

## Promoting Human Rights and Education in Bangladesh (PHREB)

### ANNUAL REPORT

2010

Promoting Human Rights and Education in Bangladesh (PHREB) is a non-profit organization without political and religious influences.

Civil society members, Human Rights Activists, and PHREB Alliance Representatives are committed to the Governing Body to direct the organization. Furthermore, PHREB's Managing Director, Programme Director Finance Director, and Board Members are committed to the Board Directors to serve as the highest decision making body.

The organization is financed by Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO, the Netherlands, Cordaid, Amnesty International Sweden, and many private companies in Bangladesh.

PHREB believes that we cannot accomplish our aim alone. Together with local and international organizations, professional networks and individuals, we can ensure that change happens. PHREB has memberships/working relations with Asian Human Rights Commission, Hong Kong, Amnesty International (Dutch, USA, Australia, UK, Canada and Swedish Chapters), the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR) the Netherlands, The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, Geneva, The International Network for Domestic Workers, the Netherlands, the Global Network on Women's Right to Livelihoods (India), Communities of Youth (a global alliance of youths based in Bangladesh), The NGO Coalition on Women and Climate, Bangladesh and Chittagong Social Development Forum (CSDF).

This report summarizes the efforts of PHREB to promote women's rights, gender equality, and respect for human rights international standards included in the UN Declaration.

2010 was a year of sadness and joy for PHREB. In 2009 the ICCO (the Netherlands), PHREB's long time international funder, announced that had decided to stop funding all of its projects in Bangladesh and would stop funding PHREB's STOP Violence Against Girls NOW project. The ICCO (the Netherlands) has always been a strong supporter of PHREB and we are eternally grateful for ICCO's guidance and friendship over the past several years.

In 2009, PHREB entered into two new partnerships with Amnesty International Sweden and Cordaid. Amnesty International Sweden agreed to fund PHREB's STOP violence Against Girls NOW project for three years. PHREB and Cordaid partnered to create a new program, Safe Maternity – Strong Communities, that began with an initial one year funding and before the end of 2010, Cordaid agreed to fund the program through 2014.

In late 2010, PHREB began working with USAID and AED to expand PHREB's Imam's Movement for Women's Right program to host Imams and religious leaders from Afghanistan. This program will introduce the participants from Afghanistan how to view the Koran in a different light and how women's rights and gender equality are compatible with Bangladeshi Society. This program is scheduled to take place in April 2011.

Also in late 2010, PHREB entered into a five-year partnership with The World Bank and the Government of Bangladesh to operate 75 schools in Moheshkhali sub-district for approximately 3,000 boy and girl students for the Ananda Schools project "Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC) Project." This project gives disadvantaged children a second chance to continue their education. This overall World Bank ROSC project is scheduled to be implemented in 60 of the poorest areas of Bangladesh and aims to reach approximately 500,000 children who had been forced to drop out of formal schooling. The project aims to enroll these hard to reach children in the Ananda Schools, which are alternative learning centers. Most of the parent's of the children that will enroll in these schools are unable to afford formal education for their children. The ROSC Project will provide education stipends, distribute free books, stationeries and school uniforms. This project is scheduled to begin in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2011. PHREB is honored to partnership with the World Bank and the Government of Bangladesh in this noble effort.

In 2009, PHREB opened its first permanent office in Moheshkhali with 2 full time staff members, 11 school teachers and 5 volunteers. At the end of 2010, the office had expanded to 9 full time staff, 75 school teachers and 2 volunteers.

In 2010, for the very first time, the national government declared 13 June 2010 as "Eve Teasing Protection Day." Eve teasing is a local phrase used to describe the physical and verbal violence young girls and women face every day on the street walking to school, to work, to their friend's home – virtually walking anywhere. PHREB sees this as an encouraging sign that both the government and Bangladeshi citizens are beginning to understand the terrible adverse affects all forms of violence against women has on not only the victim, but their families and the community as a whole. The struggle to end violence against women all over the world is far from over. What follows are PHREB's efforts to end violence against women, promote gender equality and create an world where everyone is treated equally.

Activities in this report are divided into five groups:

1. Giving Agency: Adolescent Girls Alliance
2. School based Interventions
3. Community based Interventions
4. Alliance based Interventions
5. Vulnerable Groups Interventions

## **GIVING AGENCY: ADOLESCENT GIRLS ALLIANCE**

### **Bangladesh Kishori Adhikar Forum (BKAF): Motivating Adolescent Girls to become Advocates for Women's Rights**

PHREB is an outcome of an intensive research on violence against girls and women. The research found that girls in Bangladesh lack independent agency. To give adolescent girls an agency, PHREB created BKAF (Adolescent Girls Alliance) to empower them to speak out, demand and access to the fundamental rights enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights and other international human rights treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

PHREB's main focus is the work the organization does with adolescent girls in slums and in villages. We work with the world's most deprived adolescent girls who are the most vulnerable to the some worst forms of human rights abuses such as child marriage, child pregnancy, human trafficking, child

pornography, slavery and sexual violence. PHREB's activities empower these vulnerable adolescent girls, by providing them with life skills and education, to become the leaders of change, reproductive Health Educators and women rights advocates.

