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RISING STARS

**Young Leaders
In Action**

Rising Stars: Young Leaders in Action

Third Edition

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This magazine is dedicated to Kamla Bhasin,
a developmental feminist activist, poet, author and social scientist.
(1946 - 2021)



“*I'm not a wall that divides.
I'm a crack in that wall.*”

- Kamla Bhasin

Rest in power and peace.

Editor's Note

Young people are an extraordinary force capable of driving changes in the society. With their energy, creativity, and passion, they are often the first to step up and take action in the face of injustice, inequality, exclusion, and crises.

The aim of this magazine is to champion the changemakers behind the curtains. ActionAid Bangladesh has taken the initiative to feature the stories of 20 young leaders from across the country who have made notable contributions in their respective localities. From the coastal belts to the bustling streets of the capital, from the lush greenery of the mountains to the realities of plainlands- we have received astonishing response from the young people through our call of application. We applaud their spontaneous participation.

Our pages are filled with inspiring examples of young people doing their best to make a difference. In our endeavour, we hope that this publication will bring the due recognition to the leadership, strength, and commitment of the exceptional pool of young leaders and inspire many more. We invite you to explore our pages, and join us on this journey of discovery, learning, and transformation.

To hope and compassion!



Farah Kabir
Country Director
ActionAid Bangladesh



Young people have the power to imagine a new world. They ignite change, inspire hope, and are committed for an inclusive and just world for all. Active participation of young people is instrumental in achieving the desired social and political changes. Our experience of working with young people across the country validates this belief. We celebrate these unsung heroes for their significant contributions to their communities and Bangladesh as a whole. ActionAid Bangladesh is publishing the third edition of 'Rising Stars: Young People Leading Change', featuring exemplary stories of 20 young leaders from all over Bangladesh. These young leaders demonstrated remarkable determination, resilience and innovation in overcoming challenges posed to them by the society, patriarchy, autocratic mindset and resistance to change. This publication is a testimony to the leadership for change.

We are fortunate to have been a part of their journey. I would like to extend my congratulations to all the young leaders featured in this edition. I commend their efforts to not only create a positive impact in their communities, but also encourage their peers to do so.

I am confident that you will be moved by these stories as much as we are, and it will encourage you to support their initiatives and future endeavours.

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Youth Leadership in **Preventing Child Marriage, Gender Inequality and Gender-based Violence**

PRIYANKA HALDER



“When I found out that my classmates got married off, I was shocked to my very core. I kept wondering how marriage could be more important than education! I could see her dreams got shattered in a jiff. It was then that I decided to take strong initiatives to prevent child marriage.”

Age: **22**

Location: **Meherpur**

Hobby: **Working for Social Development**



Priyanka is a brave young leader working incessantly to prevent child marriage in Meherpur district. In recognition of her excellent advocacy, determination, and courage, she has been selected as a Shornokishoree in 2016.

She grew up in an affectionate family, but she had suffered due to the backwardness of her community. Her neighbours and relatives used to taunt her parents to marry her off at a very young age. When she enrolled in Class 5, she was shocked to find out that most of her female classmates were getting married off. The incident affected her deeply, as she resonated with the agony of her friends. It motivated her to initiate a widespread campaign against child marriage.

She prevented more than 115 child marriages with the help of the local

administration. Every time she came to know of any child marriage taking place, she rushed to stop it- often by herself, and sometimes in the company of her ever-supportive father. She also organised an event with the help of the local administration, titled 'Red Card to Child Marriage', where discussion took place on the harmful effects of child marriage with the participation of parents and guardians in every secondary school in Meherpur. She also formed Adolescent Safety Clubs in several secondary schools of Meherpur. Initially, the community reacted aggressively to her initiatives. However, the crisis began to shift in 2016, when she was selected as a Shornokishoree (Golden Girl) of Meherpur district by Channel I.

She is now working as the Chief Coordinator of Youth Mobilisation Unit, Climate Based Health and Nutrition for Adolescent Girls at Roots Bangladesh.

Priyanka aims to build the capacity and agency of women to empower themselves.

She wants to continue advocacy to reduce exploitation, increase recognition, improve the status, and ensure safe working conditions for women.

TAHEATUL JANNAT REMI



"Grassroots realities are very harsh. Thus organisations like Nandita Surokkha need more support, networking, recognition, and monitoring in order to flourish."

Age: **25**

Location: **Faridpur**

Hobby: **Volunteering**

Taheatul Jannat Remi is the founder of Nandita Surokkha, a women-led voluntary organization that advocates for the rights of marginalised women and the gender diverse community. Taheatul experienced social stigma due to vitiligo, which triggered severe depression. Through this experience, she developed empathy for women who are suppressed and deprived in the existing social structure. In 2018, she founded Nandita Surokkha, which received registration from the Department of Social Welfare in 2020 and from the Department of Women's Affairs in 2022.

