

SEMI-ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT NO. 4  
1 APRIL 2003 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2003

*More Effective Civil Society Advocacy of Human Rights*

BANGLADESH

---

Funding provided by the  
United States Agency for International Development  
under Associate Award No. 388-A-00-01-00133-00

SEMI-ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT NO. 4  
1 APRIL 2003 - 30 SEPTEMBER 2003

Submitted by:  
*Academy for Educational Development*  
Center for Civil Society and Governance  
The AED Global Civil Society Strengthening Partnership  
AED Reference 1270-2926-04

In collaboration with  
*Management Systems International*

.....  
Washington, DC  
28 October 2003

---

Submitted to:

Jessica Hunter Zaman  
DG Specialist  
USAID-Bangladesh  
Madani Avenue, Badidhara  
Dhaka 1212  
Bangladesh  
1 Copy

Mary Anne Riegelman  
CTO, Civil Society Strengthening  
USAID DCHA/DG, Rm. 5.07-115  
RROB, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave  
NW  
Washington, DC 20523-3100  
1 Copy

Raymond Edler  
Regional Contracting Officer  
USAID-Bangladesh  
Madani Avenue, Badidhara  
Dhaka 1212  
Bangladesh  
1 Copy

**BHRAP**  
**Semi-Annual Performance Report No. 4**  
**1 April 2003 – 30 September 2003**

**CONTENTS**

SUMMARY .....	1
PROGRAM ACTIVITY .....	2
a. Grants Program .....	2
b. Task Forces and Micro-Coalitions.....	7
c. Facilitated Workshops and Training.....	7
d. Study Tours/Participant Training.....	8
PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION .....	8
a. Staffing.....	8
b. Performance Monitoring Plan.....	9
c. Sub-grants .....	9
d. Meetings.....	9
e. Public Relations .....	10
CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AND LESSONS LEARNED .....	10
STAFF TRAVEL DURING REPORTING PERIOD .....	10
HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE NEXT REPORTING PERIOD .....	11

**Attachments:**

1. Some Aspects of Police Impunity and Their Effect on Women
2. Presentation on Advocacy Solutions to the Trafficking Problem in Bangladesh
3. Advocacy Techniques & Legal Strategies: Lessons Learned in India
4. Bangladesh Journalism Training Program Phase I Report
5. Phase I Report Addenda
6. List of proposals on Violence against Women
7. List of proposals on Child Rights
8. Key information of the potential NGOs for selection
9. Meeting with Partners on Anti-Corruption

## SUMMARY

Despite certain constraints related to the Iraq war early during this performance period, the Bangladesh Human Rights Advocacy Project (BHRAP) made substantial progress in its overall program of grants and training activities. AED/MSI's BHRAP reports results under the three objectives:

1. Strengthened the ability of local NGOs to advocate human rights in Bangladesh through grants, training, and technical assistance;
2. Increased civil society advocacy of human rights issues in Bangladesh through trainings, workshops, and study tours; and
3. Increased public awareness of human rights issues such as torture, verbal and physical abuse, violence against women, and trafficking.

During this reporting period, an additional five grants to Bangladesh NGOs completed the approval process and were signed. Of these three are fully operational and two are awaiting NGO Affairs Bureau approval. Three additional grant agreements nearing completion at the end of the period. As of the end of the period the approved sub-grants totaled BDT 127,092,716.98. Cost share commitments from the local NGOs amounted to BDT 40,620,955.60, resulting in a total grants program value of approximately BDT 167,713,700.

Grantee activity during this period has demonstrated promising results toward the effective advocacy of human rights in Bangladesh. We are pleased to report the following illustrative results:

- *Human rights issues documented through surveys and research.* An extensive database on trafficked returnees was completed; in-depth research on cross-border migration and trafficking continued; research on the violations of human rights by law enforcement agencies is continuing; and a baseline survey of the existing state of gender related human rights violations in *the private sphere* and people's awareness and attitudes towards such violations is underway.
- *Capacity to prevent the trafficking of women and children strengthened.* Ten watchdog committees comprising 7-12 members representing various professional groups and elected representatives were formed at four focal sites: one at Brahmanbaria; one at Cox's Bazar; two at Dhaka; one at Dinajpur; one at Gopalganj; two at Jessore; one at Lalmonirhat; and one at Narayanganj district. Each of the watchdog committee meets at least once a month to discuss various aspects of the trafficking situation of their respective localities. The watchdog committees also respond to any emergency situation that arises within the community including initiating rescue of victims and legal action against traffickers.
- *Trafficked women and children received legal assistance and protection.* Seventeen cases related to trafficking were filed and/or collected during the reporting period. Thirty-five victims related to these cases received legal assistance during the period. Fifty-five persons were made accused in these cases.
- *NGO staff trained to advocate for reduced discrimination of women and children in slum areas.* One orientation workshop for staff working on the "Innovative Advocacy Effort Against Discriminatory Application of Rights of Women and Children in Slum Areas of Dhaka City" took place.
- *Legal protection for abused women provided.* Thirty-seven cases involving violence against women have been initiated and settlements will include the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.
- *Law enforcement agencies monitored:* Thirteen investigations of police brutality took place and were reported on during the period. Six news articles detailing these investigations were published in national daily newspapers. Four police stations are continuously being monitored in order to prevent human rights violations from taking place.

AED and MSI worked together during this period to provide major technical assistance to grantees as well. In addition to working closely with potential grantees to refine concept papers, develop budgets, and assess

management capacity as part of the ongoing grant approval process, the project addressed major programmatic requirements through a substantial technical assistance exercise with grantees near the end of the period to assist them in developing focused performance monitoring plans. As usual, the signing of grant agreements triggered initial provision of technical assistance and training services in the design of performance monitoring plans and training in financial management. This standard procedure was supplemented by an intensive series of workshops and individual consultations with grantees conducted by an MSI expert in evaluation, Molly Hageboeck. The MSI-provided technical assistance and training was specifically aimed at enabling the grantees to tie their own baseline research and performance monitoring into the overall strategy and results reporting requirements of BHRAP and of USAID.

The first phase of the journalism training program, delayed first because of travel restrictions and later due to Bangladesh government visa processing requirements for journalists, was finally held in September.

This report summarizes achievements in both program activities and administration. The latter half of the report discusses the challenges faced and lessons learned during the reporting period and highlights upcoming planned activities. Supporting documentation can be found in the attachments.

## **PROGRAM ACTIVITY**

BHRAP's main achievements center around four core activities: a) the grants program, b) the promotion of task forces and micro-coalitions, c) workshops, and d) study tours and participant trainings.

### **a. Grants Program**

AED's BHRAP successfully completed processing of an additional one round of grants and kicked off a second round during this reporting period. Five grants completed the NGO Affairs Bureau approval process and initiated operations. The grants totaled BDT. 127,092,716.98 and the total amount of grant money dispersed through September 2003 was BDT. 21,154,816.

As part of AED's grant management philosophy, BHRAP staff worked closely with potential grantees to refine concept papers, develop budgets, and assess management capacity; thus, grantees' capacity was strengthened during the grant process as well as after receiving their funds. The signing of these grant agreements triggered the first provision of technical assistance and training services in the design of results-oriented performance monitoring plans (see below) and financial management.

Summaries of each grant, including a project description and results-to-date, follow. Results are outlined in more detail in each grantee's quarterly report, which are available upon request from the BHRAP office.

#### **Grant One**

<b>Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST): <i>Gender, Knowledge, Networking, and Human Rights Intervention in Bangladesh</i></b>	
<b>Total Grant Award:</b>	BDT. 29,091,387.50
<b>Dispersed up to September 30, 2003:</b>	BDT. 7,021,318
<b>Project Duration:</b>	3 years (January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2005)
<b>Locations Served:</b>	Jhenaidah, Noakhali, Kurigram, Chittagong, Rangpur, Comilla, Bagerhat, Gaibandha, Kushtia, Rajbari, Sirjgonj and Barisal

**Project Description:**

The goal of this project is the promotion of citizen-initiated efforts for systematic improvements of human rights in Bangladesh. This includes: strengthening the institutional capacity of human rights organizations in Bangladesh; increasing the research and analysis capacity of BLAST and its partners; increasing the access to justice for victims of illegal detention, violence against women, police torture; and increasing public awareness of human rights. Proposal and other related documents were submitted to NGO Affairs Bureau approval was requested on November 23, 2002 and received on December 19, 2002.

