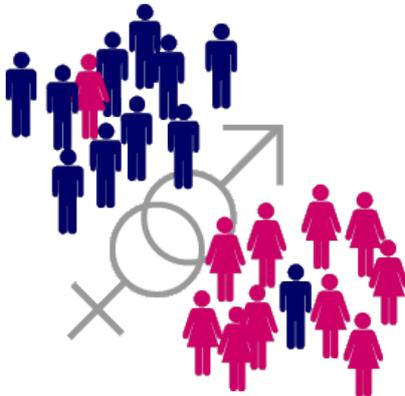




2010-2011



Annual Report

**Activities of the Foundation
during the Financial Year &
Audited Statement of Account**

*Improving the pace of rural development
and alleviating poverty in rural areas*

PFI FOUNDATION

An International NGO Based in Assam

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Improving the pace of rural development and alleviating poverty in rural areas by using appropriate technologies and building technical skills through a Public-Private-Partnership

Message from the President

Voluntary organizations play a catalytic and coordinating role with government and the civil society, providing a balance in socio-economic development of a country to ensure that universal social service objectives are realized. PFI Foundation (India) played a vital role in making known the needs of poor and disenfranchised groups, such as rural communities, the homeless, the aged and the sick, and contributed to developing their capacity to raise their standard of living.

The foundation works for public concerns and needs, and other unorganized local voluntary groups in Assam, focusing on Barak Valley Districts, an a particularly important force for defining priorities in uplifting the economic conditions of the marginalized sections of the society.

The Foundation worked actively last year with various stakeholders in the realization of its vision, strategies and plans for socio-economic development, for example, through the participatory programmes in the focal areas.

One of the biggest challenges for PFI Foundation is to mobilize and utilize resources in a creative and optimal manner, with a clear focus on building systems, which will ensure sustainability of development processes and products even after PFI Foundation withdraws. While systematic development of technical and managerial capacities is a key ingredient in this, it is important that each community has substantial funds at their disposal as well. The process of building up community funds needs a tremendous amount of foresight and ability to calculate future costs and factor in contingencies. The process of convincing communities to raise resources today to meet tomorrow's expenses is tougher. This has been most impressively accomplished by PFI Foundation (India) in its interventions in community managed water supply and rural infrastructure building programs.

The lessons learnt from the initial experiences of the activities during its first decade of existence from 1992 to 2002 stood in good stead as PFI Foundation prepares to expand exponentially in the coming years.

With a committed volunteer group PFI Foundation promises to grow bigger and more effective in the coming years.

Sulekha C. Bhattacharjee, PhD
PRESIDENT



From the Executive Director



Over the past fifteen years, a significant element of the modus operandi of the PFI Foundation has been the focus of our programs on the rural, poor and marginalized communities pressing who need educational and human development support. In order to recognize and embrace these issues, the Foundation periodically reviews and revises its priorities so that they reflect the issues confronting rural society at large, and specifically our sponsors and supporters. One such review was held in 2010, and the revised priorities identified in consultation with our collaborators and stakeholders reiterated our focus on six prime areas: Rural Development, Education, Health, ICT, Conflict Resolution, and Social reform.

These areas formed the new goals of the foundation for the next 5 years cycle up to 2012 when we will complete 20 years held in the spring of 2002. While a number of Foundation's priorities were recognized to still reflect ongoing national concerns, several new areas were identified. A new area of attention for the Foundation is the priority the potential importance of Information Technology in development, Role of Women in the Industry – both organized and unorganized sectors, Legal awareness on gender issues, and the modernization of traditional education systems.

In addition to changes in program priorities implemented over the past year, several changes of an administrative nature have been implemented as well. After many years of dedicated service, Mrs. M. Islam and her team of Executive Boards have stepped down and a new Board has taken over with Ms. Sulekha Bhattacharjee, PhD as the President. We also created a new position of Vice-President and Mrs. Parveen Akhtar, a distinguished faculty in Education has taken over the position. In the interim period Prof. Ms. R K Mazumder, PhD served as the President of the Foundation from March to June 2010. We remember their services with a deep sense of gratitude and wish them all the best in whatever they do.

New faces, new challenges and new opportunities and we look forward to it all.

Baharul Islam, PhD
Executive Director



PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

SEASONAL FEEDING PROGRAMME



Early and heavy monsoon rains in India have caused floods in different parts of the country, including the north-eastern state of Assam. During 2010 floods in Assam about South Karimganj dev Block under Karimganj Dist was under heavy flood in recent years. Almost 80% of the crop land / house / villages were under water from early June to late August 2010. Most of the Rice Crop was damaged during the season. As the area has a single crop/year cultivation pattern, this meant a heavy blow to the food supplies/staple diet (rice) for the entire population of 240,000 people. The present Seasonal feeding programme is targeted to address the nutritional food support to the poor and flood-affected people in the areas where farmers lost their normal rice crops this year and had to live on supplementary food during the season. In this way the programme was planned to fit into the supplementary food supply aspects.

