

rain and storms, our ship stays on the *chars* and carries on with the basic health programmes. Though we stop all the major surgical interventions, minor operations are carried on the ship everyday," Runa remarks. "It is simply not possible to have secondary care during this period as the heavy storms make the ship sway to and fro."

Besides Unilever, there are other organisations that donate for the secondary health care camps. "I have different organisations coming up to support the NGO," she says. "This time I have The Ispahani Group helping Friendship with all the operations conducted specially for children. Last time, I had HSBC who had donated for all the eye operations and JOAC (Jersey Island Overseas Aid) funded all the supporting boats, for instance the doctor's living quarters. The Danish Embassy donated a satellite boat as well. We also get private donations from close friends and acquaintances which are always welcome," she smiles. "I had approached several local pharmaceutical companies but they have not been of much help," remarks Runa. "It's very disappointing since they all claim to give a certain percentage in charity. But it seems these charities are limited to areas where their goods are marketable and not always in genuine areas of need."

The floating hospital sails up to the *chars*, or as Runa calls them the Nomadic Islands, in the North of the country, where other NGOs were unable to settle due to difficulties of reaching remote areas and continue sustainable work due to the geographical nature of the shifting lands. The floating hospital sails to the *chars* in the Gaibandha, Kurigram, and Jamalpur areas, covering more than 90 *chars* for primary and secondary health services. At least 200-250 patients come in everyday for general care and also major surgeries. Approximately 40 operations, namely cataract, burn, dental, cleft lips, hernia and many more, are performed on an average, over a week. The ship is well equipped with the latest X-ray machines, separate units dedicated to ENT, dental, surgical, gynaecological, pathology and general health. International specialists from the Swedish Doctor Bank, Humaniterra from France and Dutch medical groups fly in to train

*Sitting in one of the makeshift camps near the hospital, on Kalashona char, 13-year-old Rehana is healing from an operation, which was done the day before. "Her right arm was burnt when she was 4 years old," explains Rehana's mother.*



A surgery in the Dental unit of the floating hospital.



An eye operation in progress.