**Results:**

Development and pre-testing of data collection instruments together with recruitment and training of personnel was completed, a baseline survey of the existing state of gender related human rights violations in the private sphere and people's awareness and attitudes towards such violations was underway, 12 partner organizations were selected, and staff recruitment and training in gender and human rights and mediation was completed. Issue themes and scripts for film and video magazine were also completed.

**Grant Two**

**Bangladesh National Woman Lawyers' Association (BNWLA): *Protection and Legal Action against Women and Child Trafficking***

<b>Total Grant Award:</b>	BDT. 28,949,795
<b>Dispersed up to September 30, 2003:</b>	BDT. 7,714,750
<b>Project Duration:</b>	3 years (November 15, 2002 to November 14, 2005)
<b>Locations Served:</b>	Bogra, Brahminbaria, Cox's Bazaar, Chapaynawabgonj, Dhaka, Dinajpur, Gopalganj, Jessore, Lalmonirhat, Mymensingh, Narayanganj, Satkhira & Sylhet

**Project Description:**

This project works to protect the rights of women and children that have been trafficked both internally and abroad. BNWLA documents trafficking incidents and cases at the district level in target areas, advocates at the district level in target areas to eliminate trafficking of women and children, assists in the prosecution of traffickers and the release women and children trafficked internally, repatriates women and children trafficked abroad, and rehabilitates and reintegrates survivors of trafficking into society. NGO Affairs Bureau approval was requested on November 3, 2002 and approval was received March 9, 2003. The delay in approval was due to the fact that BNWLA had not fulfilled the audit requirements of the NGO Affairs Bureau and was required to undergo a standard audit as a condition for approval.

**Results:**

Ten watchdog committees comprising 7-12 members representing various professional groups and elected representatives were formed at four focal sites. Of them one at Brahmanbaria, one at Cox's Bazar, two at Dhaka, one at Dinajpur, one at Gopalganj, two at Jessore, one at Lalmonirhat and one at Narayanganj district were formed during the reporting period. Each of the watchdog committees meet at least once a month and discuss various aspects of the trafficking situation of their respective localities. The watchdog committees are also committed to respond to any emergency situation arises within the community including initiating rescue of victims and legal action against traffickers. Seventeen cases related to trafficking were filed and/or collected by the project during the reporting period. Thirty-five victims related to these cases received legal assistance during the period and 55 persons were accused in these cases. Under the project, professional counselors provided psychosocial counseling to 14 repatriated victims and seven internally released victims.

**Grant Three**

**Jesh Foundation: *Raising Awareness of Violence Against Women and Assistance to the Victims***

<b>Total Grant Award:</b>	BDT. 2,473,935.48
<b>Dispersed up to September 30, 2003:</b>	BDT. 1,825,660

<b>Project Duration:</b>	1 year (January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003)
<b>Locations Served:</b>	Kolaroa Thana, Satkhira District
<b>Project Description:</b>	The Jesh Foundation is working to raise awareness in civil society concerning violence against women, the need to enforce existing laws protecting women, and, through social mobilization, reducing the incidence of violence in the community. To accomplish these goals, the Jesh Foundation is: increasing the awareness of violence against women and human rights among community leaders; increasing public awareness of violence against women; increasing the access to justice for women who are victims of violence; increasing advocacy efforts on behalf of victims; and improving the health status of the community and battered victims. NGO Affairs Bureau approval was requested October 31, 2002 and received December 20, 2002.
<b>Results:</b>	Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) committees have been formed at the grass root level. In each ward 9 members and in each union 19 members have been selected to form ADR central committees. Each has been given training on ADR, family laws and basic human rights issues, including children's and women's rights. A major social mobilization meeting was conducted at Kalaroa on 24 May 2003 entitled 'Islam and Human Rights'. Presided over by Mawlana Md. Abu Zafar, Principal of Bujhtala Senior Madrasa, the meeting was also addressed by Mr. Eman Hoque, Chairman of Jesh Foundation and Major (Rtd.) Kazi Jahan Mia, as the key speaker. Out of 83 participants 23 were the Imams of different mosques, 28 madrasa and college teachers, 13 social workers, two marriage registrars, four Union Parishad members, eight madrasa students and four service holders. The number of cases settled by ADR was more than double the established target for the program during the first quarter of the period.

#### Grant Four

<b>Odhikar: Investigation, Research and Publication of Human Rights Violations</b>	
<b>Total Grant Award:</b>	BDT. 5,612,058
<b>Dispersed up to September 30, 2003:</b>	BDT. 978,270
<b>Project Duration:</b>	3 years (November 15, 2002 to November 14, 2005)
<b>Locations Served:</b>	Police Stations of Munshigonj & Dhaka District
<b>Project Description:</b>	Odhikar is working to highlight the violation of civil and political rights through investigation and research and through monitoring law enforcement agency activities in order to help contribute towards the protection of human rights and good governance by; publishing and disseminating detailed first-hand investigation reports; improving the behavior of police towards arrested individuals; increasing awareness and advocacy to initiate change; and highlighting police abuse in order to create pressure groups to advocate for a better police system. NGO Affairs Bureau approval was requested October 5, 2002 and received December 19, 2002.
<b>Results:</b>	Thirteen incidents of police brutality were investigated and reported on during the period. Six news articles detailing these investigations were published in national daily newspapers. 602 arrest cases in four thana were monitored and disaggregated by criminal code violation to establish police behavior patterns.

#### Grant Five

<b>Padakhep Manabik Unnayan Kendra: An Innovative Advocacy Effort for the Non-discriminatory Application of Rights of Women and Children in Dhaka City</b>	
<b>Total Grant Award:</b>	BDT. 2,442,000
<b>Dispersed up to September 30, 2003:</b>	BDT. 835,583
<b>Project Duration:</b>	3 years (November 15, 2002 to November 14, 2005)
<b>Locations Served:</b>	Slum areas of Dhaka City (Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur & Farmgate areas)

**Project Description:**

The goal of this project is to guarantee that laws protect women and children in slum society in Dhaka City. This will be accomplished by: 1) ensuring proper and effective application of the laws that protect the rights of women and children by law enforcement agencies in 22 slum areas in Dhaka City, and 2) increasing the public awareness in 22 slum areas about the rights of women and children and the laws that protect them. NGO Affairs Bureau approval was requested October 19, 2002 and received December 20, 2002.

**Results:**

Seven community workshops were organized with children and women. Two street dramas were organized in Kallayanpur and Tejgoan slums. Folk songs were performed in the slums of Kallayanpur and Tejgoan. Experience sharing meetings were organized. Wall murals were painted in four places (two in Kallayanpur, two in Tejgaon) on the issue of women and child rights after an "Awareness and Advocacy Training" given to the artists. Basic training on "Children's and Women's Rights" was conducted as well as a four day long Strategic Planning Workshop on an Innovative Advocacy Effort Against Discriminatory Applications using an advocacy approach titled Ghatah Pakhi. This is basically a community based advocacy approach, through peer groups, to ensure effective advocacy to the community.

**Grant Six**

**Bangladesh Poor Women Development Association: *Program for Prevention of Discrimination Against Women (PDAW)***

<b>Total Grant Award:</b>	BDT. 1,495,380
<b>Dispersed up to September 30, 2003:</b>	BDT. 216,630
<b>Project Duration:</b>	3 years (June 1, 2003 to May 31, 2006)
<b>Locations Served:</b>	7 Thanas and 1 municipality of Comilla District

**Project Description:**

The Overall Project Goal is to increase human rights for impoverished marginalized and other women and reduce violence against women in Comilla district. Specific objectives include an increase in specific and general awareness of human rights and the knowledge of mechanism for effectively address human rights violence; the development of strategies to prevent the occurrences of human rights abuses of women in Comilla; and strengthening the capacity of human rights organizations in Comilla to ensure the perpetuation of human rights interest groups as a fact of Comilla society. NGO Affairs Bureau approval was requested June 14, 2003 and received August 4, 2003.