Every year, the floods leave a trail of destruction, washing away villages, submerging paddy fields and drowning livestock, besides causing loss of human life and property in Assam. Malnutrition was evident among the poor families, pregnant women and specially children.

In 2009-10, it was a major challenge and turning point in the history of PFI Foundation (PFI), an NGO based in a remote corner of the state of Assam in Northeast India. During 2008-2009 Assam saw devastating floods in hitherto unknown parts of the state. In addressing the emergency relief and post-flood reconstruction programs, in parts of Upper Assam (Lakhimpur) and Southern Assam (Karimganj), the initial focus was on relief and





rehabilitation efforts, specially supplying essential ration to prevent starvation in some areas. However, during the post-flood analysis and interaction with the affected communities, there was a strong demand from the communities to look at long-term livelihood issues that the vulnerable communities, who were economically poor and socially marginalized, face in throughout the year. It was time for PFI to go beyond the immediate supply of food materials at the time of flood. It started looking at the overall socio-economic welfare activities and looked for ways to alleviate poverty in rural areas by increasing the employability of the rural unemployed youths through technical skill training with an eye of the demands of the prevailing labour market.



PFI was fortunate to have the generous donor, OFFER, Calicut, who had come forward in uplifting the devastated conditions of thousands of families belonging to the most backward minority communities (BMC) during the Assam flood in 2008 and 2009. When people are crying a bowl of rice in the flood affected district of Lakhimpur a special flood relief operation was launched by PFI in district

with assistance from OFFER. In the first phase 26 Villages were being covered and sufficient food materials were distributed. Similar food supplements were also provided in 2009 and 2010 under seasonal feeding programme of OFFER. As PFI was seeking to shift from ‘emergency relief’ to the long-term sustainable capacity building and income generation opportunities for the affected communities, it found out that large number of rural youths are mostly ‘unemployable’ due to lack of any skill training. There are large number of school drop outs among the BMCs who have studied upto Grade V and if they were trained in any skill to make them ready for a ‘trade’ that is needed in local market they can get jobs. There are around 1500+ skills/trades that are in demand in India’s growing economy. Unfortunately, the rural poor, especially minorities, who has higher school dropout rates compared to others, individuals to pay the fees and the communities to ‘prepare infrastructures’ at are necessary as per the “Guidelines” both are equally difficult.



VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTER Karimganj

The current capacity for skill development in the country is 3.1 million. India has set a target of skilling 500 million people by 2022 to meet the challenges of Indian economy. To fill the gap in skill development opportunity the Govt of India approved the National Skill Development Policy 2009, on 24 February 2009 under the Ministry of Labour and Employment and invited private organisations to act as Vocational Training Providers (VTP). Govt invited applications to grant VTP accreditations as the policy specifically targets the minorities and disadvantaged sections. But, the eligibility clauses for approval as a VTP requires that organisation must have the minimum set of classrooms to conduct the training. The applicant organisation (PFI Foundation, India) has already managed to procure land but it must build at least four classrooms before the the proposed Vocational Training Center at Alamkhani Village in Assam is 'accredited' by the government.



The Vocational Training Center (VTC) project is for setting up four classrooms and a Workshed for this in Assam state of India. PFI Foundation has managed to procure land, staff and other equipment to be eligible for training cost reimbursement but needs classroom infrastructure. Therefore it needs an 'emergency' assistance to build the required minimum four classrooms so that the proposed Vocational Training Center is accredited by the government and government start reimbursing the training costs to the trainees who are mostly below poverty line

(<\$1/day). If the classrooms are built and the first batch goes for training by January 2011, it is expected that it will provide training to around 500 youths by the end of 2011 in the first phase itself.

Mashuk Ahmed joined his elder brothers in cultivating the small piece of land they inherited when he was in class V. He did not study further and as time passed he found that the small piece of land divided among the brothers and sisters in the family did not leave him enough to grow food for the whole year. He tried to join any other ways of earning but because of his little education he could not get any government jobs (minimum VIII grade required). Today he works as a shop assistant in a local market and earns barely enough to supplement his shortfall of rice crop and keep his own family (now married with two kids) alive. Mashuk is the lone bread earner in the family of four. He wanted to increase his income but with very little education and little training he is unable to get a job in the industry. He is a good shopkeeper but no good shop owner will employ him he has no 'certified qualification'.



Mashuk was desperately searching for the ways to increase his income. But he doesn't have any open school in the whole district, any adult education program or any 'night school' for him. With little education, just above mere literacy, he came to PFI Foundation's VTC in search of a job oriented training. At the same time he cant leave his present job during 6 days a week to maintain his flow of little income whatever he earns today. In such a scenario he was suggested to take up skill training in masonry or plumbing. But for that he will need some bridge course/program in language and maths so that he can pick up even the basic calculations, measurements etc. Therefore, he is now undergoing the language/maths adult education programme 'prior' to his vocational training.



