

ADVOCACY

750 +

**STUDENTS REPRESENTING THREE
MAJOR UNIVERSITIES ATTENDED THE
'GENDER AND SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH
CONFERENCE FOR YOUNG ADULTS'
IN 2018**

200+

**ADVOCACY-BASED
EVENTS WITH
MULTI-STAKEHOLDER
ENGAGEMENTS**

14

**ADVOCACY-BASED
EVENTS THROUGH
MULTI-STAKEHOLDER
ENGAGEMENTS IN 2018**

With a strong academic integrity, a focus on research, and as leaders in public health both in Bangladesh and globally, the School believes in advocating for change in policies and working closely with stakeholders to push agendas that are of critical national and global importance. We aim to foster better and healthier lives through evidence-based research which can inform policymakers, practitioners and programmes/interventions for vulnerable communities. We strive to collaborate closely with key stakeholders, including communities, development practitioners, NGOs, INGOs, government and other key policymakers, and with global research and service delivery organizations, when advocating evidence that will improve health outcomes for the disadvantaged.

All research projects undertaken by the School have policy and advocacy as part of their key mandate. The aim of the five Centres of Excellence are to translate research knowledge into action through influencing policies and diverse actors. Research uptake is undertaken by various means, through both formal and informal channels. These include, organizing different critical platforms of national importance through partnering with key stakeholders for hosting high level meetings and dialogues with government, organizing seminars, and disseminating advocacy activities through media and radio channels, blogs, and policy briefs. The School hosts an independent national group – Bangladesh Health Watch, established in 2006, whose mission is to monitor the state of citizen's health each year, and publish a report on various public issues of national and critical importance.

The School's policy and program-based advocacy efforts are directly informed by research on existing and emerging critical public health challenges in Bangladesh and the region. A key area of implementation science is to bring researchers and policymakers together to make programmatic changes to influence policy and engage in reform. Some examples of our advocacy work include ensuring universal health coverage, holding policymakers and influencers accountable on health sector reform, breaking the shame and taboos around gender and sexual and reproductive health and rights, sexuality, bodily rights, and pushing the urban health to the forefront of the country's health policy agenda. Another current prime focus at the School is on emerging advocacy on non-communicable diseases and nutrition, particularly adolescent girls.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES IN 2018

DISSEMINATION EVENT ON REACHING OUT AND LINKING IN: HEALTH SYSTEMS AND CLOSE-TO-COMMUNITY SERVICES

A dissemination event of a five-year (2013-18) multi-country EU funded implementation research project titled 'REACHOUT - Reaching Out and Linking In: Health Systems and Close-to-Community (CTC) Services' was organized by BRAC JPGSPH on 28 January 2018. REACHOUT Bangladesh, led by BRAC JPGSPH aimed to strengthen the capacity of CTC providers through improving the referral system for Menstrual Regulation (MR) services. Marie Stopes Bangladesh and Reproductive Health Services Training and Education Program (RHSTEP) were the local implementing partners of this project. About 98 different stakeholders representing the government, national and international non-governmental organizations, universities and CTC providers attended the event.

A short documentary produced by REACHOUT Bangladesh titled 'Walking Together: How Close-to-Community providers support Women seeking Menstrual Regulation Services in Bangladesh', was also launched at the event. The documentary describes how community health workers help women in Bangladesh navigate the health system to attain Menstrual Regulation services and the challenges that they face.

You can watch the documentary here:

bit.ly/walkingtogetherCTC



Consequently, many women were persuaded by brokers/dalals to use untrained clandestine providers in unsafe conditions.

GENDER AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CONFERENCE FOR YOUNG ADULTS 2018

The Gender and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Conference for Young Adults 2018, funded by NUFFIC and organized by The Centre of Excellence for Gender, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (CGSRHR) took place on 30-31 January 2018. The one-and-a-half-day conference featured panel sessions about young people and sexual and reproductive health by 30 experts from all over the world.