**Results:**

(1<sup>st</sup> Quarterly report not yet received.)

**Grant Seven**

**Save the Children Australia: *Child Access to Rights through Development (CARD)***

<b>Total Grant Award:</b>	BDT. 12,047,224
<b>Dispersed up to September 30, 2003:</b>	BDT. 1359,368
<b>Project Duration:</b>	3 years (July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2006)

<b>Locations Served:</b>	220 villages of 9 unions and 5 Upazilas of Tangail District
<b>Project Description:</b>	The long-term goal is that, by the end of June 2006, to improve the lives of 50,000 children in Tangail District in line with UN Convention on the Rights of Children and to ensure that a child friendly community exists in the project area. In the 220 villages of 9 Unions of 5 <i>Upazilas</i> of Tangail District, the specific objectives are: the capacity of 30,000 children will be increased to protect themselves from abuse/exploitation; 5,000 key stakeholders will participate in promotion of child rights; fifteen <i>Nari-o-Shishu Nirjaton Protirodh Committees</i> (Women and Child Abuse Protection Committees) at Union/Upazila/District will be strengthened to take a proactive role to prevent child abuse/exploitation; and 2,000 Children's Institutions (Shishu Parishads) will be promoted with the involvement of 50,000 children (6 to 18 years) to ensure that their rights of participation, association and freedom of expression are better realized in their family and community life. NGO Affairs Bureau approval was requested May 12, 2003 and received July 30, 2003.
<b>Results:</b>	145 adolescent facilitators were selected for training; 294 working children were enrolled in six education centers; 54 community resource personnel were identified and received TOT training to create nine community facilitation committees to conduct workshops on different thematic areas of child rights i.e. child marriage, child abuse, physical punishment, birth registration etc. and to develop 27 Community Action Plans for continued training; Pourashava "NOSNPC-Committees" were formed in each of the 9 Unions and 1 upazila level. These committees have been formed in line with the government circular through which the child representatives could raise the issues of child and women abuses to the elected local government bodies as well as to the civil society members. Child Rights week was observed in all project areas of 9 Unions.

### Grant Eight

<b>Banchte Shekha: Human Rights Development Project</b>	
<b>Total Grant Award:</b>	BDT. 10,829,137
<b>Dispersed up to September 2003:</b>	BDT. 1,203,237
<b>Project Duration:</b>	3 years (1 July 2003 to 30 June 2006)
<b>Locations Served:</b>	Jessore: Jessore Sadar, Bhaghar Para, Choughacha; Narail: Narail Sadar, Calia; Khulna: Phultata, Rupsha; Kushtia: Khoksha; Gazipur: Gazipur.
<b>Project Description:</b>	The overall goal is to improve the awareness level and access to justice – both within the formal legal system and within alternative dispute resolution mechanism such as salish – and to increase women's capacity to mobilize to enforce their fundamental human rights. This will be accomplished by improving the awareness level, assisting them to identify and observe root causes of women's subjection, suppression and injustice and by improving the quality of justice through alternative dispute resolution; increasing awareness among law enforcement agents of their responsibility to ensure gender-sensitive dispensation of justice; and increasing women's access to the legal system in cases of violence or of family disputes. NGO Affairs Bureau approval was requested July 20, 2003 and received September 28, 2003.
<b>Results:</b>	(1 <sup>st</sup> Quarterly report not yet received.)

### Grant Nine

<b>South Asia Partnership-Bangladesh: Broad-Based Coalition and Advocacy for Human Rights</b>	
<b>Total Grant Award:</b>	BDT. 18,632,300
<b>Dispersed up to September 30, 2003:</b>	BDT. 0
<b>Project Duration:</b>	3 years (1 October 2003 to 30 June 2006)

<b>Locations Served:</b>	Khulna: 4 thanas; Barishal: 2 thanas; Borguna: 4 thanas; Potuakhali: 4 thanas; Noakhali: 2 thanas; Chittagong: 2 thanas; Cox's Bazar: 2 thanas.
<b>Project Description:</b>	The project aims at improving the human rights situation and reducing the incidence of violence against women by means of cooperation with change agents both within civil societies and government institutions. Objectives include enhancing the human rights programming capacity of ten NGOs; fostering human rights awareness among a cross-section of people and facilitating greater collaboration among local Civil Society Organizations so that they may broaden their influence on the policy environment and decision making process; and initiating self-help initiatives of the rural women to safeguard themselves from violence. NGO Affairs Bureau approval was requested on September 24, 2003 but has not yet been received.
<b>Results:</b>	Although NGO Affairs Bureau is still pending, the project has begun recruitment of personnel and four teams have already been formed to visit the coastal districts to conduct the survey for selecting NGOs to work with the project.

### Grant 10

<b>Manabik Shahajya Sangstha (MSS): Human Rights Education Project</b>	
<b>Total Grant Award:</b>	BDT. 15, 518,500
<b>Dispersed up to September 30, 2003:</b>	BDT. 0
<b>Project Duration:</b>	2 Years (1 September 2003 to 31 August 2005)
<b>Locations Served:</b>	Rajshahi: 6 Districts, 12 Upazilas; Khulna: 6 Districts, 17 Upazilas Chittagong: 3 Districts, 6 Upazilas
<b>Project Description:</b>	The overall goal is to ensure active community participation for reducing human rights abuses and influencing public policies on human right issues. This will be accomplished by: increasing awareness of disadvantaged grassroots people especially women on basic human rights issues and increasing their capacity and skill for advocacy and campaigns; forming Human Rights Watch Groups (HRWG) involving the grassroots people and encouraging broad participation of the people and civil society members in the activities of the HRWGs; influencing public policy on human right issues by research, documentation and dissemination; and educating the community about the root causes of violations of human rights through a Participatory Action Research Process. NGO Affairs Bureau Approval was requested on October 19, 2003 but has not yet been received.
<b>Results:</b>	Approval by NGO Affairs Bureau is pending.

### b. Task Forces and Micro-Coalitions

BHRAP's role in the area of task forces and micro-coalitions is to serve as a catalyst, facilitator and promoter of the efforts of existing groupings, not as a principal instigator. Efforts focus on cooperation with groups identified as working in the primary sectors of program intervention and encouraging those groups to move toward effective advocacy activities. Currently, the project is primarily focusing on a task force on violence against women by facilitating interaction among project grantees as well as other organizations operating in appropriate civil society arenas. This task force grew out of the India Study Tour and a subsequent workshop for its participants (described below).

### c. Facilitated Workshops and Training

Financial training sessions were held regularly with sub-grantee finance officers as new grants were signed. An intensive one day workshop was conducted by an AED/Washington finance officer to train grantees in the requirements of proper accounting for cost share reporting and documentation.

In addition, a series of group and individual workshops were conducted by MSI Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist Molly Hageboeck to refine sub-grant performance monitoring plans and to coordinate data gathering and reporting by the individual grantees. The purpose of the two week long exercise was to ensure that all performance data and reporting fed useful information into the hierarchy of result reporting requirements from grantees, through the program, to USAID.

On June 18 2003, AED/BHRAP organized a half-day workshop on “Violence Against Women-Advocacy and Campaigns” at the Conference Room of BRAC Center Inn. This workshop was a follow-up program to the week long India Study Tour that AED/BHRAP organized in March 2003. At the workshop, participants shared their ideas and plans as to how to apply the advocacy tools and strategies that they had learned in India in their respective area of work. Participants also explored the possibility of working together on common issues and forming a coalition, network, or working group on VAW. Dr. Faustina Pereira (human rights lawyer) was invited to the workshop as a guest speaker to explain some of the critical issues that human rights lawyers face in handling cases of violence against women in the courts. She also discussed legal and advocacy strategies for bringing about changes to discriminatory laws. A very fruitful and lively discussion followed the presentations made by the participants and the facilitators. The workshop came out with a work plan for all the participants to carry out through their organizations.