People like Mashuk are suffering from lack of opportunity to increase their skills or education level at a rural village – joining the large force of urban migration only, Living in abject poverty they are unable to have spare time or afford the cost of such training. As they don't have day time free for any such training they cant leave their present job also. It's a vicious cycle of poverty they are embroiled in. These 'poorly' employed people need to have a flexible day/night training program on any market-needed skill with some additional 'bridge course' to meet their lack of

education also. A program has to be tailor made to serve people like Mashiuk.



MILAP Program – British High Commission

March 28-30, Administrative Staff College, Guwahati, 2010

The reform of the traditional Madrassa system of Islamic education in India is a much talked about and hotly debated subject today. The September 11, 2001 marks a watershed in the contemporary perception of terrorism as a global phenomenon beyond local militant responses of some disgruntled groups in various parts of the world. Discussions on Madrassa education is often linked to allegations of these institutions being involved in training fundamentalist forces within the community and invariably the voices of Muslims who are engaged in promoting reform within the system are often marginalized or completely silenced. This conference, therefore sought to bring together a number of key stakeholders associated with a range of Madrassas –both government aided and un-aided - which are associated with different schools of thought in India.

Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India has recently requested the private sector asking them to help in generating employment for the minorities (Press Trust of India: Posted online: Sunday, February 11, 2010). However, are the minorities ready and trained for jobs in the emerging job market in the private sector? Is there any strategy so that specific schemes could be formulated to make the minorities employable in the fast-growing sectors of the economy? A number of such jobs, which have emerged/are emerging in the private sector after liberalization of the economy. Perhaps this workshop will develop a program to incorporate minorities in the national mainstream through employment avenues.

South Asia consists of the following countries and territories: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India Maldives Nepal Pakistan and Sri Lanka. These countries, except the British Indian Ocean Territory, are also currently members of a regional co-operation group, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (**SAARC**), which was jointly formed by them. For assumed geographic, cultural, and/or historical reasons[citation needed], the following countries and territories are often included in South Asia: The Indian subcontinent is a large section of the Asian continent consisting of countries lying substantially on the Indian tectonic plate. These include countries on the continental crust (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan), an island country on the continental shelf (Sri Lanka), and an island country rising above the oceanic crust (the Maldives). The term subcontinent signifies "having a certain geographical or political independence" from the rest of the continent, or "a vast and more or less self-contained subdivision of a continent."

However, recent trend in rise of radicalism in faith, cultures and languages in various parts of South Asia often marked the way in which relations between people of different faiths and beliefs are sometimes strained in the recent years. It will be very important to see, therefore, that some platforms for interfaith consultations are created to play an important role to play in strengthening the mutual understanding and civil society relationships working on some common Interests like - peace and development. There have been many national and International dialogues on these Issues and most of them recognised that much effective work is being done to develop networks of communities, groups and individuals



of different faiths but more needed to be done – not only to enhance the positive contribution that faith communities were already making to integration and cohesion but also to address those instances where religious identity had been advanced in divisive ways or had become a factor that had the potential to separate people from the wider community.



Against this backdrop, PFI Foundation India - a civil society organization based in Northeast India felt that there is a need for more constructive conversations between faith communities to build cohesion and tackle community tensions. It aims at seeking specific commitment to develop an inter faith network and a strategy to build an interfaith consultative platform. PFI Foundation (India) organized the MILAP (Minorities initiative on Learning and partnership) at Guwahati in 2011.

Objectives:

1. To understand the use, role, scope and benefits of interfaith consultation activities to express meaningful interactions between people from different faith communities and between faith communities and wider civil society.
2. To develop a platform for dialogue which leads to faith communities having a better understanding of one another, including celebrating the values held in common as well as acknowledging distinctiveness
3. To highlight the importance of collaborative social action (including participation in local democracy) involving different faith communities and wider civil society, which brings about positive and concrete change within local communities.



INTENSIVE TRAINING PROGRAMME ON PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

Under Mainstream Employment Oriented Training Programme for the Madrassa Students and as a follow-up pilot project based on the Recommendations of the Guwahati onference on Reforming Madrassas for Modernization in Northeast India, PFI Foundation organized a pilot programme on personality development.

