

National Girl Child Day – 30 September 2009

BKAF Statement

STOP Eve Teasing and Child Marriage NOW

Bangladesh Kishori Adhikar Forum (BKAF) is the largest alliance of adolescent girls in the country and are committed to ending all forms of violence and discrimination against girls and women and promoting women's human rights in Bangladesh. As of August 2009, BKAF consists of 295 chapters with over 38,000 registered members across the Chittagong region. The alliance has developed 18,000 girls as Youth Human Rights Advocates.

BKAF members are very confident girls who are able to stand up for the rights of women and girl children. This alliance is known for its strength in 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 because of the support from other girls in their community. This BKAF alliance then disseminates throughout entire communities, reaching numbers far beyond that in the alliance.

BKAF chapter leaders and members seek help from the community based PHREB alliances, such as Imams, village heads, teachers and local government leaders and finally from local police stations. BKAF organizes regular motivational dialogues, theatres and cultural functions on violence against children, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, gender equality, girls' right to education, health care services and social justice at the BKAF Chapter Meeting Points.

PHREB (Promoting Human Rights and Education in Bangladesh), a human rights, not-for-profit organization is based in Chittagong and founded the BKAF program in 2005 to empower adolescent girls to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives and to become active agents of social change, by giving them the opportunity to articulate, demand and access their human rights.

Since her inception in 2004, PHREB has been educating young people about human rights. PHREB aims to empower girls and women to speak up when they are abused, to seek help for themselves or others in an abusive situation, and be leaders in their communities in the fight against gender-based violence.

On National Girl Child Day 2009, which will be celebrated throughout Bangladesh on 30 September, BKAF members demand from the Government of Bangladesh the following:

Adolescent girls demand safety on the street, at school and at work

Adolescent girls are one of the main victims of gender-based violence. They are not safe at home, school, work, in the community or on the street. Adolescent girls are often subjected to eve teasing (stranger violence) on a daily basis. The prevalence of eve teasing creates an environment where young girls do not want to leave their home. These girls often drop out of school, quit their jobs, are denied access to an education, sometimes commit suicide and may be subjected to child marriage.

Child marriage is gross violation of human rights - STOP Child Marriage

The legal age for marriage in Bangladesh is 18 but according to the Bangladesh Health Demographic Survey 2009, 70% of Bangladeshi girls are married off at the age of 16 or below. It is also estimated that 90% of rural girls are getting married before the age of 18 and expecting a baby in the following year or two. High incidence of child marriage contributes to high levels of persistent poverty, low educational levels for girls, high levels of maternal and child mortality and greater levels of maternal and child malnutrition.

STOP domestic violence

Domestic violence, which is not recognized as a crime in Bangladesh, remains the biggest threat to women's security. Bangladeshi culture creates an environment that condones domestic violence. Over one-third of married women between the ages of 15 and 49 believe it is acceptable for a husband to hit or beat his wife. Extreme physical abuse at the home that led to death, accounted for more than 70% of the domestic violence cases involving young married women between the ages of 13 and 18. Combating violence against women and children is critical to improving maternal and newborn health. One in seven maternal deaths is a direct result of domestic violence.

PHREB

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