As a continuation of the follow-up workshop, Manabik Shahajya Sangstha (MSS) invited the participants of the India Study Tour to one of their discussion meetings on “The Deterrent Law on Violence Against Women and Children,” held on August 14<sup>th</sup>. The AED/BHRAP Program Manager attended the discussion on AED/BHRAP’s behalf. To discuss the ambiguity and the weakness of the law relating to Violence Against Women and Children NGOs, civil society members and parliamentarians were present at the meeting. The other objective of the meeting was to do advocacy on the recent change of the section (by dropping sexual harassment section from the law) in the deterrent punishment act of violence against women.

#### **d. Study Tours/Participant Training**

Despite significant problems created first by Iraq war travel cautions and subsequently by Bangladesh sensitivities regarding foreign journalists, Phase I of the three phase journalism training program was completed. The two consultants met with a broad cross-section of editors, journalists, donors and other individuals concerned with the status of the journalism profession in Bangladesh. As a result of their needs assessment, the consultants have proposed a design for the two remaining phases of the program which will involve intensive training and practice in investigative reporting focused on human rights and a study tour to India or another country to examine the practice of investigative journalism (Attachments 4 & 5).

The preparation for the training to address corruption issues in Bangladesh was also well underway, with substantial donor and government interest centered on the move to establish an anti-corruption commission. Consultants to be engaged in the initial round of meetings with political and administrative stakeholders were selected during the reporting period.

### **PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

#### **a. Staffing**

During the reporting period, one local staff member, the Finance/Admin Manager, left the project to take an

international position with a USAID funded project in Africa. The deputy finance manager has assumed the position. The Administrative Assistant position was filled as well as the Driver/Messenger position.

### **b. Performance Monitoring Plan**

Project staff participated in a Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) Workshop on USAID Strategic Objective (SO) 9 with Hap Carr and Eric Chetwynd in June 2003 followed by consultations at the project office. The main objective of this exercise was to draw up the project's PMP in line with that of USAID. The PMP design process, PMP overview and the current state of SO 9 was discussed in the opening session. Later, Hap sat with the AED/BHRAP staff separately to help us complete the Performance Indicator Reference Sheet. USAID's Draft SO 9 Results Framework was the outcome of this exercise.

### **c. Sub-grants**

In light of the strategic decision explained in the previous report to focus on a more limited set of sectors under the project, concept papers were reviewed again for content to narrow the field to those in the priority areas. A list of the proposals remaining eligible for consideration in the categories of VAW and child rights has been developed (Attachments 6 & 7)

Program staff continued their ongoing assessments of proposals and organizations for future grant possibilities. Attachment 8 is illustrative of the summary data of selected assessments.

### **d. Meetings**

The April 2003 monthly meeting of the USAID/Bangladesh DG-ED (Democracy-Governance and Education) partners was hosted by AED/BHRAP at a local hotel. One of the India Study Tour participants made a presentation on "Lessons Learned from the Study Tour to India". There were two more presentations by AED/BHRAP sub-grantees: Odhikar presented on "Police impunity and its effect on Women" and Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) presented on "Solutions to trafficking problems in Bangladesh".

The AED/BHRAP Program Manager attended a conference on "Inter-relations between Trafficking in Women and Children and HIV/AIDS: South Asian Perspective" organized by the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) on 24 and 25 July 2003. Delegates from India, Pakistan, Sudan and Bangladesh attended this international conference. The purpose of the conference was to exchange views, disseminate information, share experiences and formulate strategies to control, combat and contain the menace of trafficking in women and children in South Asia through better cooperation and coordination between the regional partners. The participants further affirmed that there is a direct linkage between trafficking, an illegally organized crime that has flourished as a lucrative trade in the sub-continent, and the deadly HIV/AIDS.

In connection with its planned journalism training (see below) AED/BHRAP joined a Donor Coordination Forum (DCF) for the media sector in Bangladesh. The Chief of Party of AED/BHRAP attended a meeting organized by this forum in April 2003. Many donor agencies at present fund various NGOs who work on media campaigns in Bangladesh and this forum was formed to coordination among these donors. Since BHRAP has received a good number of concept papers on media campaigns, it was important to join this forum. Some of the other members of the forum are: DFID, Royal Norwegian Embassy, SIDA, UNDP, UNICEF, and DANIDA.

At the request of USAID, and in connection with the project's anti-corruption training, a meeting of all sub-

grantees was held to examine their specific experiences with issues of corruption in the implementation of their activities. In the meeting, partners talked about their experience of facing corruption at various levels while implementing development activities. They also talked about the steps taken by them to fight corruption and instances of success in this regard. This discussion was based not only on the ongoing projects but also on their previous experience. A report on the findings of this meeting was submitted to USAID (Attachment 9).

#### **e. Public Relations**

AED/BHRAP staff were deeply involved in the US Embassy sponsored “American Week in Sylhet.” BHRAP staff manned a booth displaying various human rights awareness activities in Bangladesh and administered an interactive quiz on human rights issues for interested members of the public attending the exposition. A brochure and poster on AED/BHRAP were designed and published in order to publicize program activities to the general people and stakeholders. These were displayed and distributed during the American week in Sylhet. The brochure contains basic information regarding the project and the poster focuses on the equality clauses in the Constitution of Bangladesh.

### **CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AND LESSONS LEARNED**

The major challenges during the period were the constraints on staff and consultant movement resulting from security concerns during the Iraq war. However, program staff managed to continue with core activities focusing on the sub-grant process and building of the VAW task force. The major participant training programs were also forced to exercise maximum flexibility in the face of local sensitivities and as rescheduling became necessary in order to respond to important programming considerations such as the buy-in by political and administrative authorities to the anti-corruption efforts of the program. The planning for journalism training was especially enlightened by examination of the experience of previous donors in efforts to implement similar journalist training programs.

Recalibrating the project (as described in the previous report) has helped to generate new opportunities to enhance overall impact. Specifically, in giving priority to activities designed to address various aspects of VAW, the project is in a much better position to encourage grantees to cooperate where they have a common interest. Coalition building should become easier in these circumstances, although individual groups will still find it challenging to work collaboratively given the competition for limited resources and their different foci. It should be mentioned in this context, for example, that one of the new grantees, MSS, included an activity in its proposal which it developed as a result of the insight its representatives gained through participating in the India Study Tour. Still, there is much BHRAP can do to help promote greater cooperation, including facilitating more joint strategy sessions or dedicating a portion of at least some grants specifically to the task of coalition building for the purpose of pursuing effective advocacy efforts.

The efforts of the program to build a national human rights movement were encouraged by the willingness of sub-grantees to coordinate with each other in all aspects of implementation including coordination of legal services to victims and cooperation in development of community based human rights monitoring groups in different areas of the country to form the nucleus of a national human rights movement

### **STAFF TRAVEL DURING REPORTING PERIOD**

One staff member from AED and two MSI home office staff traveled to Bangladesh during the period.

---

## **HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE NEXT REPORTING PERIOD**

To continue meeting our program objectives, BHRAP plans to conduct the following activities during the next reporting period:

Program areas:

- Additional new sub-grant activity is expected during the next reporting period.
- Two major participant training exercises in anti-corruption and investigative journalism are expected to occur during the next period.
- An in-depth social marketing training effort will be undertaken to benefit sub-grantees who are undertaking public awareness raising exercises. The purpose will be to lead the sub-grantees through the process of identifying their audience, identifying the action that they are hoping to promote (rather than the action they are hoping to curtail), identifying the needs of the target audience, identifying the barriers and benefits to the action they are promoting, and then arriving at interventions (communications and other) that will lead to the desired action among the target population.
- The six-month Empowering Women Research Project will get underway to provide in-depth data regarding the dynamics of violence against women in rural Bangladesh, with particular attention to the role of the institution of marriage as a context for violence and other forms of gender-based inequity. When the research is completed, the results will be shared with sub-grantees through a workshop where the potential implications of the research on individual sub-grantee activities can be examined. Individual technical assistance will also be provided to sub-grantees in augmenting or refining their intervention programs and evaluation designs.