The traditional Islamic religious schools in this region in the post 9/11 scenario have seen a marked shift in their activities towards modernization (academic and administrative). The reform of the traditional Madrassa system of Islamic education in South Asia is a much talked about and hotly debated subject today. It is often linked to discussions about terrorism and allegations of Madrassas being involved in training terrorists. In this way the voices of the clerics associated with the Madrassas, as well as the voices of Muslims who are engaged in promoting reform within the Madrassa system, are often marginalized or completely silenced. Against this backdrop, and in view of a large number of Madrassas that operates in the Northeastern region (approx. 1200 in the state of Assam alone), a sincere endeavor was made to bring together a cross-section of stakeholders from Madrassa education sector, government departments and civil society in Assam at a conference to discuss the socio-political-psychological issues associated with the reform process, draw a strategic action plan with a few time-bound pilot projects in the Northeastern region starting with Assam. A three-day National Conference Cum Workshop was organized on 28-30 March 2010 at the Administrative Staff College, Guwahati Assam by PFI Foundation in collaboration with the Directorate of Madrassa Education, Government of Assam and the British High Commission, New Delhi. The National Conference cum Workshop had a general exploratory objective of looking into the functioning of the large number of Madrassas in India and through focus group discussions/working sessions it put forward a number of recommendations (summary attached). A restructuring framework for educational as well as political administrators of Madrassa system was also proposed.

It was highlighted during the Guwahati conference that some visible and sustainable programmes should be launched on the ground to show some results to the community. The first initiative under this project is an **INTENSIVE TRAINING PROGRAMME ON ENGLISH AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT** that was piloted in a schhol in Silchar with a sample number of participants. As economic, social and technological change gathers pace, people everywhere need to develop their knowledge and skills, on a continuous basis, so that they can live and work meaningfully in the knowledge society. Modern Language Education (English in the case of India) is a training that contributes to an individual's personal development, increase her/his productivity and incomes at work, and facilitate everybody's participation in economic and social life. It follows that education and training can also help individuals to escape poverty by providing them with the skills and knowledge to raise their output and generate income. Investing in education and training is therefore an investment in the future; knowledge and skills are the engine of economic growth and social development.



Library and Information Processing for Academic Exchange through Digital Library and Education Reform



The information revolution, along with its attendant explosive growth of knowledge, and the related phenomenon of the globalization of the world economy has brought about the Information Age. Asia is no exception to this disparity between information rich and information poor. The need of the hour is, therefore, to join national academic information portals with that of other regional initiatives in a collaborative effort to use information and communication technologies (ICT), specially the power of the Internet, for knowledge sharing and

disseminating academic information. The Library and Information Network is an initiative of the PFI Foundation to facilitate knowledge-sharing and research partnerships between professional networks, researchers, libraries and between them and key knowledge end-users, including policy-makers, trainers at institutions of higher learning, civil society organizations and the private sector. There are currently some national research and information network initiatives in different parts of Asia. But the lack of an effective networking mechanism to bridge those activities, inadequacy of institutional arrangements to link various Islamic research institutions and organizations and centers of higher learning and public policy decision-making entities, have led to a number of shortcomings including absence of a portal, or gateway to the best researched information generated by the various knowledge sources in the region and Islam focused research centers; isolation of research from the training of future policy leaders at institutions of higher learning; limited local content at all levels; limited policy impact of research and programmes on public policy; limited enrichment of civil society programmes from contemporary research;

Against this backdrop, the network will "federate" existing research and library networks with the aim of strengthening Islam oriented research and analysis for more effective use by Asian institutions and academic centers. It will provide a continuous link between Asian research institutions and networks and support Asian expertises that are critical to the pooling of resources for effective knowledge production and use. It will be particularly important to promote consensus building among Asia's academics and rural societies around key educational challenges, and to set priorities on which research initiatives should focus. However, it should be noted that implementation of the Network on the Asian continent is likely to encounter a number of barriers. Some of these, like the shortage of finances and relevant technical competencies and skills in participant institutions are highlighted in this paper. It is very important to reflect on the potential barriers to the successful implementation of the project on the continent, and where possible, examine the possible solutions.

Dr Baharul Islam attended a Conference on Human Resources For Libraries, Information Centers, and Archives from 19th -21st February 2011 at the Center for Documentation and Research, Abu Dhabi. He presented the project to an international audience that included the UAE Minister for Higher Education Sheikh Nahyan Mubarak Al Nahyan.

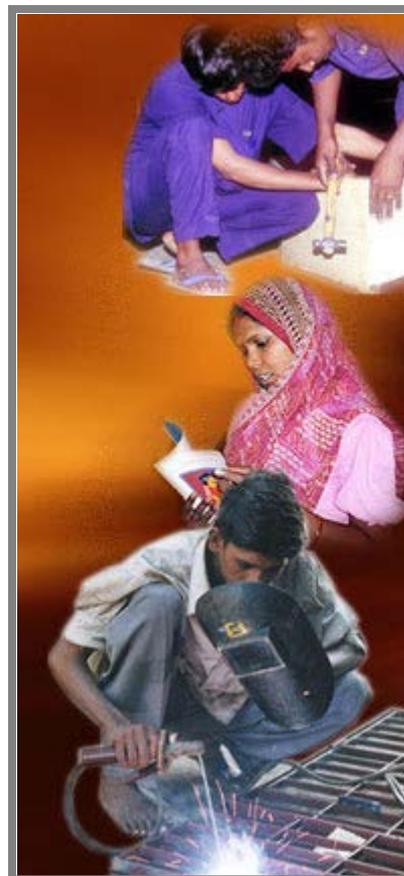


VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTER (VTC), KARIMGANJ

PFI Foundation is now test running an VTC as an educational Scheme in the field on non-formal and continuing education and training for for unemployed youth. The distinct features of the VTC are:

- The flexibility characteristics of non-formal education.
- The special target group of the socially, economically and educationally deprived sections of the society and
- The objectives of offering polyvalent education that is meant to provide the individual not only the skills to enhance his /her productive potentiality but also the knowledge necessary for him/her to improve the quality of life.

These features distinguish the VTC from other educational programmes and institutions for adults. VTC, Karimganj was proposed in 2010. It is only institution located in district for vocation education and training at open access level. Since its conceptualization, the JSS is expected to offer various Polyvalent Education-Cum-Vocational training programmes as per the need of the client groups or organisations. The programmes and activity conducted by the Sansthan include the following:



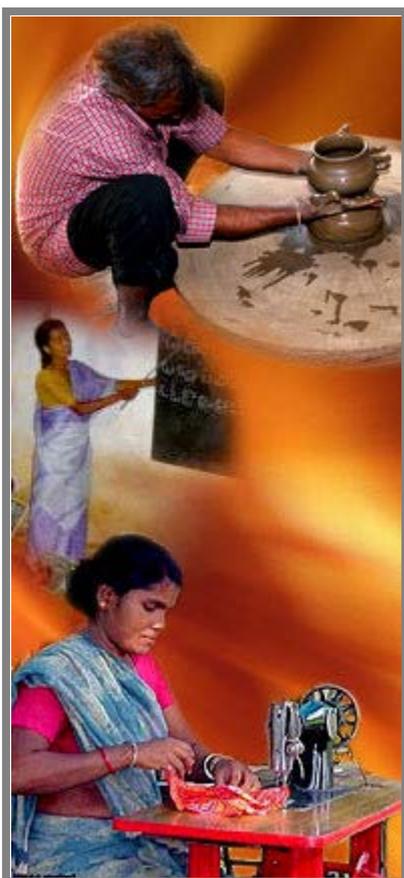
- Training programmes in skill formation and skill upgradation for potential youths, dependents of workers, migrants , men and women belonging to unorganized & informal sector, slum workers etc. in both industrial /urban/rural areas.
- Training programmes for key resource person, master trainers and trainees in vocational course and also for neo-literates.
- Nodal continuing education centre and coordinate, supervise and monitor 10-15 continuing education centers/nodal centre;
- To organise equivalency programmes through Open Learning Systems;
- To promote National goals such as Secularism, National integration, population and development education, women's equality , protection and conservation of environment etc.
- To widen the range of knowledge and understanding of the social, economic and political system in order to create a critical awareness about the environment among the potential youths;

Te programmes would be based on the polyvalent or multi-dimensional approach to adult education. The polyvalent approach attempts to provide knowledge and skills in an integrated manner and based on the following principles : The methodology of training includes : theory, practical; and field work experience. Some programmes are :



- > Diversified
- > Flexible (i.e in duration, place, timings etc.)
- > Adaptable to varying situations

The Directorate of Adult Education (DAE), ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India will provide necessary technical guidance and support services and review the programmes from time-to-time. The JSS courses are distinguished from other formal Education and Technical courses by the fact that these are designed mainly considering the need the clientele or organizations and are flexible in nature.



The planning and implementation of the programmes is carried out keeping in view the target group, the employment and self-employment opportunities and the available infrastructure and resource person. The courses are generally tailor made and built around the specific needs of groups of participants taking into account their educational level, aptitude and receptivity. Life Enrichment education (LEE) relevant to the course and the participants is included in the curricula to develop better outlook and awareness of the beneficiaries. Emphasis is laid on practical work combined with related theoretical instructions. Programme monitoring evaluation and certification are in-built in all the programmes.

Classes are arranged in the Institute Campus as well as in different localities, villages, and habitations of the entire District and nearby areas. The classes are organized through Extension/field centres & conducted in week days for 2-4 hours daily. The duration of the courses vary from one type to another type ranging from seven days to six months. The Sansthan also provides Library facilities to its trainees in the campus and also Mobile Library facilities to the trainees at field level.

Besides the above, VTC also organizes some course in collaboration with Non-Govt and Govt organization as per their needs. Courses are also organized through open-learning system and accredited to National Open School (an Autonomous body under Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt of India). The programmes are conducted by professional faculties / Resource person from Institution and Industries/Workshop. In few specialized programmes experts are also invited from Govt. Agencies located outside such as SISI , SRC , central Board of Handicrafts, Central Board of Food & Nutrition etc. It also organizes various activities from time-to-time such as: Exhibitions, Talks, Seminars, Motivational camps, Competitions, and Film shows etc.