Invited experts discussed topics on emotional life and well-being of young adults, addressing sexual and reproductive health, and gender issues faced by both young women and men, the role of digital technology, and contemporary relationships, desirability and skin color, eating disorders, issues of consent and choice, censorship and comprehensive sexuality education, and other critical reflections, which impact on young people's lives. The first day focused solely on young adults and brought together 750 students from four universities (two public and two private).

Over 300 stakeholders working on gender, sexual and reproductive health (i.e. groups working on comprehensive sexuality curriculum, people with disabilities, adolescents' health, etc.) joined to discuss issues and recommendations on ways forward to improve SRH for young adults on the second day of the conference.

Kate Hawkins, the Director of Pamoja Communications and who supported the communications and research uptake elements of REACHOUT Project, wrote a blog on the Gender and Sexual Reproductive Health Conference for Young Adults 2018.

You can read the blog here: bit.ly/GenderSRHYA



DISSEMINATION SEMINARS ON THE FINANCIAL AND SERVICE COVERAGE & QUALITY ASPECTS OF UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

The Centre of Excellence for Health Systems and Universal Health Coverage (CoE-HS&UHC) in partnership with icddr,b organized two dissemination seminars in 2018.

The first dissemination seminar was organized to share four different research findings on 'Financial Aspects of UHC' on 29 January 2018. The seminar highlighted the importance of health insurance to address the challenge of out-of-pocket payment in Bangladesh and the importance of social health insurance.

The second dissemination seminar on 27 February 2018 shared research findings from the study 'Service Coverage and Quality aspects of UHC'. Findings from three different research projects were presented at this seminar.

Researchers from BRAC JPGSPH and icddr,b with panelists and invited guests from public and non-government sectors participated in the both the events. Participants shared their experiences and suggested the way forward for addressing the aspects of UHC.



PANEL DISCUSSION ON EVIDENCE TO INFORM LOCAL-LEVEL POLICY, PROGRAMME AND PRACTICE

The Centre of Excellence for Science of Implementation and Scale-Up (CoE-SISU) with the support from UNICEF Bangladesh, organized a panel discussion on 'Evidence to Inform Local Level Policy, Programme, and Practice' on 19 February 2018. Around 40 government officials, development practitioners and researchers from 15 organizations attended the panel discussion.

Various topics were discussed, including evidence-based local level planning in the health sector and education sector, local level planning in maternal and child health, international experiences in evidence based-local level planning, and the role of icddr,b and UNICEF in promoting evidence-based local level planning in Bangladesh.



ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ON 'PROMOTING ADOLESCENT NUTRITION IN BANGLADESH'

A round table discussion on 'Promoting Adolescent Nutrition in Bangladesh' was jointly organized by BRAC JPGSPH and Shornokishoree Network Foundation (SKNF), with the support of UNICEF Bangladesh and World Bank at the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) Auditorium on 8 March 2018. The Chairman of the SKNF moderated the program.

The Centre of Excellence for Non-Communicable Disease (CNCDN) shared on the Evidence on Adolescent Nutrition, and others who spoke at the program included senior nutrition specialists from the World Bank and UNICEF, and discussion was aired live in Bangladesh on Channel I.

You can watch the round table discussion here:
bit.ly/nutritionroundtable



ANTI-BULLYING CAMPAIGN AT BRAC UNIVERSITY

BRAC University successfully concluded a week-long campaign on Anti-Bullying between 13-17 May 2018. Professor Sabina Faiz Rashid, Dean, and Professor Malabika Sarker, Associate Dean, represented BRAC JPGSPH during the campaign. Professor Rashid shared her own experience of getting bullied while growing up; and on the third day of the campaign, Professor Sarker talked about sexual bullying, emphasizing on how women bully each other. A video on cyber bullying produced by a BRAC JPGSPH project under CGSRHR and funded by NWO-WOTRO titled 'Digital Sister for Urban Youth' was also shown to students during the campaign.

The campaign is a part of the Empathy Program of the University, and highlighted the different aspects of bullying that include, Verbal and Non-verbal Bullying, Cyber Bullying, Physical & Sexual Abuse, Social Bullying (Prejudice and Racism), and Psychological & Emotional Bullying.