Travel:

- Up to 7 consultants are expected to visit Bangladesh in connection with participant training programs mentioned previously.
- One or two AED consultants will visit Bangladesh to work closely with sub-grantees on social marketing for their public awareness efforts.
- One trip will be made by AED researcher, Sid Schuler, to oversee the Empowering Women Research Project.

## Some Aspects of Police Impunity and Their Effect on Women

### ODHIKAR

#### **Introduction**

Since 2000, Odhikar has monitored the application of Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure in several Thana's or police stations in the greater Dhaka district. In 2001 it added Section 86 of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Act to this programme and in 2003 it began monitoring arrests under the Special Powers Act in 21 thanas in Dhaka city and arrests under Section 54 and 86 of the CrPC and SPA respectively as well. These laws allow police to arrest persons without a warrant or a magistrates order and on grounds of 'reasonable' suspicion' and are misused by the police, who make unnecessary arrests for mainly monetary gains.

#### **Who are arrested under these laws?**

Investigations carried out by Odhikar have shown that there are two broad groups of people who are arrested under the abovementioned laws:

- a. political activists and those suspected of being involved in confrontational political activity
- b. people belonging to the lowest income bracket – rickshaw pullers, petty tradesmen, street hawkers, floating sex workers, drug addicts and phensidyl peddlers, abandoned women, street children, etc.

Odhikar has focussed its investigation work on the second group of people and studied the reasons for their arrests and the effect their incarceration has on the rest of their family. Odhikar investigators have learnt of cases where persons had been arrested on the grounds that they could not comply with police officers that had accosted them on the streets asking for money. A majority of these people are either from poverty stricken economic backgrounds .

According to the government, 1,329 persons were detained in Dhaka under section 54 from January to September 1999 and, in 1998, the Home Ministry acknowledged that police abused S 54 . The various governments, which have come to power in Bangladesh, have occasionally abused this provision to harass and intimidate members of the political opposition and their families .

It is common for persons arrested under S 54 or S 86 to find themselves later charged under the Special Powers Act 1974. This conversion occurs when a prayer or petition, for detention under the Special Powers Act, is submitted to the District Magistrate from the concerned police station, through the Superintendent of Police. The District Magistrate will

then issue a detention order and send it for approval to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

There have also been cases where the police have arrested a person under S 54 or S 86 and then included his name in a criminal case - even though his name was not found in the First Information Report (FIR). Thereafter, the unfortunate detainee is charge sheeted.

### **The Effect of the Arrest on the Family**

People picked up by the police under Section 54 or 86 are usually accosted on the streets or at their place of work – the pavement or roadside. As a result, they are unable to inform their families of the matter. Persons interviewed by Odhikar have stated that they have spent up to 3 days in the police lock-up before they were able to inform their family members or before a witness had been able to inform them for him. Such arrested persons are usually the sole earning member of their often large families and by the time they are freed from the police station or jail, they find that not only have they lost their jobs but must carry the stigma of being a criminal, despite the fact that they may be innocent of any crime. Wives must borrow money to live on or sell cherished jewelry or land. They need to do the same to obtain bail money for the release of their husband. Furthermore, if the arrested person needs legal representation, the family has to pay a lawyer as well. All these activities have negative repercussions. Women whose husband's are incarcerated, are easy targets for local musclemen, money lenders and other vested interest groups.

Women who are arrested under these laws are usually sex workers or drug couriers. Many of the latter are heads of their households, being deserted by their husband, and have children to bring up.

### **Women in Jail**

This brings us to women in Jail. In 2001, Odhikar carried out an investigation into the situation of women in prisons in Bangladesh. The organisation studied and interviewed inmates in the Dhaka, Comilla, Jessore and Rajshahi Central Jails. Prisons in Bangladesh are extremely overcrowded and the cells unhygienic and insanitary and the food extremely poor in both quality and quantity. Women have more problems than men do. They have no separate medical facilities and very few beds in the wards. In December 2000, there were 298 women in a cell for 84 in Dhaka Central Jail. This figure rose to 300 in March 2001 and fell to 248 in October 2001. In Jessore Central Jail, there were 145 women in a cell with a capacity for 45 persons in December 2000. This fell slightly to 135 by October 2001. Some of these women are incarcerated with their infants as well.

## **Strategies by Odhikar**

1. Constant investigation in the target area – Odhikar has been monitoring thanas since 2000. It has been a difficult task to tackle police officer, but a friendly rapport has been established with a few of them. The constant monitoring of arrests under section 54 in 2000 had reduced arrests under that section in thana's in Dhaka city. Instead of using section 54 to arrest persons, the police had resorted to making the arrests under Section 86 of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Act. That is when Odhikar decided to monitor arrests under both S 54 and S 86 in their 2001- 2002 programme. The background of the victims remain the same.
2. Publication of findings – Odhikar believes in publishing its findings in the daily papers as part of its awareness-raising campaigns. To date, Odhikar's reports and data are published in 5 Bangla and two English dailies, along with monthly, quarterly and annual human rights reports.
3. Discussion meetings – Regular discussion meetings are held and annual press conferences organised by Odhikar in order to highlight its findings in public. One of the organisations most successful meetings was a discussion meeting on the organisations findings of the situation of female inmates. The Minister for Home Affairs, Inspector General of Prisons and others were present and despite the Honourable Minister stating that all was well with the prison system, Odhikar and the Inspector General of Prisons had another story to tell. In conclusion, the Minister for Home stated that the Government was planning to build a separate home for female juvenile offenders. This facility was completed last year. Odhikar is continuing this campaign in the hopes that the Government may establish separate facilities for female prisoners.

### **In Conclusion:**

In conclusion, I would like to mention that on 07 April 2003, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court decided that persons arrested under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure cannot be placed on police remand for interrogation. It also barred the detention of a person under the Special Powers Act after being arrested on suspicion. The court also directed the government to amend Section 54 within six months.

**Presentation on  
Advocacy Solutions to the Trafficking Problem in Bangladesh**

**Meeting of the DG ED Team, USAID  
Hosted by AED/BHRAP  
Date: April 30, 2003**

**Prepared by:**

# Advocacy techniques based on lessons learned to fight trafficking in women as part of violence against women

## PREVENTION

HIGH RISK GROUP	COMMUNITIES	POLICY MAKERS
<p>Make potential victims aware of trafficking as well as help them to save themselves from being trafficked</p> <p><b>Advocacy techniques:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about safe and unsafe migration</li> <li>• Display posters and leaflets having proper messages on trafficking related issues</li> <li>• Linkage (through advocacy with relevant organizations) with skill training programs</li> <li>• Linkage (through advocacy with relevant organizations) with sustainable community based livelihood opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>Create general awareness about the risks of trafficking</p> <p><b>Advocacy techniques:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of mass media (e.g. TV spot prepared by different organizations, newspaper publications etc.)</li> <li>• Rallies</li> <li>• School based programs</li> <li>• Posters and leaflets</li> <li>• Community media (street drama)</li> <li>• Educating people through interpersonal communication and group meeting</li> <li>• Awareness on Birth registration</li> <li>• Marriage registration</li> </ul>	<p>Lobby with policy makers within country and neighboring countries to adopt appropriate policies, enact pragmatic laws relating to trafficking and ensure implementation of those</p> <p><b>Advocacy techniques:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seminars, workshops, consultations for sensitization</li> <li>• Study tours</li> <li>• Exchange programs</li> <li>• Filing public interest litigation etc.</li> </ul>