BKAF is a membership club. Members of our BKAF alliance include students, garment workers, victims of gender-based violence, domestic workers, street girls and slum girls. There are chapters of BKAF in the slum & villages as well as in the schools and rich communities. Village/Slum/School BKAF members elect their Ward/Union Council Officials and Union/Ward leaders elect sub-district officials and sub-district officials elect their district officials, district officials elect divisional leaders and divisional leaders elect executive council of BKAF.

BKAF provides girls with strength by enabling girls to connect with others, share stories, learn about human rights, and support each other in their stand against violence. Many girls have stood up to violence in their homes and neighborhoods as a direct result of the support from BKAF members in their community.

BKAF chapter meetings develop BKAF member's self confidence, personal safety and teach leadership skills to fight against all forms of violence against women, including child marriage, child pregnancy and disseminating information in the community about preventing infant and maternal mortality.

Throughout the year, PHREB organizes different programs to change adolescent girls' knowledge, attitude and behavior about child marriage, gender discrimination, sexual violence, domestic violence, sexual and reproductive health, common diseases, Maternal and Infant Mortalities, Fistula and climate change.

## **Reducing the number of Child Marriages**

PHREB empowers adolescent girls in BKAF to save their peers from unwanted marriages, pregnancies and abortions. We empower girls to stand for themselves, for their rights and for the rights of other girls in their community. We develop girls' life-skills so that they are capable of dealing with their families and traditions. This self-support network is critical there is a direct relationship between child marriage and adolescent girls who become pregnant, which adversely affects the adolescent girls' health and well being. The latest Bangladesh Demographic Health Survey reports approximately 28% of girls who become pregnant are below the age of 19.

Child Marriage is the gross violation of child rights and is widespread in Bangladesh as the country has the highest percentage of child marriages in all Asian countries. In the rural areas of Bangladesh, child marriage is a socially and traditionally accepted custom. Around 95% girls in the coastal and disadvantaged rural and slum areas are married before they reach 13. From 10 January to 28 February 2010, PHREB conducted participatory situational analysis in five wards of Chittagong City Corporation and 3 unions of Moheshkhali island sub-district. The survey found that the average age of marriage in Moheshkhali for is 13 for girls and 18 for boys. In the slums the average age of marriage is 14 and 20 for girls and boys respectively.

PHREB connects adolescent girls chapters with PHREB's existing networks in the community such as Imams Movement for Women's Rights, Public Health Forum, Boys for Gender Equality, Journalists' Forum, Married Women Club, Headmasters' Forum, local elect government officials and sub-district or district level government and police officials to stop and prevent child marriages.

When an event of child marriage occurs in a given community, BKAF chapter in the community or in

the school discuss about the occurrence among themselves and contact with the parents of the girl who is getting married. The members try to motivate parents not to marry off their daughter. When the parents are unmoved, the members of the club contact with other networks and get the government help to stop the marriage.

In 2010, BKAF in Moheshkhali stopped 213 incidences of child marriage with the help of the Imams Movement for Women's Rights Network of PHREB and Moheshkhali Sub-district head of the government officials (UNO).

## **Reducing Infant and Maternal mortality**

### **Turning Adolescent Girls into Maternal and Reproductive Health Advocates (MRHA)**

Because over 95% of girls between the ages of 10 and 14 are married, PHREB's Safe Maternity – Strong Community project (*discussed in detail in the New Initiatives section below*) focuses preventing adolescent girls from being married before the national legal age of 18. The project creates alliances with adolescent girls to provide them with education and knowledge of reproductive and maternal health. The project provides adolescent girls with the life skills and knowledge to become advocates for maternal and reproductive health. As of 31 December 2010:

- 32 Maternal and Reproductive Health Alliances were created with 732 adolescent girls. The Village based chapters of BKAF were actively engaged in creating public awareness about maternal mortalities, child marriage, Fistula, Common Diseases and Essential Primary Health Care.
- 32 Capacity Building training held to provide 732 adolescent girls from 32 special BKAF – MRHA clubs with adequate knowledge on maternal and reproductive health and advocacy skills.
- 408 weekly refresher training meetings were held with PHREB staff to provide additional healthcare education and support.
- 35 meetings with the alliances members were held with doctors from the local hospital and Family Welfare Visitors to provide the alliance members with medial and reproductive healthcare education.
- PHREB staff, Teachers and alliance members participated in 27 Health Education classes in 11 primary schools, 2 high schools and 1 college with approximately 6,100 students in attendance.
- Alliance members participated in a letter writing campaign and sent 2,400 letters to the Prime Minister, National Medical Ministers, and Upazila Mirbhahi Officers (UNO) demanding adequate government healthcare services in Moheshkhali.
- Alliance members, with assistance from PHREB staff, created 120 community health education sessions in which doctors, government officials and key community persons spoke to the community. Approximately 7,950 community members were in attendance.

## **Reducing the incidences of Sexual Violence and Eve Teasing**

### **BKAF Members for Combating Sexual Violence/Eve Teasing**

Adolescent Girls are the real victim of sexual harassment on the street, at work, at school and at the community spaces. They are not safe at their own houses, in educational institutions or at work. Eve Teasing/Sexual Violence is the main reason girls drop out from school and stop going work. and child marriages in Bangladesh. After being abused psychologically or physically or sexually many girls have committed suicide.

PHREB was primarily founded to combat eve teasing in 2004. Eve teasing is a phenomenon which causes girls' future tremendously. Girls who become victim of such violence lose confidence, hope and confine herself at her house. She becomes psychologically sick.