Outreach and Networking

Senior staff of PFI Foundation participated throughout the year attended several meetings and consultations organized by government, donor agencies and non-government organisations. The Foundation made substantial contribution at these platforms and presented informed inputs to the agenda. Some of these programmes were:

Conferences and Meetings

National Seminar on Library and Information Management in Digital Environment, Indian Institute of Management, Indore

Information and Communication technologies have affected all fields of human activity. The field of Library and Information Science is not an exception to this. Internet has emerged as a powerful source of information. Web Technologies are making it possible to access / disseminate the information at a faster rate with a lesser cost. With the current Information Technology revolution there is a sea change in the total scenario of Information availability and dissemination/access. Web Technology is a fast growing field of knowledge. Libraries would benefit immensely by adopting this technology for their information dissemination and accessing activity. In the present scenario it is essential on the part of the library professionals to equip themselves with the skills and techniques to fully exploit the digital resources available globally. The seminar is intended to familiarize the participants with the developments in the field of Information Technology and improve their skills in using Internet and other related technologies for discharging information management activities effectively.



National Seminar On Library And Information Management in Digital Environment was held at the Indian Institute of Management, Indore, 24 March 2011. Dr Baharul Islam, Executive Director of PFI Foundation delivered a plenary address during the conference on the topic: *Harnessing Digital Libraries for Development* in which he highlighted the role of Libraries in harnessing Information and Knowledge to increase the value of human intellectual outputs by processing and organization moves primary intellectual outputs from raw bytes to information. He reiterated that the world's intellectual outputs would be useless if libraries were not there to gather, analyze, classify, catalogue and provide access to them. In fact, hundreds of bibliographic records of published and unpublished materials ensure their use and reuse to satisfy commercial, educational, cultural and recreational needs



6th AsiaCALL International Conference

Indian Institute of Management Indore hosted the 6th AsiaCALL International Conference on “Computers and Language Learning Technologies in and for the Developing Economies” on November 17-19, 2010 at IIM Indore. This is for the first time that India hosted AsiaCALL International Conference. The earlier AsiaCALL Conferences were held at Chulalongkon University, Bangkok, Rajabhat University, Phranakhon Sri Ayutthaya, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia, Sorabol College, Gyeongju, R.O.K., and Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia. The conference was attended by experts and speakers from different parts of the world including India, USA, Malaysia, Korea, Iran, Lebanon, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, and Kazakistan etc. They spoke and share their experiences on the following four broad topics: Prof S P Parashar, Director, IIM Indore inaugurated the Conference. Prof M Ashraf Rizvi, was the Chairperson for 6th AsiaCALL International Conference.



The Executive Director of PFI Foundation Dr Baharul Islam delivered the keynote address at the inaugural session of the conference. The theme of his presentation was : **ECONOMICS OF CALL IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: A CASE FOR ACCESSABLE AND AFFORDABLE ICT IN ASIA**. In his address Dr Islam presented an overview of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) access points in Asia and the scope of using these points, popularly known as



‘rural call centers’ as a means to reach the remotest CALL user. Some of these issues that are invariably associated with the cost effectiveness of CAL are also discussed such as enabling environment, affordable infrastructure and access, institutional strategies and policies, capacity building, research & development, resource mobilization & partnership, and enhancement support teaching/learning process in the country and the sub-region. He recommended a systemic approach to broaden the reach of CALL beyond

university laboratories and departments through a fair and equal access to ICT facilities in the developing societies. By this “leap-frog’ approach we can empower our average learners, teachers and researchers in the poorest of the communities to communicate, share information and transact with colleagues, fellow researchers and professionals across the globe. Ownership and access to CALL needs to be extended to each and every learners and this will enable our institutions to foster ownership, reduce digital inequalities in the society and thus create an avenue for learner-centered education.



International Symposium on Intercultural Understanding: Changing the Landscape and Building Bridges for Peace, 28-30 November 2010 in Bangkok

SPAFA successfully convened an International Symposium on Intercultural Understanding: Changing the Landscape and Building Bridges for Peace, from 28-30 November 2010 in Bangkok . With over 200 delegates from 13 countries, the 3 main themes under discussion were: Inter-cultural Cooperation and Understanding, Religions for Peace, and Cultural Identities and Cultural Rights. Countries represented included Bangladesh , China , India , Indonesia , Israel , Italy , Japan , Malaysia , Myanmar , Philippines , Thailand , Turkey , and Vietnam . The Symposium was held in honour of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej on the occasion of his 80th birthday.