## PREVENTION

MEDIA	NGO/CIVIL SOCIETY
<p data-bbox="203 304 771 367">Involve media positively through working with them closely to better address the trafficking issue</p> <p data-bbox="203 399 438 430">Advocacy techniques:</p> <ul data-bbox="203 430 755 640" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="203 430 755 493">• Emphasize the importance of human rights principles (e.g. confidentiality)</li><li data-bbox="203 493 755 525">• Develop guidelines for responsible reporting</li><li data-bbox="203 525 755 588">• Demonstrate through media that traffickers are being arrested and prosecuted</li><li data-bbox="203 588 755 640">• Use media in disseminating awareness raising messages on trafficking</li></ul>	<p data-bbox="885 304 1421 367">Make NGO/Civil society aware of the trafficking problem and effective solutions</p> <p data-bbox="885 399 1128 430">Advocacy techniques:</p> <ul data-bbox="885 430 1421 619" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="885 430 1421 493">• Orientations, discussions to explore modalities of addressing the problem</li><li data-bbox="885 493 1421 556">• Incorporation of anti-trafficking measures in existing programs of the organizations</li><li data-bbox="885 556 1421 619">• Making campaign materials available to field level staff</li></ul>

## PREVENTION

POTENTIAL TRAFFICKERS	TRAFFICKERS
<p>Refrain potential traffickers from becoming involved in trafficking</p> <p>Advocacy measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Publicize cases in the media</li><li>• Demonstrate that traffickers are being arrested and prosecuted</li><li>• Educate on the implications of the crime</li></ul>	<p>Bring the traffickers into the book</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arrest and prosecute</li><li>• Use community to act as a pressure group to punish traffickers</li><li>• Mobilize the community by disseminating relevant information through posters, leaflets, interpersonal communication, group meeting etc.</li><li>• Encourage law enforcers to arrest criminals frequently for lesser charges</li><li>• Educate the community about strategies used by traffickers and recruiters</li></ul>

## PROTECTION:

VULNERABLE GROUPS	TRAFFICKED VICTIMS	PROFESSIONAL GROUPS	POLICY MAKERS
<p>Assist vulnerable groups to protect them from being trafficked</p> <p>Initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure family support</li> <li>• Community care program</li> <li>• Inform them about rights and legal support</li> <li>• Lobby with government and private sector to initiate livelihood programs within the locality</li> <li>• Inform them about safe shelter if needed</li> </ul>	<p>Help the persons who have been trafficked to get out of harm</p> <p>Initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rescue the persons who have been trafficked internally from confinements like brothel or brothel like situation etc.</li> <li>• Release them from jail where they are put in the name of safe custody to protect their rights</li> <li>• Repatriate trafficked persons from abroad on voluntary basis</li> <li>• Repatriate them as quickly as possible to make sure that they are not further victimized while awaiting repatriation</li> <li>• Arrest and prosecute recruiters, traffickers and employers</li> </ul>	<p>Sensitize professional groups on anti-trafficking issue (Judges, Lawyers, Law enforcers, Journalists etc.)</p> <p>Initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training/workshop on legal issues</li> <li>• Group discussions</li> <li>• Distribution of relevant publications among the group</li> <li>• Guidelines for responsible reporting in the media</li> <li>• Make sure that the law enforcers play proper role</li> </ul>	<p>Lobby with policy makers nationally, bi-laterally and regionally for rescue, repatriation and extraterritorial prosecution</p> <p>Initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bi-lateral agreement between neighboring sending and receiving countries</li> <li>• Implementation of Regional instruments like SAARC convention on trafficking</li> <li>• Multi-lateral agreements</li> <li>• Implementation of National Plan of Action</li> <li>• Proper implementation of existing laws</li> <li>• Reformation of related laws</li> </ul>

## RECOVERY

SURVIVORS	FACILITATING AGENCIES
<p>Ensure that the survivors of trafficking are recovered from trauma</p> <p>Initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short term stay facility ensuring such an environment where survivors are not further victimized</li> <li>• Long term stay facility (if needed)</li> <li>• Ensure proper case management through</li> <li>✓ Psychosocial assessment</li> <li>✓ Psychosocial counseling</li> <li>✓ Provide food and health care</li> <li>✓ Legal support (if needed)</li> <li>✓ Homely environment</li> <li>✓ Recreational activities</li> <li>✓ Need based education</li> <li>✓ Skill development training etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Advocacy with the facilitating agencies both at government and non-government level to make sure that they provide services to the survivors to protect their rights</p> <p>Initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop guideline for proper psychosocial counseling</li> <li>• Ensure that the services provided are proper and beneficial for the survivors</li> <li>• Increase coordination among agencies at GO-NGO level</li> </ul>

## REINTEGRATION

FACILITATING AGENCIES	FAMILY/COMMUNITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop guideline for sustainable reintegration of the survivors into the society</li><li>• Make arrangements to provide<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Education</li><li>✓ Skill training</li><li>✓ Linkage to job etc.</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Psychosocial counseling for family and community to accept the survivors positively</li><li>• Create community care team/committee to oversee the well-being of the survivors at the post reintegration period</li></ul>

## **Advocacy Techniques & Legal Strategies: Lessons learnt in India**

### **Lessons Learnt**

In order to know about the advocacy techniques and legal strategies that we have learnt in the Study Tour, it is important to understand *Majlis*'s approaches towards law reform, campaign and advocacy. These approaches are developed through analysis of laws and practices, understanding of social implications and invaluable experience of working with the issue of violence against women. These approaches ultimately reformulated the advocacy techniques of *Majlis* and impacted on the greater regional and national level advocacy of women's movements.

Some of the approaches and strategies are discussed below.

- ❑ Women's movements have shifted from their demand for a Uniform Civil Code and reframed their own demand as 'reform from within'. This was mainly due to the demand made by communal Hindu political groups for Uniform Civil Code in order to integrate all communities under the broad umbrella of Hinduism.

After the controversial judgement of Shah Bano by the Supreme Court in 1985, upholding divorced Muslim women's right of maintenance, the communal undertones in the rulings led to a backlash. At that point, Muslim leaderships demanded for a separate statute based on Islamic jurisprudence and finally the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 came into being. The Act was viewed as a defeat of secular principles within the Indian polity and deprived Muslim women of the rights granted under a secular provision, S: 125 of the Cr.P.C. on the basis of religion alone and thus violated the constitutional mandate of equality. It was also a clear departure from the directive principle of enacting a Uniform Civil Code. Interestingly enough this Act, advertently or inadvertently, bestowed upon Muslim women a superior economic right, than the one enshrined in the secular S:125 of Cr. P.C. Drawing on the Islamic concept of fair and reasonable provision several High Courts carved out a space for the protection of women's rights from what appeared to be an erroneously conceived and badly formulated law. The statute introduces the concept of lump sum settlements in place of an extremely restrictive, recurring monthly entitlements.

Similarly, reforms on Christian personal laws became a success story of a sustained campaign to negotiate within the community and the state to bring reforms. The task was tedious and needed constant dialogue legislature, law ministry, Christian women's groups and the church hierarchy. It amended the Divorce Act, 1869 and make cruelty, adultery and desertion independent grounds of divorce and introduced mutual consent divorce for Christian couples.

- ❑ The demand and campaign for stringent laws against violence against women have underwent some serious critique as in many ways it strengthened the state rather than the women. After the infamous Mathura case, where the Supreme Court acquitted two

policemen from the charges of custodial rape and thus reversed the High Court judgement that convicted the accused persons on the ground that helpless surrender is not free consent, agitation in protest of the judgement eventually resulted in changes in the rape laws. This campaign and subsequent reforms set the trend for several issues relating to VAW in later years. E.g. it resulted in changes in existing laws or enacting new ones (laws relating to dowry violence, cruelty to women, *sati*, trafficking in women, etc.), increase in punishment, laying down minimum punishment, at times shifting burden of proof, etc. These laws on VAW were cited as a precedent for enactment of anti-terrorist laws with severe punishment. However, discretionary powers were used to award less than minimum sentence, conviction rate continued to be less than 2% and reforms didn't include main demands of women's movements that past sexual history should not be used as evidence during trial. In Bangladesh VAW Acts were passed along with anti-terrorist laws with striking similarities. While the punishment was increased by each govt., the procedural aspects and gender biases are left untouched despite demands from women's groups.

- After separate laws on dowry violence and introduction of that law in practice, the populist formulation of dowry as a regional case of domestic violence came into question. Need was felt to shift to more widespread and universal phenomenon of domestic violence. This again paved the way for new strategies to formulate a civil law providing for injunctions against domestic violence and introduction of the concept of right to matrimonial homes.