PHREB improves girls' life skills so that in such abusive situation, she can survive with her dignity and freedom. We enable girls to think positive and to fight against such abusive situation. We develop girls' support groups who can help them to get out such situation.

### **January to December 2010, PHREB and BKAF made key success in fighting against eve teasing/sexual violence against girls:**

#### **Committee for Girls:**

- BKAF members believe that if the local government officials do not support the perpetrators of eve teasing, there will be less incident of eve teasing in Bangladesh. To involve local government officials in our fight against eve teasing, we organized 7 Dialogues among BKAF Chapter Leaders and Local Government Officials in five wards of Chittagong City Corporation and two unions of Moheshkhali sub-district. In these dialogues, BKAF members highlighted how their sisters are abused on the street by men and boys who wait to humiliate girls on the street, in front of educational institutions or homes or market places. The local elect officials made strong promise that they won't support the criminals and bring them to the justice. They also promised girls that if such incidences happen to their constituencies, they will ensure severe punishment.
- BKAF members urged the Local Government Leaders to develop local committees for the protection of girls in their constituencies with local gate-keepers. After the dialogues, 7 "Committees for Girls" were formed. The members of the Committee include school headmasters, school managing committee presidents, Members of the Union/Ward Council, Social Leaders, Political Leaders and Adolescent Girls Leaders.
- The Committee published its poster with the aim of the committee and members' cell numbers to publicize the action of the local elect officials to combat eve teasing.
- After the formation of the committees, the numbers of eve teasing reduced remarkably.

#### **BKAF – Police Partnership for ending Child Marriage and Eve Teasing**

Violence against girls and women cannot be prevented without the assistance of the police department and local law enforcement agencies. Currently, girls lack confidence in the police department's willingness and ability to bring to justice perpetrators of gender based violence. Also, it is not uncommon for female victims of violence to be again attacked by the police when they report the crime. There is a popular saying that if a girl goes to a police station to report she was raped, the police will rape her too. A direct result in this lack of confidence in the police department is very few girls and women who are victims of violence will seek assistance or protection from the police

PHREB believes that if attitude of police are changed and taught to be respective of human rights, there will be a great benefit in our fight against gender based violence. In 2010, PHREB partnered with Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) and Moheshkhali Police Station to fight against Eve Teasing and Child Marriage.

CMP and PHREB developed thousands of posters to create public awareness against Eve Teasing/Sexual Abuse. The poster explained after being threatened or harassed how a victim can report to the concerned police officials by sending a simple blank text message. In this poster the police administration assured the victim that after receiving her SMS, the police official will contact with her and take quick action. The police administration also assured that they will keep the complaint as secret.

In 2010, Chittagong Metropolitan Police have received 18,931 SMS and Police brought 12,209 criminals to the justice.

In 2010, Police and BKAF leaders met three times in dialogues to discuss how violence against girls can be combated. Police officials became very friendly to the girls' voice and movement.

Police officials and PHREB worked together to create awareness among adolescent girls and boys in the schools and garment factories about eve teasing. The Deputy Commissioner of Police in Chittagong (North) Mr. Banaj Kumar Majumdar joined 13 campaigns organized by Police where thousands of students and garment workers participated.

### **BKAF for Girls' Education**

Being inspired by PHREB staff members and founder Mr. Faridul Alam, BKAF chapters took own initiative to promote girls' education in their community. 211 non-formal schools were set up in 2010 where BKAF chapter leaders' educate their sisters and domestic workers voluntarily.

BKAF members raised funds for girls' education. They donated 32,850 to PHREB for sponsoring girls in the high school education.

### **BKAF Sports for Girls' Empowerment: Improving Girls' Confidence, Safety and Leadership through Sports and Physical Activity**

In Bangladesh a significant portion of girls are not allowed to play sports because their families or community will not condone it. They believe that girls playing sports will cause controversy for their families. We have found that by creating sports programs in schools that allow girls to engage in active games in safe spaces the girls become empowered. By engaging in team sports and physical activity, girls can build confidence, body awareness and life skills. In addition, these team sports help build social networks and bonds between the participants which are crucial to helping other programs that PHREB engages in such as BKAF and teaching the girls that when they speak and act in unity they can overcome many of the obstacles they face in their daily lives. In addition, we have found that by introducing sports into the girl's lives it helps break down barriers at home and in the community – it generates acceptance of girls playing sports which in turn helps PHREB advance gender equality within the community.

- In 2010 was a breakthrough year in PHREB's Sports program. This year PHREB held six football/soccer games with all girl teams. For many years PHREB has attempted to have girls play football but there has been strong community resistance. This was a proud achievement for PHREB.
- In 2010, 123 sports programs were organized for adolescent girls in 25 schools located in Bakalia, Chandgaon and Paschlaish sub-districts of Chittagong Metropolitan City and in Howanak and Shaplapore unions of Moheshkhali.

- Approximately 1,832 female students participated in these sports programs.

### **Young Women's Summit 2010**

The Young Women's Summit is an annual event that began in 2006. This summit provides adolescent girls from all over the country to come together to learn and speak about all forms of violence against women. On 8 March 2010, the Young Women's summit was held at the Chittagong Theatre Institute Auditorium. In addition to the 25 BKAF leaders, local and national government officials, police officials, leaders of political parties and government educators also participated in the event. This year's event the following key government officials participated:

- Mr. Nurul Islam BSC (Member of Parliament)
- Mr. Banaj Kumar Majumdar, Deputy Commissioner of Police in Chittagong
- Professor Ali Hossain, Inspector of Schools of Chittagong Education Board.