Lady Syeda Sarwat Abed (Founder & Director of BRAC Institute of Languages, BIL) initiated the campaign along with, Dilara Afroz Khan (Assistant Professor & Director of the Office of Co-Curricular Activities, OCA), and Safina Binte Enayet (Coordinator, Senior Psychosocial Counselor, and Lecturer, Counseling Unit).

600 participants from all the departments of BRAC University including students, faculty members and staff were present in the programs for each day.

View the Cyber Harassment video on here:
bit.ly/cyberharrasment



NGO STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP: 'LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND: CHALLENGES OF ENSURING ACCESSIBILITY AND UTILIZATION OF HEALTH SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES'

An NGO stakeholder workshop titled 'Leaving No One Behind: Challenges of Ensuring Accessibility and Utilization of Health Services for People with Physical Disabilities' was hosted on 27 May 2018.

The workshop was attended by participants from the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD), Action on Disability and Development International (ADD), BRAC, Handicap International, Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association (DRRA), Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP), Turning Point Foundation and other disabled people's organizations (DPOs) that assist to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

The workshop was conducted as a part of the research project 'Leaving No One Behind: Is the health sector of Bangladesh failing to fulfill the needs of persons with disabilities?' and captured the experiences of non-government stakeholders working with people with disabilities. It also identified their unmet health needs and its underlying reasons through a focus group discussion.



'WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE WANT?' DISSEMINATION SEMINAR AND POLICY DIALOGUE FOR TWO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR) RESEARCH PROJECTS

BRAC JPGSPH hosted a seminar titled 'What Do Young People Want?' to disseminate the findings from two innovative SRHR research projects targeting young people in Bangladesh on 2 June 2018. Findings from the research projects titled, 'Breaking the Shame: Towards effective SRHR Education for Young People in Bangladesh' and 'Digital Sister for Urban Youth: Using New Technology for Effective SRHR Communication for Urban Youth (15-24 years) of Bangladesh' was shared during the program.

A beta version of an android mobile app titled 'Amra Jante Chai' was also launched during the seminar. The app aims to provide reliable SRHR information to young people in Bangladesh. The app launch was followed by three panel discussions on topics including, 'Innovative Tools for Disseminating SRHR Information for Young People in Bangladesh', 'Influence of Cultural and Social Norms, Shame, Stigma and Other Perceptions on Young People's Lives' and 'Existing SRHR Services in Bangladesh for Young People'.

The seminar was followed by a round-table to present and discuss policy recommendations based on the findings from the two research projects. Senior government officials, representatives from national and international organizations and adolescents from different parts of Bangladesh also participated in the dialogue to inform government policy on adolescents sexual and reproductive health needs, especially in the education curriculum.



You can watch a brief video on the dissemination seminar and the policy dialogue here: bit.ly/whatyoungpeoplewant



SEMINAR ON THE STRENGTHENING HEALTH SYSTEMS THROUGH ORGANIZING COMMUNITIES (SHASTO) PROJECT

The Centre of Excellence for Non-Communicable Disease and Nutrition (CNCDN) presented preliminary findings of the 'Baseline Survey of the Project for Strengthening Health Systems through Organizing Communities (SHASTO)' at a seminar on 27 June 2018. The event was organized by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) who funded the project.

The study was conducted in Dhaka, Narsingdi and Gazipur districts to assess the NCD burden and their risk factors among men and women over 30 years of age. The SHASTO project aimed to improve both Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) and Maternal Health services in an integrated manner with a community based approach through mobilizing Community Group (CG) and Community Support Group (CSG).



STAKEHOLDER MEETING TO CLARIFY THE OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE, AND METHODOLOGY OF THE GLOBAL POLIO ERADICATION INITIATIVE (GPEI) STUDY

The School organized a meeting with stakeholders at the IMCI conference room of Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) Head Quarter, EPI Bhaban, Mohakhali, Dhaka on 4 July 2018. The meeting aimed to clarify the objective and purpose and the methodology of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) study.

The current status of availability and access to grey literature of GPEI from the key stakeholders in Bangladesh was also discussed during the meeting. The meeting was attended by key stakeholders from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, WHO, and icddr,b, to inform policy and research in the future.