This time demand for stringent criminal laws were not made, as women's group begun to realise the failure of criminal law to address the complexity of domestic violence. Despite efforts of women's organisations to formulate a law that included every conceivable situation, the final bill was reframed in the narrowest possible manner. Today, most groups will opt for this bill to be scrapped than allow it to be passed. However, this did not stop the groups to use injunction against domestic violence. This strategy has already established within the legal system the practice of injunction in domestic violence cases. At this point husbands started to move the court for divorce and obtain an injunction preventing women entry into the matrimonial home. Then feminist lawyers begun to seek for the right to stay in the matrimonial homes and after many fruitless efforts have succeeded in getting this right.

- After the groundbreaking judgement on sexual violence against women in the workplace, for the first time the issue was recognised as a widespread systematic discrimination against women. The court set out various directives to combat sexual violence in the workplace. The earlier focus was on criminal laws with emphasis on trial and punishment. Violence against women was regarded as crimes committed by individuals not as systematic discrimination against women. Now the emphasis is on prevention and creation of a safe, equal and gender friendly workplace. The guidelines are legally binding and must be enforced. Although large number public and private sector formed a policy for sexual harassment at workplace, women outside the purview of the organised sector have not benefited from the guidelines.

- While campaigning for reform women's movements also tried to reduce gender biases within the male dominated justice system. One such effort was establishment of cells in the police stations for supporting women victims/survivors. The cell focuses on pre-litigation strategies which includes counseling, advice, negotiating with police, helping women to get shelters, etc. The cells are unique in a sense that they provided a space for women to be heard and given support within the male dominated criminal justice system and thus making it accountable. The cell was formulated after much debate and advocacy. The effort was a difficult one. At one point one cell had to be shut down because the police officer in charge thought it to be useless.

The separate family court with mediation judges, trained marriage counselors and psycho-social counselors are another success story of decades of campaign. The courts are less forbidding than the other courts and more women friendly.

- Throughout these struggles strong contact were maintained with diverse women's groups and organisations. Two such organisations were visited by the participants, which work intensely within their community. They have developed strong negotiating powers, acceptability and capacity to work within the community. Most of the members are victims of violence and through their shared experience of violence they reach out to help other women.
- The women's movements examined the rape and sexual violence of Muslim women during the Gujrat carnage where the intersectionality of gender and identity became a complex issue as it cannot be only a "race-less tale of gender subordination" for feminists and a "gender-less narrative of minority victimisation" for the Muslim community. Similarly, in Bangladesh the struggles and experiences of women of religious and ethnic minorities are sometimes different from the struggles of middle class Muslim women belonging to the majority community. Many a times their voice is not heard in the mainstream middle class women's movements.
- Portrayal of women as victims, weak and dependent has been the motto of mainstream media. Ironically this attitude was also present in many documentaries and films on VAW. This in turn establishes the preconceived conception of women as a vulnerable group that needs to be protected. In a number of TV spots and films made by *Majlis* on several issues of women's rights, the women characters are assertive and in control of their life. There are women protesting against violence and inequality and helping other women, women unfolding the story of history and their role in it.

### **Conclusion**

During the 5 day Study Tour legal reforms, advocacy techniques, women's movements, gender and identity issues of Bangladesh were also discussed by participants and in many ways the situation in Bangladesh seemed just the mirror image of India, however, these is not always the case. During the Study Tour *Majlis* did not gave any quantitative data or statistics, but despite that through strong analysis, the intensity and appropriateness of their work was clearly visible.

# BANGLADESH JOURNALISM TRAINING PROGRAM

## Phase I Report

Submitted by:  
Lewis M. Simons and Deborah J. Winsten, Consultants

October 10, 2003

**Funding provided by the  
United States Agency for International Development  
under Associate Award No. 388-A-00-01-00133-00**

Administered by:  
*Academy for Educational Development*  
Center for Civil Society and Governance  
The AED Global Civil Society Strengthening Partnership  
AED Reference 1270-2926-04

---

Presented September 24, 2003

Carol Horning and Jessica Hunter  
Democracy, Governance and Education Office  
USAID-Bangladesh  
Madani Avenue, Badidhara  
Dhaka 1212  
Bangladesh

## OVERVIEW

Serious investigative journalism is extremely rare in Bangladesh, whether specifically applied to human rights or in a more general sense. What passes for investigative journalism typically avoids naming names and other vital details that are essential to reaching a clear conclusion. Rather, on the basis of hints and rhetorical questions, readers and viewers are left to read between the lines and supply the context.

Our meetings with Bangladeshi reporters and editors in print and television media during a two-week visit in September 2003 revealed some reasons – or at least explanations -- for the absence of more in-depth, comprehensive reporting:

Editors cite budget and time limitations for their inability to assign even one reporter to a story that might require more than one day's work.

Reporters, in turn, cite their fear of clashing with the overriding political and business interests of owner-editors as restraints for not doing in-depth investigations. At the same time, we must note that reporters and editors – like Bangladeshi society at large – are thoroughly politicized and partisan. There is a general reluctance to step outside the proscribed boundaries that have come to define their roles. Objectivity is without meaning in this environment.

But, because several – but by no means all—of the major newspapers in Dhaka are profitable, we are inclined to back the reporters and working editors, not owners, as the best hope for promoting more industrious and more honest journalism.

The essential problem is lack of motivation, not lack of funds. For example, the leading Bangla language daily, Ittefaq, is hugely profitable, and employs 350 journalists. Most fulltime reporters are poorly paid, even by Bangladeshi standards, and local staff in rural areas, where many of the human rights abuses occur, are generally paid all but nothing. These part-timers typically use their press credentials for prestige in advancing their own personal or business affairs. Furthermore, while media owners we met disclaimed their own refusal to allow reporting that would conflict with their non-journalistic interests, they cynically accused competitors of such behavior.

The few reporters who attempt to probe beyond the most superficial level into cases of crime, government corruption, police brutality, civil and human rights violations and other sensitive subjects are frequently threatened, arrested, beaten, tortured and even killed. More ordinarily, their official sources apply pressure by cutting them off or implying they'll do so and their editors chase them from one press conference or symposium to another, often five or six in a single day. So, there is little incentive to commit the time and energy or incur the risks that are integral to effective investigative journalism.

However, given the competitive nature of most journalists globally, we believe that once even a single media outlet produces a compelling investigative report, others will want to do the same. Even media owners whose primary objective is to use their outlet as a mouthpiece for their own ends would be reluctant to see circulation go to a more penetrating competitor. “Oh, yes, that would be fantastic,” one owner-editor responded when we sketched the planned investigative program. “Of course, once this kind of reporting is done here, people in the U.S. and elsewhere will conclude that we're not civilized; that we're semi feudal; that the power structure is exploiting the people. But it should be done.” He promised to send two reporters to the course.

This is one example of several that indicate that the instruction, exercises and examples that we propose for this project could contribute to a more enterprising climate for investigative journalism in Bangladesh.

## HURDLES

In our meetings with 30 stakeholders, including editors, reporters, directors, NGO representatives, and think-tank analysts, we gathered background on the scant record for human rights reporting. The impact of the various journalism training programs held in Bangladesh over the past 14 years has been minimal at best in terms of improving the quality of reporting. This is self-evident on the front pages and newscasts of all the major media in Dhaka. All too often, a report on even the most horrendous forms of human rights abuses, not to mention an act of high-level government corruption, measures no more than three or four inches and relies entirely on a single source, most often an official one. The most fundamental tenet of rudimentary journalism – cross-checking with a second source – is ignored. As a result, two of the foreign donor organizations with whom we met have expressed their dissatisfaction and hesitation to continue with their journalism training programs.

To underscore the evident lack of results, these providers -- and some of the trainees themselves -- offer the following explanations:

\*The pervasive, yet often subtle, self-censorship exercised by virtually all journalists (with notable exceptions) that emanates from editors' and reporters' understanding that owners will not permit stories they perceive as counter to their financial or political interests.

\*Reporters' and editors' reluctance to accept the intrusion of outside journalistic standards. This reflects (rightly, in some cases) their belief that outsiders don't fathom Bangladeshi culture as well as their fragile grasp on their own professional self worth.