This year's event lasted for a full six hours as the government officials, educators and political party members asked extensive and probing questions to the 25 BKAF leaders. It was an extremely hopeful sign that the various government organizations are beginning to view violence against women as a top priority issue that needs to be addressed at the national level. Approximately 700 people attended the summit. During the summit the 26 BKAF leaders spoke about:

- The physical and verbal violence girls and young women in Bangladesh face on a daily basis.
  - The lack of protection and enforcement of laws the girls receive from the police and government officials.
- The increased number of girl suicides due to the feeling of hopelessness due to not being able to leave their homes for fear of physical and verbal abuse.
- The increase in number of child marriages as the economy continues to get worse and more families are unable to afford caring for their children.
- Making walking to and from schools safe for girls.
- Making the schools safe for girls.
- Including human and women's rights in the national school curriculum.
- Providing safe spaces where government health sponsored pamphlets and information about sexual and reproductive health issues can be discussed.
- Enforcement of existing laws that are designed to protect women and girls from all forms of violence, including child marriage, dowry and domestic violence.
- Enforcement of laws designed to ensure girls attend school.

At the end of this year's event the government officials acknowledged they understood the magnitude of the situation for girls and women in Bangladesh and promised they would advocate for change through:

- Better enforcement of existing laws
- Increased training for police and local government officials on women's rights and
- Advocate to the national government for more support for programs designed to end all forms of violence against women and girls.

## **BKAF Artists for Human Rights Network**

BKAF develops singers, dancers and theatre players from the members of the alliance to create public awareness about women's rights, violence against girls/women and maternal and infant mortalities.

In 2010, 2813 Cultural Functions held in 5 Wards of Chittagong City corporation, Three Unions of Rangamati hill district and two unions of Moheshkhali sub-district. In these programs, around 12,000 BKAF Artists for Human Rights performed in singing, dancing and theatre focused on child marriage, child pregnancy, maternal and infant mortalities. Around 200,000 community people joined these programs.

## **Facts and Figures**

As of 31 December 2010 there were approximately 68,400 registered BKAF members:

- 39,617 in the Chittagong Hill Tracts
  - 24, 293 in Rangamati Hill District
  - 13,214 in Banderban Hill District
  - 2,110 in Khagrachari Hill District
- 19,814 in Chittagong Metropolitan City
- 7,982 in Moheshkhali sub-district.
- 975 in the Cox's Bazar District, including Chakaria and Kutubdia Upzilas

BKAF members support each other in their opposition to all forms of violence against women and girls. BKAF networks provide internal support for its members, enabling girls to connect with each other, share stories, and learn about human and women's rights. BKAF members have a higher high school graduation rate than the general female high school population. BKAF members write articles and publish a quarterly magazine, Kishori Avilash (Dream of Adolescent Girls) which is sold in various high schools. BKAF members are leaders who create awareness and advocate for human and women's rights to their peers, their families and within their communities.

## **SCHOOL BASED INTERVENTIONS**

### **Educating School Children about Women's Rights and Reproductive Health**

Since inception in 2004, PHREB partners with government, non-government, semi-government, private and community run schools to educate school children and teachers about Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) so that they learn, defend and access to human rights. By educating children about human rights, PHREB aims to develop human rights culture where violence against girls and women, child marriage, child pregnancy, modern-day slavery, maternal and infant mortalities does not exist.

### **Bringing Human and Women's Rights into School Lessons**

PHREB organizes workshops at schools that integrate international human and women's rights charters, including what rights mean to people on a personal and social level, into the school curriculum. PHREB works closely with school administrators and teachers to create lesson plans that can be incorporated into the existing school curriculum. PHREB provides human and women's rights pamphlets, stickers and other materials that are used as teaching aids. PHREB's age appropriate lesson plans are designed to be interactive and customized (urban, rural, or hill tracts) for the target



audience.

In 2010 PHREB conducted 361 school workshops in 25 high schools and 12 primary schools for 16,391 school students (13,003 girls and 3,388 boys) aged 11 to 16. These schools were located in Chittagong Metropolitan City, Boalkhali, Chakaria, Cox's Bazar. Moheshkhali, Kutubdia Island sub district and Sadar. PHREB school workshops also include:

- 189 school teachers participated in the school workshops
  - 56 teachers participated in advanced human rights training classes designed to assist the teachers in integrating human and women's rights into school lessons and how they can better advocate for human and women's rights in their communities.
- 23 police officers, 39 local government officials, 03 members of National Parliament and 12 national government officials participated in school workshops.
- **Since 2004 PHREB has conducted approximately 4,500 school workshops for approximately 648,000 students, 500 teachers and 12,000 parents.**

### **Youth Advocates for Human Rights**

Students who demonstrate academic excellence and the desire to become community advocates for human and women's rights make up PHREB's Youth Advocates for Human Rights. These students are given additional training on advocacy and lobbying for human and women's rights. Members lead and supervise other students in various advocacy activities. In 2010, 866 students from 23 High Schools participated in this program.