Dr Baharul Islam, ED, PFI Foundation attended the Symposium, presented a Paper and Chaired a session. He presented his paper on “Democratic Islam for Peace in a Pluralistic Society: Strategies of an Ongoing Reform Process in Muslim Religious Educational Institutions”. He gave a picture of the post 9/11 watershed in the contemporary perception of Muslims in the intercultural discourse. With a distorted view of Islam, many tend to ignore the fact that Islam has not only a number of local socio-cultural identities but it also has a strong undercurrent of global unity – in its religious fervour. He presented a case of democratic, peace-loving and pluralistic Islam that is being propagated through a number of reform programmes in Islamic religious institutions like Madrassas. As an illustrative case in point the paper highlights the preliminary results of such an initiative in Northeast India. He focused on social reform among Muslims and an acceptance to the multicultural setup of the present day world.



Second Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Reduction New Delhi, 7-8 November 2010



The overarching goal of the 2nd Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction is to review the implementation of the Hyogo Priorities of Action in Asia in the context of various initiatives taken by the national, regional and international governments during the past two years and share the experiences of Asian and Pacific countries in Disaster Risk Reduction. The objectives of the 2nd Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction were as follows:

- a) To review the action taken by the national governments and other stakeholders for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action as a follow up to the Beijing Action for Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia;
- b) To take stock of initiatives taken in various sub-regions of Asia for promoting and enhancing cooperation among the nations within and outside the governments for disaster risk reduction;
- c) To share and exchange best practices and lessons learned from disaster risk reduction in various fields including application of science and technology, community based disaster preparedness, public-private partnership etc;
- d) To discuss the outcome of new international initiatives such as Global Platform, Regional Platforms and Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction; and
- e) To develop a vision and roadmap for disaster risk reduction in Asia.

The outcomes of the 2nd Asian Conference were:



- a) Report on the positive gains made in disaster risk reduction in Asia;
- b) Identify the gap areas requiring concerted action by various stakeholders;
- c) Develop common agreement on further enhancing regional cooperation among nations;
- d) Reach agreement on short and medium-term initiatives for disaster risk reduction in Asia.

The Conference was attended by Ministers and other Government and Non-Government representatives from Asia and the Pacific

Island Countries as well as Experts, DM practitioners, Scientists, Subject matter specialists, Representatives of the United Nations agencies, regional organizations and other specialized agencies at the international, regional and national levels. PFI Foundation was invited to the conference to present a NGO perspective on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and follow up the outcomes of the Bangkok ISDR workshop whereby the recommendations of the Bangkok meeting were incorporated in the New Delhi declaration.



Asia-Pacific Workshop on School Education and Disaster Risk Reduction 8-10 October 2010, Bangkok, Thailand

The Regional Workshop on Education for Disaster Risk Reduction is an initiative developed by the Education Task Force as a first step to demonstrate the long term commitment of this partnership to integrate disaster risk reduction into the Education sector. This three-day Regional Workshop will be part of a longer-term regional strategy that aims at raising awareness on the need to integrate disaster risk reduction and school safety construction programmes as part of education curricula. It will bring together decision makers and practitioners from the field of disaster risk reduction, disaster

management and education and will build on past and existing in-country initiatives as well as key processes and bodies at the country and regional level that have placed education for disaster risk



reduction and school safety as a top priority of their agenda (RCC, Asian Conferences on Disaster Reduction, ASEAN Committee for Disaster Management, UNCRD, IFRC among others). The Ahmedabad Declaration adopted in January 2010 at the International Conference on School Safety in India lists out a set of responsibilities and actions for each stakeholder to take to become a “school safety champion” and will serve as a reference to the discussions. The third day of the workshop is expected to benefit from the participation of Ministers of Education and will highlight the Bangkok-based joint celebrations of the International Day for Disaster Reduction and ASEAN Disaster Management Day. Its conclusions will serve as the regional contribution for the Asia and Pacific



region to the International Conference on Education for Disaster Risk Reduction that will be organized in November 2011 by the UN/ISDR system Thematic Platform on Knowledge and Education in Europe.

Dr Baharul Islam participated at the Regional Workshop on Education for Disaster Risk Reduction as a first step to demonstrate the long term commitment of this organization to integrate disaster risk reduction into the Education sector. This

Workshop was part of a longer-term regional strategy that aims at raising awareness on the need to integrate disaster risk reduction and school safety construction programmes as part of education curricula. PFI Foundation presented its contribution on Thematic Platform on Knowledge and Education in Asia.



The 4th International Conference on Environment Education

The 4th International Conference on Environment Education was held from from 24 to 28 November, 2010 at Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Ahmedabad, India. .CEE was the nodal and host agency The Conference was organized by Government of India with UNESCO and UNEP and UNEP as co- sponsors.



