expanded to promote awareness, access, and protection of rights for transgender and marginalized communities. This includes legal literacy programmes, documentation support, and continued engagement with institutions to ensure inclusive and non-discriminatory practices.

The organisation will also enhance its support systems for individuals in distress by providing timely assistance, safe spaces, and crisis response mechanisms, ensuring that vulnerable individuals receive immediate care and guidance.

Focused interventions for HIV-affected individuals will continue, including nutritional support, access to treatment, counselling, and strengthening linkages with healthcare services to ensure continuity of care and dignity in service access.

Livelihood programmes will be scaled up to create sustainable income opportunities through skill development, community enterprises, and market linkages, particularly for transgender persons and economically vulnerable groups.

Child-focused initiatives through Gurukul will be strengthened by improving access to education, creating inclusive learning environments, and supporting the holistic development of children.

Community engagement platforms, cultural programmes, and awareness campaigns will continue to promote inclusion, visibility, and social acceptance across diverse identities.

Through these efforts, Moitrisanjog Society Coochbehar remains committed to advancing dignity, equality, and inclusive development, ensuring that no individual is left behind.

*Thank
You*

We look forward to continuing this journey together, strengthening partnerships, expanding our reach, and deepening our commitment to inclusion, dignity, and social justice for all.