### **Alliance of Students, Parents, Teachers and School Administrators**

Students are encouraged to participate in youth networks such as BKAF for girls and Boys for Gender Equality. Boys are encouraged to support each other in promoting human rights and gender equality. The Alliance's main focus is to mobilize communities to prevent violence against the girl child and promote equality and human rights. Also, PHREB has developed alliances of High School Teachers and School Managing Committee members to help create schools and communities safe place for all girls and women. In 2010:

- PHREB and Headmasters from Chittagong schools created the Headmaster's Alliance for Safe Schools for Girls.
  - This Chittagong based network reported that they assisted 89 adolescent girls in stopping their families from forcing them to enter into child marriages.
  - Unfortunately, the alliance also reported that it was unable to stop the families of 38 girls from forcing them into child marriages. The alliance has reported these incidences to the local government authorities and continues to press the national and local government to act on behalf of these 38 girls.
- 14 High Schools created new Teachers and School Administrator alliances which focus on creating safe schools for girls and ending all forms of violence against women and girls.

### **Leaders of Tomorrow Club**

PHREB encourages and teaches male students to understand the benefits gender equality creates within a society. PHREB's Leaders of Tomorrow Club helps provide male students with the foundation necessary to become advocates for women's rights and gender equality. These male students work together to become change makers within their communities and encouraged to design creative solutions to address all forms of violence against women. The Leaders of Tomorrow Club has a central committee that leads the efforts of the members to reduce incidences of stranger violence

(eve teasing) in the communities and schools and reduce domestic violence at home. As of 2010, there were 7,811 male members who are committed to bring an end to the culture of violence against girls and creating a better future for all women in Bangladesh.

### **Essay Writing and Art Competitions**

The essay writing and art competitions activities are used to reinforce the human and women's rights lessons learned in the classroom. Students are invited to demonstrate their knowledge human rights and gender equality by writing or creating artwork on any human rights related topics. All entrants receive an Advocate for Human Rights award certificate. In 2010 approximately 6,532 boy and girl students participated in Essay Writing and Art Competitions.

### **Celebrating International Days**

PHREB works with Schools to integrate International Days into the school calendar, such as (in order of observance): World Day of Social Justice, International Women's Day, World Health Day, Safe Motherhood Day, World Population Day, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, International Girl Child Day, World AIDS Day and Human Rights Day. As in 2009, this year PHREB partnered with same 26 schools to celebrate these International days:

1. A.L. Khan High School
2. Abdul Hamid Sawdagar High School, Chittagong
3. Abdul Mabud High School, Howanak, Moheshkhali
4. Alkaran City Corporation Girls High School
5. Bahaddar Kata High School Chakaira
6. Bakalia Adarsha Girls High School
7. Barik Meah School, Chittagong
8. Chakaria Central High School
9. Chakaria Korok Biddapit
10. Chakaria Pashiakhali High School
11. Char Chaktai City Corporation High School
12. Chittagong Government Girls High School
13. Cox's Bazar Government Girls High School
14. Dr. Khastagir Government Girls High School, Chittagong
15. Dulahazara High School, Chakaria
16. Kapashgola City Corporation Girls High School
17. Kutbdia High School
18. Kutubjum Adarsha High School, Moheshkhali
19. Moheshkhali Adarsha High School
20. Moheshkhali Island High School
21. NMC Model High School, Chittagong
22. Nurul Islam Municipal Girls High School
23. Panir Chara High School, Moheshkhali
24. Rahmania High School, Chittagong
25. Sonara High School
26. Shahid Nagar High School, Boakhali

### **Adolescent Debating Society: Human Rights Parliamentary Debates**

Since PHREB began School Based Interventions, PHREB has used student debates as a tool to teach students about human and women's rights, promoting gender equality and ending violence against women. In 2010, with strong support from Amnesty International Sweden, PHREB has been able to adequately fund and promote these student debates. In 2010 PHREB conducted 11 parliamentary debates with 36 students in 12 high schools with approximately 3,000 people attending.

### **Creating Safe Spaces for Girls within the Education System**

Schools in Bangladesh hold a very unique position in the community. Schools are one of the few places in the country where the intrusion of external forces can be minimized or eliminated. In addition, schools are in the unique position of being able to control the behavior of everyone within the school itself: administrators, teachers, family members and students. For this reason, since 2004, PHREB has partnered with individual schools to create an environment that minimizes the affects from society's paternalistic culture and pressure from religious leaders and family members. By minimizing these external forces, schools have been able to create an environment where girls feel both physically and emotionally safe to attend classes, participate in class discussions and obtain the same education as the boy student sitting next to her. In addition, these safe places provide girls with the opportunity to hold single-sex discussions on culturally sensitive topics such as domestic violence, reproductive health and stranger violence (eve teasing). **In 2010 the following schools declared their schools free from violence and safe havens for girls. PHREB congratulates these schools for all of their hard work:**

- Agrabad Barik Meah High School
- AL Khan Boys High School
- Alkaran City Corporation Girls High School
- Chakaria Korok Biddapit High School
- KBAH Dovash City Corporation High School
- Kushum Kumari City Corporation High School

### **Safe Motherhood Education for School Children: Empowering School students to become Safe Motherhood Advocates**

PHREB educates school children about sexual and reproductive rights so that they can become advocates for sexual and reproductive rights and prevent early and forced marriages, early and forced pregnancy, sex – slavery, sexual violence and sexual and reproductive tract infections.