In 2021-22, the organization provided immediate legal and medical assistance to seven child rape survivors in Faridpur and



free legal services to 43 women. Taheatul also played a role in preventing around 50 child marriages. The organization has set up "Menstrual Safety Banks" in 45 educational institutions for girls after conducting workshops to raise awareness of menstrual hygiene. Since 2019, a self-defense course has been initiated for young girls, and about 100 participants have received training. Around 30,000 marginalized women have benefited from Nandita Surokkha's services, and the organization currently has 50 volunteers working to make a difference.

Taheatul aims to uproot gender-based violence from society altogether and help the gender diverse community integrate with the mainstream in complete harmony.

RIMI AKTER



"I believe that to change the society, we need to change our mindset first. I was distraught to discover the physical complications, and maternal and child mortality rate caused by child marriage, so I decided to raise my voice against it."

Age: **23**

Location: **Munshiganj**

Hobby: **Travelling and Gardening**

Rimi Aktar is a young leader hailing from Munshiganj. She is courageously working to prevent child marriage in her community.

In her locality, there was a tendency among families to marry off young daughters to non-resident Bangladeshis or immigrants, which resulted into dropout of bright female students from education. Afflicted by the alarming mortality rate of young mothers, she



initiated 'Alliance to Stop Child Marriage' in 2022 to raise awareness against child marriage.

Through her campaigns, Rimi found out the causes of child marriage, its effects and rate of rise of divorce through survey. Then she engaged with students from child marriage-prone areas to raise awareness through focus group discussions. The discussions helped nurture leadership and understanding among the students, enabling them to mentor their peers and take measures if they came to know of any child marriage taking place. She has engaged 150 female students against child marriage in three workshops, out of which thirty students (classes 6-10) voluntarily took an oath-where they said "no" to child marriage.

She was engaged with the 'Amra Notun Network' initiative of BRAC Youth Platform as a trainee.

Rimi wants to spread her awareness campaign throughout Bangladesh, until the country is freed fully from the curse of child marriage.

MINI AKTAR



"In my experience, mediation can resolve cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence in the grassroots. I am working to ensure justice for the oppressed women through mediation, and awareness campaigns."

Age: **21**

Location: **Jamalpur**

Hobby: **Storytelling**



Mini Aktar is a young leader from Jamalpur. She has been working incessantly to prevent child marriage for the last six years.

Mini's father worked very hard to raise and educate all five of his daughters. She gradually learnt that not everyone was as lucky- a lot of girls of her age had to give up on their dreams because of child marriage. This epiphany motivated her to take action. In 2017, when she found 'Udbhabon Shomaj Kalyan Shangstha'. The organisation works on preventing child marriage, violence against women and gender discrimination. She registered the organisation in 2021. Currently, she is working as its President.

Since 2016, Mini has been staging plays and

outreach meetings at local schools and colleges to bring about a positive change in mindset regarding gender norms and roles in the community. She formed a school level committee to prevent child marriage and played an active role in preventing 10 child marriages. Whenever she failed to prevent instances of child marriage and violence against women by herself, she immediately contacted the Upazila Nirbahi Officer, MoWCA or the national helpline number, and took measures with their help. Through her initiative, about 12 cases of gender-based violence had been resolved. Currently, 21 volunteers are engaged with Mini through the organisation.

She is associated with Global Platform Bangladesh and ActionAid Bangladesh as an Activista, and with Brighters Society of Bangladesh as a District Representative.

Mini aims to be a successful entrepreneur. She wants to empower the marginalised communities, especially the young women through capacity building, skill development and leadership training, so that they can have a better future.

SANJANA AFROZ POPY



"I prevented my own marriage as a child myself. It takes a woman a lot more courage, dedication, and determination to continue an initiative. As Bangladesh is graduating from the status of a least developed country, we need to ensure that the development reaches every marginalised community, to ensure we leave no one behind."

Age: **24**

Location: **Mymensingh**

Hobby: **Singing**

Sanjana Afroz Popy is a young leader from Mymensingh. She has been working to eradicate child marriage from the society for over a decade.

Popy came to realise the toiling costs of child marriage when she found out how it contributes to spiking dropout of young girls from schools and mortality rate of young mothers. The situation was even more dire at the marginalised communities, such as the Harijans and the Biharis. To help these young girls to realise their dreams, Popy initiated her campaign against child marriage.