\*Editors' reticence in devoting time or space to in-depth work, owing to lack of encouragement by media owners or direct orders to stay away from sensitive subjects.

\*Poor professional preparation and poor quality education among those entering the field.

These hurdles are daunting and anyone planning an investigative journalism-training program might well be put off. However, our contacts have encouraged us to continue and try to surmount the obstacles.

## APPROACH

The approach we recommend centers on a practical exercise rather than a large assembly or series of lectures. By developing a story based on a real-life human rights situation in Bangladesh, reporters and editors participate in a guided exercise that demonstrates how the everyday stories they report in a cursory way can yield results that impact political leadership as well as ordinary citizens – and help the journalists themselves to gain respect for their own work.

The classroom approach traditionally used by training providers in Bangladesh tends to offend the professional sensibilities and easily bruised pride of journalists here

who, after all, deal in the local milieu daily, and understand their own society very well. Our practical assignment draws on their expertise, giving them the experience of taking it to a higher and more effective level.

We believe that the program would be most valuable if restricted to a maximum of 24 journalists. Although the number is limited, our meetings with reporters and editors indicate that this should be a very productive group, whose future efforts will be noted, and ultimately emulated, by their peers. Our plan is to accommodate the varying skill levels of young and midlevel journalists, mixing them in six teams of four reporters each. Each team works with one of the three pairs of trainers, consisting of an American and an experienced Bangladeshi editor. The trainer pairs split their time between two reporter teams, providing individual attention and guidance, posing and answering questions.

We also recommend that AED/BHRAP invite a few human rights NGO representatives. Although the focus of the NGOs is on getting their stories into the media, we'd like to include 2 or 3 of the representatives who have done their own independent investigations as participants in the training exercises. This is aimed at enhancing their own investigative skills and for their complementary interaction with the print and broadcast journalists and editors. In addition, we'd like to invite an outstanding Bangladeshi investigative reporter who has suffered as a result of his work to participate in the introductory session for the entire group. A frank discussion led by such a person would, we believe, inspire the would-be investigators about their own potential.

## CURRICULUM

Since the editors and reporters we met recognize that many Bangladeshi journalists lack fundamental skills, more so in the English-language outlets than in the Bangla, the course will necessarily be conducted at a very basic level. We will augment the investigative instruction with such essential reporting techniques as:

- writing sharper leads
- using direct quotations
- developing sources
- questioning authority figures
- interviewing
- research
- attribution
- pitching stories and follow-ups to editors

In advance of traveling to Dhaka, American instructors will formulate a hypothetical case of a human rights abuse occurring somewhere in Bangladesh. We create an investigative journalistic exercise based on this scenario that will require the trainees to supply the missing elements to conclusively investigate the situation for publication or broadcast.

One issue we're considering is the commonplace practice of men throwing caustic acid into the faces of women. So widespread has this become that the national government passed a law aimed specifically at acid throwing. Hardly a day goes by when newspapers don't carry one or more such stories; almost never are these more than simple police-blotter accounts.

This is an abuse worthy of investigation well beyond coverage of each separate event. It warrants a penetrating examination of the recent emergence of women into the workforce, the upheaval this has caused in broad economic terms, the waves it has stirred in traditional families, and the resulting, often violent, reaction of distressed men.

We anticipate constructing a scenario for reporters to investigate, though in a controlled, newsroom-style environment, in which they would be guided through multiple sourcing – victim, eyewitnesses, family and friends, police, social scientists, and so forth. Finally, they would assemble all the elements and produce a story that would be studied and discussed by instructors and reporters/editors.

This is how the course would evolve:

1. The first day of training is devoted to the instructors briefing a preselected group of up to six hands-on print and broadcast editors on our proposed program. Their participation fulfills a dual function throughout the training as both interpreters and editors.
2. The next day involves the entire group. The program includes introduction to the visiting Americans, the veteran Bangladeshi investigative journalist, and, most importantly, the representatives of Bangladeshi NGOs specializing in the human rights arena. These representatives, or even better, a human-rights attorney, could serve an important role by speaking in basic terms about just what human rights are. (Several of our sources complained that local reporters simply do not understand this or know what mechanisms exist to address abuses.)
3. The trainees work in teams with an instructor pair that consists of one American and one local editor to conduct a thorough investigation based on the scenario. During this period, we will impose a deadline and length/time for each team's story.
4. Once the reporting is completed, the teams will have one full day to write their articles and compose their broadcast coverage plans and scripts.
5. The American instructors, in conjunction with BHRAP staff, will then retreat for a day to review and evaluate the journalistic process and product. The editors and trainees have this day to return to their work, or take a weekend break.
6. All of the participants reconvene on the final day (possibly two) to critique, discuss and summarize the results with an outline for follow-up reporting on this hypothetical case. Certificates will be presented.

### SELECTION PROCESS

We strongly recommend that AID/AED draft and dispatch letters to the editors who have been identified by our contacts as those who are actually in daily contact with reporters, rather than the owner-editors. Since the media owners are effectively useless in terms of convincing staff to pursue stories that could hurt their own interests, it's important to cultivate the hands-on editors and encourage them to sign on to our program. We recommend that the letter include a short description of the planned program and brief narrative summary to introduce the American trainers. This will be more meaningful to the targeted media outlets than excerpts from our resumes. The letter should request the recipients' active cooperation in extending the invitation for participation in the training program to their staffs. They should encourage reporters

whom they judge to be most able to benefit and most highly motivated, hardworking, and tenacious. We also suggest advertising the call for participants in newspapers as well as posting it prominently on any broadcast or print newsroom bulletin boards.

To achieve the best selection, interested journalists should apply directly to AED/BHRAP with their c.v., a brief letter explaining their interest in the program, and a few samples of what they consider their best work. Concurrently, editors should be encouraged to recommend their most promising reporters. Based on our extensive interviews with stakeholders, including previous journalism trainers and human rights monitors, we believe that despite all the deficiencies and handicaps there are sufficient numbers of reporters who will be excited about tackling human rights issues in Bangladesh.

The ideal mix of trainees will include reporters from Dhaka-based mainstream media as well as some correspondents from outlying areas. We emphasize the importance of including women and broadcast journalists, though not at an artificially high level. The staff at ETV, whose broadcast license was suspended by the government, is highly regarded by many of our contacts and has been retained on salary, maintaining active production pending official action, due before the end of 2003. They should be encouraged to apply.

### PHASE III AND BEYOND

Regarding Phase III travel to a third country, our contacts were uniform in their preference for a South Asian nation. Our preliminary recommendation is India, possibly Calcutta but more likely New Delhi. The newsroom surroundings would be familiar, therefore relevant, yet the investigative standards sufficiently advanced to be impressive and instructive. Other possible destinations include Indonesia, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Selection of participants in the third-country study tour could be based on the quality of the broadcast/published stories the trainees produce for their outlets when they return to work following the training. As this would likely mean no more than half of the original group would travel, those Phase III trainees should be encouraged to share their experiences and observations with the colleagues who remain in Bangladesh.

Beyond the weaknesses we've discussed, Bangladeshi journalists suffer from a sense of isolation in the region and the broader international arena. They would certainly benefit from learning about professional journalism organizations around the world. Any sense that the challenges they experience are also shared with journalists in other countries is bound to encourage them. There are myriad foundations and stakeholders that recognize and honor the work of developing-country journalists, especially those who take the risks inherent in investigative work. We believe that having access to information about opportunities to participate in awards competitions, international conferences, and internships would provide incentive for the Bangladeshi reporters and editors to do better work during and following the training program.

As we discussed in the draft report review at USAID/Bangladesh, an important innovation would be the establishment of an annual prize for human rights journalism. Ideally, this would be sponsored by a coalition of Bangladeshi human rights advocacy groups, who would also select the award recipients.

The Bangladesh Journalism Training program is itself a critical intervention that can foster stronger links between news providers and human rights advocates. Phase II models independent, interactive and action-oriented techniques that journalists can apply in their own work environment.