DISSEMINATION WORKSHOP ON LEARNINGS FROM THE PAUSE STUDY

A dissemination workshop for the study titled 'Perspectives of Policymakers and Practitioners on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Scenario in Bangladesh: Pathways of antimicrobial use among people and animal (PAUSE)' took place on 7 August 2018.

The workshop was hosted by the Centre of Excellence for Health Systems and Universal Health Coverage (CoE-HS&UHC) at BRAC JPGSPH. Government representatives, professionals, researchers, academics, prescribers, and development Partners participated in the event. Key findings from the study was shared at the event followed by a panel discussion. This is a critical area, which requires urgent attention at the national level.

PARTICIPATION AT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR) KNOWLEDGE FAIR

Center for Gender and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (CGHRSR) colleagues participated in a day-long event titled, 'Knowledge Fair on SRHR' on 9 September 2018 hosted by Share-Net Bangladesh. Share-Net Bangladesh Steering Committee Member, (at the time) spoke on the objectives of Share-Net and the needs of young people, marginalized groups and minorities regarding SRHR.

Posters and documentaries were presented at this event, focusing on the 'Effective SRHR Education for Young People in Bangladesh', covering two main areas – 'Myths and Misconceptions around SRHR Topics' and 'Practical SRHR Skills, Coping Strategies for Strong Emotions'. The school also included a stall for the duration of the event showcasing various informational and marketing materials. These materials have been distributed to two local NGOs for use in their own curriculum for adolescents, as the research was co-designed by the implementers and they were involved in every phase of the research and implementation project.

You can read more about the Knowledge Fair here:

bit.ly/knowledgefair



PANEL DISCUSSION ON ‘IMPLEMENTATION AND SCALING UP OF KANGAROO MOTHER CARE IN HEALTH FACILITIES IN BANGLADESH’

Centre of Excellence for Science of Implementation and Scale-Up (CoE-SISU) with the support of UNICEF Bangladesh arranged a panel discussion titled, ‘Implementation and Scaling up of Kangaroo Mother Care in Health facilities in Bangladesh’ on 19 November 2018.

The objectives of the event were to discuss the situation of KMC implementation in Bangladesh, scale-up plan in the NNHP and HPNSP 2017-2022, share and discuss preliminary findings from the KMC implementation research project of UNICEF: Barriers and enablers for KMC practices in public health facilities, discuss implementation bottlenecks and health system challenges to scale-up of KMC and also to recommend implementation strategies to inform the upcoming revision of the national new-born health strategy. Around 30 participants including Government, Public Health and Development Professionals, Medical Doctors, and Academics attended the event.

You can watch the panel discussion here:
bit.ly/KMCpanel



PSYCHODRAMA INTERVENTION FOR THE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH OF YOUNG MEN IN URBAN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN DHAKA

The second phase of the Psychodrama intervention was successfully implemented between February-March 2018 among young men in four different groups from the Bhasantek informal settlements under the ‘Psychodrama as a Transformative Intervention in the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young Men in Urban Slums in Dhaka: Proof of a Novel Approach’ project. Pre and post-test evaluation had also been done to assess the intervention process.

The participants were 18-29 year old young men living in the Bhasantek slum situated in Mirpur, Dhaka. The participants were selected from a census carried on 824 young men from the same slum. Selection criteria were based on the traditional gender norms that lead them to risky sexual behavior.