We encourage young students to become supporter for their mothers' fight for a domestic violence against women free society. We also encourage them to speak for their mothers' health care services. We hope that our youth and children will defend the rights of mothers and stand up for safe motherhood.

On Safe Motherhood Day 28 May 2010, we organized the biggest rally of young people in Moheshkhali island to create public awareness of safe maternity and demanding government for adequate health care services including Emergency Obstetric Care (EOC) in Moheshkhali Hospital.

In 2010, Safe Maternity – Strong Community Project created platform for youth and adolescents of Moheshkhali to raise their voice in support of their mothers and sisters, to enable young boys and girls and youth and adolescents to speak out, demand for increased health care services and

violence against women free society. PHREB organized dialogues among adolescent girls and Moheshkhali police department, sub-district council civil administration headed by UNO (Senior Assistant Secretary and Executive Magistrate, Union Council leaders, Moheshkhali Hospital Officials and Civil Service Officials.

Through these dialogues, adolescent girls voice out against the government's inability to provide the women of Moheshkhali with a female doctor and sufficient reproductive health care services.

After a series of dialogues among Moheshkhali Sub-district administration head UNO, Moheshkhali Hospital Officials and adolescent girls, on 29 September 2010, the Central Government of Bangladesh has appointed a female doctor in the Moheshkhali hospital.

PHREB's School Health Education Program has been one of the most successful programs. This program has been championed in educating school children about sexual and reproductive health, hygienic practices, safe water and nutrition education and common diseases.

- PHREB staff, Teachers and alliance members participated in 27 Health Education classes in 11 primary schools, 2 high schools and 1 college with approximately 6,100 students in attendance.

### **Youth for Fair Climate**

PHREB initiated a new program to educate children and youth in the school about the necessity of keeping our environment pollution free for a fair climate. Bangladesh is one of the vastly affected countries in the world for climate change. Because of climate change, Bangladesh is facing many natural calamities such as cyclone and flooding. It already put huge impact on our agricultural productions and increased human diseases and salinity in water.

PHREB educates young people how to keep our environment clean and cool. We encourage young people to make a green Bangladesh.

In November 2010, PHREB started forming an alliance called Youth for Fair Climate through our school and community based interventions. We started with 3 members and which at the end of 2010 reached to 1,321 members.

The Youth for Fair Climate will create public awareness and advocate for green Bangladesh.

## **COMMUNITY BASED INTERVENTIONS**

### **Building Women's Rights Community**

In Bangladesh many adolescent girls and boys are removed from the formal education system due to a variety of factors such as early marriage, pregnancy, or the need to help support their families. In addition, many older members of the community lack formal education, an understanding of the affects of violence against women or existing laws that are designed to protect women. PHREB works within the communities to reach a larger audience to improve community advocacy on gender and reproductive issues. Also, to create community support for promoting health education among adolescents through youth clubs and ending gender based violence.

PHREB's community based interventions focus on sensitizing the participants to the adverse physical and mental consequences violence against girls and women have on the victim, the families and the overall community. PHREB provides the participants with the tools and skills to become advocates for women and human rights. PHREB has found that by creating community awareness of the laws against child marriage and domestic violence, for example, PHREB is able to create communities to act together to stop incidences of violence against women when it or before it occurs. In communities in which PHREB has been able to create community awareness and understanding of violence against women the number of child marriages and other forms of violence against women has dramatically decreased.

### **Family Level Mobilization**

PHREB Staff and BKAF Members (BKAF is discussed in detail below) organize regular family meetings within a community to discuss women's rights, violence against women, gender equality, essential health care and reproductive health care. In these meetings families, from all walks of life, discuss the obstacles they face in advocating for women and human rights and work together to create solutions to these problems. In 2010, 552 family level mobilization programs were conducted in 113 slums and villages with approximately 23,000 community members participating.

### **International Day Celebrations**

Similar to celebrating International days in school workshops, PHREB uses International days to promote and advocate for women and human rights at the community level. These open sky events give PHREB the opportunity to generate general community awareness to gender equality, women and human rights. PHREB staff and community members discuss the significance of the days. Local key community people are invited to speak at these events such as, doctors from the local hospital, Police Chief from the local police department, local elected officials and respected community religious leaders. In addition, these events provide community members the opportunity to communicate and bond with each other. Creating these community relationships provides PHREB with the base to create community pressure groups that speak in a singular voice against acts of violence against women.

- In 2010, PHREB worked with over 800 communities to organize courtyard meetings, cultural functions and interactive theatres that focused on various international day celebrations.

### **Seminars to raise public awareness of women's rights**

PHREB's community based seminars are another vehicle to create community awareness of women's rights and gender equality. These seminars bring key community persons, local and national government officials, police officials, religious leaders, BKAF members and Leaders of Tomorrow Club members together to discuss issues that arise during advocacy activities and create solutions to these problems. In 2010, seminars were held at Blair Hat and DC Hill Park. During the Blair Hat seminar the Deputy Commissioner of Police in Chittagong joined as Chief Guest. During the DC Hill Park seminar Mr. Nurul Islam, member of Parliament, joined as Chief guest.

### **Interactive Forum Theatre for Human Rights**

In many communities folk music and theatre are often the main source of entertainment. These events attract the entire community. Entire families and generations come out and participate. PHREB's Interactive Forum Theatre for Human Rights is made of up adolescent girls and boys who write and perform songs and dramas on various women's rights issues including, eve teasing, domestic violence, child marriage, and generalized women's health issues, including reproductive health. In 2010, 145 interactive forum theatres were organized in 28 slums and approximately 30,000 community members were in attendance.