Over fifteen hundred participants from ninety seven countries came together to attend the conference. There were eight plenary sessions and thirty working group sessions. The outcomes of these participatory sessions were fused to form the final declaration of the conference. The event ended on 28th November, 2010 with the final declaration which was endorsed by the participants. The Founder & CEO of Worldview impact was invited to speak on a plenary on: Addressing Climate Change Concerns on 27th

November 2010 where he urged policy-makers and educators at the conference to create green jobs for young social entrepreneurs in the developing world in order to flight climate change while contributing to their local economies.

BremleyAn impressive array of international policy-makers, educators, youth, civil society and private sector representatives assembled in Ahmedabad, India, for the 4th International Conference on Environmental Education (ICEE). Following a decade after the 3rd ICEE in Thessaloniki, Greece, the conference and its theme of education for sustainable development (ESD) took on a new spirit of urgency as speakers drew important linkages between ESD and global efforts to combat climate change and environmental disasters. Presenters noted the fact that this was the first ICEE to have a plenary session devoted entirely to "Addressing Climate Change Concerns", with high- profile Indian experts on climate change such as Dr. R.K. Pachauri (Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and Dr. Sunita Narain (Director, Centre for Science and Environment), and other respected international experts. A representative from the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (UNCSD) noted that UNCSD would be coordinating a policy roundtable on the margins of the UNFCCC meetings in Bali in an effort to integrate ESD objectives into any post-2012 climate change agreement.

Dr Baharul Islam, participating on behalf of PFI Foundation, presented an innovative ICT-based Environment Education Project (IEEP) being piloted in Assam that is primarily focused on using an in institution's surroundings and environment as a framework within which students can construct their own learning, guided by teachers and administrators using proven ICT driven educational practices. IEEP uses Environment as the integrating context for learning designates pedagogy that employs natural and socio-cultural environments as the context for learning and shares some fundamental educational strategies that may be replicated elsewhere and inspire other researchers to develop similar programmes.



**World Information Technology Forum (WITFOR) 2010:
ICT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPERITY
Addis Ababa, 22-24 August 2010**



The World Information Technology Forum 2010 is being held August 22-24 in the United Nations Conference Center in Addis Ababa Ethiopia. The IFIP World IT Forum (WITFOR) was planned to contribute to taking the World Summit on the Information Society's (WSIS) Plan of Action a step forward and to helping developing countries to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). WITFOR investigates successful, sustainable ICT strategies in developing countries and examines different initiatives and projects on

effective, context sensitive development and use of ICT applications. Recognizing the developmental opportunities offered by digital technologies and the need for developing countries and developed countries to collaborate to exploit such opportunities, the World Information Technology Forum (WITFOR) 2010 is organized by the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP) and hosted by the Federal Government of Ethiopia, in cooperation with the Ethiopian ICT Development Agency (EICTDA), the Ethiopian Information Technology Professional Association (EITPA) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

Dr Baharul Islam represented PFI Foundation at the conference and he presented a paper on: Challenges and Prospects of Information Technology Based Commercial Enterprises for Women. He offered a broad understanding of how women's IT-based commercial enterprises are a new way of harnessing IT for socio-economic development of women though faced with special challenges from gender and commercial perspectives. The study is supported by an analytical study of a selected number of recent successes in women's IT-based commercial enterprises in India and in other countries.



His Excellency Mr Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of Ethiopia in his keynote address concluded on the need for Ethiopia to embrace ICT if the country has to achieve socio-economic development: "It is clear the success of our efforts, to extricate ourselves from poverty will depend in the upcoming millennium, to a large extent, on our achievements in the ICT field."

The current WITFOR is the third where the first was held in Lithuania, in 2003 and the second held in Botswana, in 2005. It is expected that it will be attended by over 1000 resource persons, researchers and participants drawn from about 66 countries..



PFI Foundation Day

January 22 marks the Foundation Day of PFI Foundation. Every year community representatives and staff come together for 2-days to celebrate the event. This year, the event was restricted to the staff of PFI Foundation and local volunteers associated in our work. There were over 100 participants in the two-day event. On January 21, 2011 staff teams discussed the Strategic Plan of PFI Foundation. The event was an opportunity to gain a common understanding of the vision, mission and strategies of PFI Foundation. The event was also an opportunity to display the talents of staff in cultural events and sports.

External Training and Exposure visits

Staff and community representatives have participated in training programmes and exposure visits to the following organizations during the year:

- Foundation staff worked with Development Gateway (USA) – South Asia to get a better exposure to professional management of ICT for Development.
- Foundation Director Sri Jahirul Islam also participated in the relief and social work missions in flood-affected areas of Assam

Through cooperation with United Nations Economic Commission for Asia, the Foundation experts hosted the Regional Adviser on Poverty Reduction Dr Amitava Mukherjee on 25-26 Dec 2010 to visit areas of Karimganj to develop a fishermen project.

Annual Accounts

The annual accounts of the Foundation as audited by our auditors M/S Hussain & Co., Chartered Accountants, Guwahati 781 006 (Assam) and approved by the General Body is appended herewith.