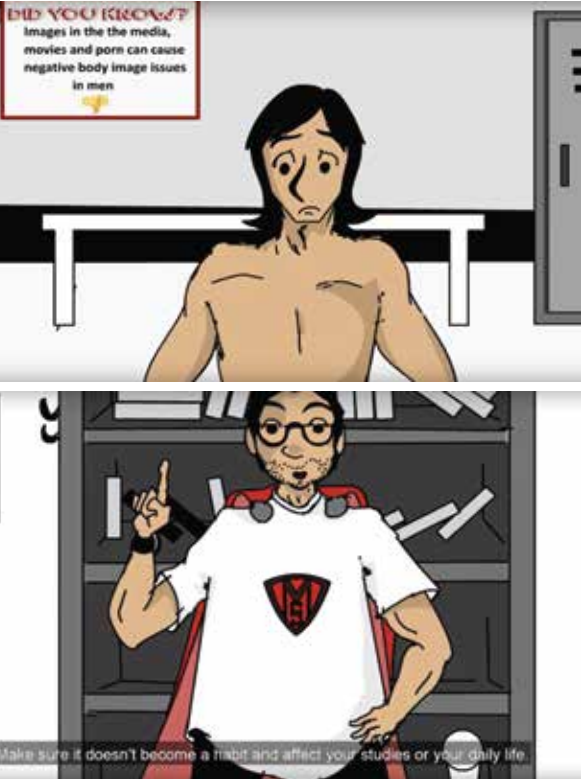
COMMUNICATION MATERIALS DEVELOPED AS PART OF ADVOCACY

BETTER INFORMED COMMUNICATION TOOLS DESIGNED UNDER THE PROJECT ‘DIGITAL SISTER: RESEARCH ON URBAN YOUTH AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS’

Evidence from the research project ‘Digital Sister for the Urban Youth: Using New Technology for Effective SRHR Communication for Urban Youth (15-24 years) of Bangladesh’ found that young people are using the internet to get information about SRHR, and at times receive misleading and inaccurate information. Based on the questions adolescents shared during the study, the Digital Sister project developed various digital educational and advocacy tools to address their SRHR needs. This was shared with the two main NGOs who co-designed the research questions to help them improve their education curriculum.

An animation video titled ‘Awareness against Cyber Harassment & How to Report Cybercrime’ to teach youth about prevention of cyber harassment and about laws that exist to protect people from cybercrimes in Bangladesh.

You can watch the video here: bit.ly/cyberharrasment



Following up to the animation on cyber harassment, the radio show ‘Thinking out Loud’ on local station Radio Dhol aired an episode titled ‘Cybercrime: Know and Save Yourself’ to raise awareness about cybercrime and cyber harassment face by young people in Bangladesh.

A second animation video titled ‘The Adventures of Mama Sex: De-bunking some Myths about Men's Sexual Health’ was also produced based on the most frequent questions that urban young men shared during focus group discussions.

To further address other frequently mentioned SRHR topics mentioned by respondents of the Digital Sister project, an information booklet titled ‘Amra Jante Chai’ (We Want to Know) was also published. The booklet covers important topics including gender roles, masculinity, femininity, menstruation, hygiene, pornography, sex, sexuality, consent, homosexuality, mental health, sexual harassment and violence.

You can watch the Adventures of Mama Sex here: bit.ly/mamasex



INNOVATIVE COMICS AND VIDEOS PRODUCED FOR YOUTH ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR)

Using the research findings from the project 'Breaking the Shame: Towards improving Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Education for Adolescents and Youth in Bangladesh' several innovative educational materials for urban and rural adolescents have been developed to address the concerns about accessing accurate SRHR information that can propagate myths and misconceptions around SRHR.

A comic book addressing myths and misconceptions titled 'Let's Debunk the Myths' was developed first. Produced in both Bangla and English, the comic illustrated 10 most recurring myths and misconceptions about SRHR mentioned by respondents from the study. The book talks about various SRHR concepts including masculinity, femininity, menstruation, pornography, sexuality, consent, mental health, transgender and sexual harassment, which was then used to inform the design of this comic book.



You can read the English version of the book here:
bit.ly/dbnkmisconceptsENG

To supplement the book, an animation video with the same title was also produced, with the aim that both materials can be used as teaching tools in adolescent clubs as well as be used by individuals on their own.

You can watch the video here:
bit.ly/debunkmisconceptionsVID



Taking into consideration that talking about condom use is a culturally sensitive topic another animation video was produced in collaboration with SOA Aids Nederland and Rutgers titled 'How to use condoms' in Bangla based on an existing Dutch instructional. The video explained how to use a condom, where one can buy it from, and how to dispose it after use - in a very simple way.



Watch the video here:
bit.ly/condomuseBANGLA



TOOLS TO ADDRESS EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Based on recent global literature and studies on adolescent health, it is clear that emotional wellbeing has a profound effect on the overall development of the youth. Recognizing the need for emotional wellbeing, tools on emotional coping strategies for young people were created with the findings from the project 'Breaking the Shame: Towards improving Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Education for Adolescents and Youth in Bangladesh'.