### **Training for Police and Law Enforcement Agencies**

PHREB works directly with local police departments and law enforcement agencies to provide training on how to properly address cases of violence against women. As with many places in the world, the funding for local police and law enforcement in Bangladesh is limited. PHREB works with the law enforcement agencies to understand the necessity to allocate resources to enforcing existing laws that are designed to protect girls and women from all forms of violence. Also, PHREB invites law enforcement officials to PHREB's community anti-violence against women activities which provides law enforcement and the community to discuss and create solutions to combating violence against women and girls.

### **Training for Journalists**

As representatives of civil society, it is important that journalists are non-biased and truth telling. PHREB works with journalists to provide them with information and support to publish accurate stories involving gender discrimination, such as rape, wife beating and dowry related violence.

### **Community Health Education:**

PHREB's Safe Maternity – Strong Community Project's Community Health Workers, BKAF Reproductive Health Educators and Safe Motherhood Club (SMC) members organize community health education sessions for men and women, sisters and brothers at the community levels. Following PHREB's Community Health Education Manual and IEC materials, Community Health Workers and Alliance Members educate community about essential primary health, safe motherhood and common diseases.

- Alliance members, with assistance from PHREB staff, created 120 community mobilization events in which doctors, government officials and key community persons spoke to the community. Approximately 7,950 community members were in attendance.

### **ALLIANCE BASED INTERVENTIONS**

PHREB develops alliances of change makers to make change sustainable. PHREB's main alliance is Bangladesh Kishori Adhikar Forum (BKAF) (*discussed in detail in the first section above*). PHREB also has alliances with boys, men, married women, community gate-keepers, Imams and Journalists.

### **Boys for Gender Equality**

In 2009 PHREB created Boys for Gender Equality that is organized and operated similarly as BKAF. Since inception PHREB has been working with boys since unless they are actively involved, all forms of violence against women cannot be addressed. PHREB's programming in Boys for Gender Equality stresses that economic and independence gains for girls and women directly benefit families and communities. In addition, working with boys to create PHREB's programming also provides these boys the skills to become active agents for change in the present culture of violence and oppression against women. By having these boys create solutions to violence against women issues, it creates a sense of ownership over the problem. When appropriate, PHREB involves or integrates the Boys for Gender Equality in activities such as Cultural Functions and Lobby and Advocacy programs listed below.

- In 2010, 138 Boys for Gender Equality chapters were formed with 2,760 adolescent boys.

### **Turning Married Women into Safe Motherhood Advocates**

A Married Women's Alliance was developed to create awareness among newly married women, pregnant women and women with an infant on family planning, birth registration, child immunizations, proper nutrition for both mothers and infants, the importance of using existing government healthcare services and safe motherhood. As of 31 December 2010:

- 32 Married Women's Alliances were created with 696 members.
- 32 capacity building training were provided to 703 women to teach safe motherhood that can be implemented by the members in their villages.
- 402 weekly meetings were held with PHREB staff to provide additional healthcare education and support.
- 32 meetings with alliance members were held with doctors from the local hospital and Family welfare Visitors to provide the alliance members with medical and reproductive healthcare education.

### **United Alliance for Safe Motherhood**

The United Alliance consists of members of Maternal and Reproductive Alliances, Married Women's Alliances and key community persons. The members of the alliances are provided education on essential primary healthcare, maternal and reproductive healthcare and advocacy. The United Alliances work with the entire community, by conducting meetings, dialogues and seminars to advocate for increased reproductive and maternal healthcare education and improved government healthcare services. In addition, the United Alliances monitor and provide feedback on existing healthcare services. As of 31 December 2010:

- 2 United Alliances were created with approximately 80 members.
- 35 Journalists were provided with information on reproductive and maternal healthcare. In addition, the United Alliances worked with these journalists to provide information on the inadequate healthcare services in Moheshkhali.
  - 20 articles were written and published on the lack of adequate healthcare, especially maternal and reproductive healthcare, in Moheshkhali.
- 30 Imams agreed to partner with PHREB and the United Alliance and use their Friday Speeches as a platform for disseminating information on essential primary healthcare and safe motherhood.
- The United Alliance held 14 seminars with members of Parliament, District Government Officials, Local Government Officials, members of the Civil Surgeon Office, Doctors and

Family Welfare Visitors to discuss the inadequate healthcare situation in Moheshkhali, to lobby for increased government healthcare services and work together to create solutions. Approximately 500 people participated in the 14 seminars.

### **Imam's Movement for Women's Rights and Safe Maternity**

In 2005 PHREB created Imam's Movement for Women's Rights with 7 Imams. Because of Islam's deep impact on Bangladesh society all of PHREB's programs designed to help change the social attitudes and behaviors of Bangladesh's patriarchal society. In Bangladesh, Imams who participate in PHREB's programming play an important role in promoting Women's Rights. In their Friday Speeches, community based religious gatherings, wedding ceremonies, community decision making processes and involvement in educational institutions, these Imams are teaching people to read the Quran with different eyes – learning that in Islam women and children are much more respected than they tend to be in Bangladeshi culture. Also, Imams use their Friday Speeches to denounce all forms of violence against women and these imams refuse to participate in child marriages. In 2010, 135 new Imams joined the Movement for Women's rights and spoke about women's rights and women's health rights during their Friday mosque speeches. As of 31 December 2010, 424 imams in the South of Bangladesh were involved with this movement. Annually, The Imam's Movement for Women's Rights reaches approximately 500,000 male citizens.