Written in both Bangla and English, the comic book 'Coping with Strong Emotions' addresses various emotional problems young people face and associated coping mechanisms including coping with mental distress, changing their mental outlook as well as managing stress, anxiety, and anger. The book also includes several group activities and exercises to help adolescents learn through practical learning. A school teacher's manual to guide instructors on implementing the tool in a classroom setting was also developed in both Bangla and English.



Coping with Strong Emotions
bit.ly/copingwithemotionsENG

Teacher's Guide - Coping with Strong Emotions
bit.ly/emotionsguideENG



A 10-minute drama on emotional management was also produced to supplement the practical learning from the classroom sessions.

You can watch it here:

bit.ly/emotionalmanagementdrama



COMMUNICATION MATERIALS TO HIGHLIGHT THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE

The Centre for Science of Implementation and Scale-Up (CoE-SISU) produced an infographic booklet highlighting the concepts of Implementation Science (IS) and to present the application of the key steps as case-studies of 3 national programmes which have been scaled-up and sustained by the Government of Bangladesh. The Oral rehydration solution (ORS) case study depicts all the major steps for IS and scale-up, the Family Planning (FP) and Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) case studies focuses on the scale-up of the programme nationwide.

Two documentaries titled 'Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) in Bangladesh' and 'Kangaroo Mother Care' have also been produced to highlight the importance of implementation science and its implication for the success of projects. Both the videos have been made with the support of UNICEF.



You can watch the 'Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) in Bangladesh' documentary here: bit.ly/EPIBD

You can watch the video on 'Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC)' here: bit.ly/KMCBDUNICEF



ADVOCACY OUTREACH IN THE MEDIA

RADIO SHOW - NA BOLA KOTHA

'Na Bola Kotha' (Unspoken Words), the first ever radio show of its kind, successfully aired 10 episodes on Radio Shadhin throughout March 2018. The show was a part of two projects – 'Psychodrama as Transformative Intervention in The SRH of Young Men in Urban Slum in Dhaka: Proof of a Novel Approach' and 'Breaking the Shame: Towards improving Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Education for Adolescents and Youth in Bangladesh'.

Targeted towards young adults, callers were encouraged to ask questions on various topics. Professor Malabika Sarker, Director, (CoE-SISU) gave the welcome speech on the first episode titled, 'Gender and SRHR for Young Adults'. The other episodes were titled, 'Care for the Person Who Takes Care of You', 'Respect and Love for Everyone, Everywhere', 'Masculinity', 'Disability and SRHR', 'Myths and Misconceptions', 'Emotional Wellbeing and SRHR', 'Skin Complexion and Stereotype', and 'Drug, Alcohol and Substance Addiction'.



BRAC SCHOOL ADVOCACY IN THE NEWS

'Erased Desires - Of Disability and Sexuality' was published in the largest circulating English-language newspaper 'The Daily Star' on February 24 2018. The article reflected on the discussions on disability and sexuality from the study titled 'Exploring Sexuality of Physically Disabled People through Photo-narratives in Bangladesh'. A photo-narrative about disabled individuals and their perceptions of desire, intimacy, love and romance has also been published under the project.

Read the article here: bit.ly/eraseddesires



'Shades of Empowerment' reflecting women empowerment was published in the 'The Daily Star' on March 18, 2018. The narratives shared in the article had been extracted from a 3-year research project 'Understanding the Nature of Child Marriage in Urban Informal Settlements in Bangladesh' conducted by the Centre of Excellence for Gender, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (CGSRHR) at BRAC JPGSPH.

Read the article here: bit.ly/shadesofempowerment



Another article titled 'Let's talk about the S Word' was published on May 6, 2018 in the renowned daily 'Dhaka Tribune' based on the findings from the study 'Digital Sister for the Urban Youth: Using New Technology for Effective SRHR Communication for Urban Youth (15-24 years) of Bangladesh'.

Read the article here: bit.ly/theSwordDT