## **VULNERABLE GROUP INTERVENTIONS**

### **PHREB's fund for Girls Education**

Created in November 2005, PHREB's Fund for Girls Education provides girls who live in the poorest of communities or have been victims of natural disasters. All of these girls have been victims of gender based violence and almost all of them are rape survivors. In 2010, this fund provided 85 girls with opportunity to continue their education.

### **Tulip Schools**

Started in November 2006, Tulip schools are free and provide non-formal education, including vocation and life skills, to disadvantaged and heard to reach children. Integrated in the Tulip School curriculum are lessons on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Tulip Schools also provide students with age appropriate lessons on human and women's rights, HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive rights, domestic violence, early marriage and dowry. Students are also provided with school dress. In 2010, 180 students graduated from Tulip Schools.

### **Legal Aid and Counseling Support**

Amnesty International Sweden has also provided PHREB with funding to adequately provide legal aid and counseling support in a select number of schools in the Chittagong area. Part of the funding for this program went to acquire the 8 cell phones that were given to the police departments for PHREB's Zero Tolerance Campaign to End Eve Teasing. Also, PHREB was able to provide approximately 1,800 girls who were victims of eve teasing, dowry related violence, acid throwing, rape, domestic violence and sexual abuse with legal aid and counseling support.

- In 2010, PHREB provided legal aid for 7 court cases and 12 cases that were ultimately transferred to the Women's Affairs Department.



## **Publications**

PHREB develops and publishes various human and women's rights publications that are used in all of PHREB activities. They are used as teaching tools in school workshops, family level mobilizations, community events and in all of BKAF activities. In 2010, PHREB developed and published:

- 10,000 Flip charts on Women's Rights.
- 10,000 Booklets discussing the adverse affects and how to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls.
- BKAF chapters published 15,000 Kishori Avilash (Dream of Adolescent Girls) quarterly publications which contain articles written by BKAF members.
- 10 Bill Boards were hanged on the street for public view on women's health services.

## **New Initiative**

### **Safe Maternity – Strong Community Project (Funded by Cordaid, the Netherlands)**

In 2010, PHREB and Cordaid launched Safe Maternity – Strong Community project which provides community based health education in five unions of the island of Moheshkhali sub-district. The focus of the project is to empower the community to audit maternal deaths, monitor and provide feedback on the performance of available government healthcare services and to lobby the local and national government for increased government healthcare services. Currently, there is only one government hospital serving a population of approximately 600,000. There are virtually no maternal and newborn medical services available to pregnant women and infants. Traditional, rural, and unskilled birth attendants remain the dominant method in which a majority of women are supported during birth. This practice, in conjunction with the inadequate state of routine and emergency obstetric medical facilities in Moheshkhali contributes to the high number of infant and maternal mortality rates.

Safe Maternity – Strong Community project creates awareness of maternal and reproductive health among the target groups and turning the participants into peer educators and advocates for safe motherhood. The project will develop the capacity of the target groups and create avenues for the community to speak as a unified voice to demand increased government healthcare services.

Safe Maternity – Strong Community project also brings the community and local government leaders together to discuss the existing healthcare services and finds ways to improve it. The project will incorporate PHREB's existing Imams Movement for Women's Rights to further disseminate information on the importance of expecting and new mothers to utilize the government healthcare services and the importance of demanding increased maternal and reproductive healthcare services.

Safe Maternity – Strong Community project began with the development and publication of four manuals written by two Chittagong Medical College Professors, Dr. Roquibul Hoque and Dr. Afroza and a Medical Nurse Volunteer, Ms. Melissa Wright, from Australia. These manuals, one in Bengali and the other three in English are use in training PHREB staff on Essential Primary Health Care and Reproductive and Maternal Healthcare. In addition, the PHREB staff participated in a nine day training course on (i) Safe Motherhood, taught by Dr. Roquibul Hoque, a specialized doctor from Chittagong Medical College and (ii) Participatory Planning Monitoring and Evaluation from Peter A. Das. Subsequent healthcare training was conducted by Mr. Ahmed Sobhan, Cox's Bazar District Senior Health Education Officer. In addition, the Chittagong medical staff and medical nurse

volunteer created the following publications which are used by PHREB staff in the field:

- Essential Primary Healthcare Booklet which provides information on reproductive health, hygiene, nutrition and the importance of accessing existing government reproductive and maternal healthcare services.
- Safe Motherhood Booklets which provides information on family planning, birth spacing, breast feeding, importance of pre and post natal care and safe conjugal life.

A participatory situational analysis conducted in January and February of 2010 revealed the majority of adolescent girls, pregnant women and new mothers were uniformly unaware about reproductive health and maternal care. A majority of Moheshkhali residents live in extreme impoverished areas and these girls and women suffer from malnutrition and a large majority of these girls and women are illiterate. This overall situation contributes to the target group's general lack of awareness of sexual and reproductive healthcare. In addition, violence against girls and women is pervasive throughout Moheshkhal and the island has an extraordinary high percentage, greater than 95%, of girls between the ages of 10 and 14 that are married.