She conducts advocacy and awareness campaigns on the harmful effects of child marriage and the necessity of education among the young girls of the excluded



communities through 'Shantimitra Shamajkalyan Shangstha'. Through these campaigns, she has been able to reach the entire community, and actively engage 80 young women volunteers. These volunteers now carry on peer-to-peer advocacy to ensure child education and prevent child marriage on the grassroots.

She is also affiliated with Youth Flambeau and National Child Task Force (NCTF).

Popy dreams of a Bangladesh free from the curse of child marriage. She wants to continue her endeavour against gender-based violence and transform the society. At the same time, she aspires to be a successful entrepreneur.



Youth Leadership in **Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Livelihoods**

SHEIKH IMRAN



"The farmers interested in growing climate-resilient crops remained reluctant to adopt climate resilient practices due to various reasons. Our advocacy has boosted their confidence, and it feels amazing to be a part of this change."

Age: **18**

Location: **Bagerhat**

Hobby: **Playing, Travelling
and Volunteering**



Sheikh Imran is a young leader determined to establish agroecology and climate resilient practices to overcome the barriers posed due to climate change in Bagerhat.

Imran was concerned with salinity intrusion in his locality, that often affected their access to safe drinking water and production of crops. The frequency of natural disasters such as cyclones and tidal waves also riddled them. However, it is after joining 'Badhon Manob Unnayan Shangstha' in 2019 did he find out more about the ways to contribute to improving the lives of the community people.

The farmers in Bagerhat did not succeed in producing the desired amount of crops due to saline water intrusion, and it made Imran

feel distressed. After receiving training from Badhon Manob Unnayan Shangstha on Participatory Vulnerability Analysis (PVA), he made an action plan to provide a consultation-based training to 100 farmers in the area for climate resilient agriculture, with the support of Badhon Manob Unnayan Shangstha and ActionAid Bangladesh. In the discussion, the Upazila Agriculture Officer provided them insights on ways to adapt their agricultural practices with the changing realities. In 2022, about 25 farmers have adopted the practices where they are growing saline-resilient paddy.

The movement to limit the intrusion of saline water in arable land is also in effect.

Imran is currently affiliated with ActionAid Bangladesh as an Activista. He is also the member of Rising Star Youth Group and Youth Hub Bagerhat, and a volunteer of Badhon Manob Unnayan Shangstha .

Imran wants to spread the climate resilient agricultural practises in the entire Bagerhat region. He wants the farmers to benefit from growing paddy and other crops, instead of focusing myopically on shrimp farming.

ASHRAFUL ISLAM ROKON



"My project gives me the opportunity to get to know the thoughts of global climate leaders, establish collaborations and work closely with local 'climate heroes' in South-central Bangladesh: the farmers. I believe, with proper knowledge, smallholders in Asia's coastal belts will be able to prioritise sustainability in the current agricultural value-chain."

Age: **24**

Location: **Patuakhali**



Ashraful Islam Rokon is a young climate activist from Patuakhali. He is passionately working with the smallholders of Southern Bangladesh to establish climate resilient agricultural practices.

He was always intrigued with climate change, and its impact on our lives. With his curiosity and acumen, he incorporated his academic learnings with climate change adaptation measures, especially contextual to southern parts of Bangladesh. In 2021, he initiated 'Advocacy for Sustainability in Agricultural Development (ASAD)', a project that capacitates young people of Bangladesh to help the farmers understand and recognise climate change consequences in agriculture.

ASAD has been able to reach about 60 farmers in six agricultural cooperatives in

southern Bangladesh, promoting nature-based solutions for agricultural sustainability. It has helped them find assistance on integrated farming and avail microfinance services on capacity development for green production from Upazila Agriculture Offices in Barishal Division, and trained representatives from 6 agricultural cooperatives in Barishal division on WASH, locally led adaptation on agricultural production and integrated pest management.

Currently, the organisation is helping the smallholders in Bangladesh's coastal areas have access to market-ready sustainable products and services in their area.

He is the Country Ambassador in Bangladesh wing of Peace First, an international organisation that helps youths to create and expand their social development project with small grant opportunities.

Rokon wants to continue his work with the agricultural stakeholders in Bangladesh on nature-based solutions to support them adapt to climate change consequences and navigate through the best of climate finance and advocacy for green innovations.

MD. IRFAN



“Along with providing organic fertilizers at low cost, I am promoting the benefits of using organic fertilizers among the farmers. Through the implementation of organic agriculture, I am training smallholders to make them aware of the benefits of using organic fertilizers in the production of crops.”

Age: **28**

Location: **Shatkhira**

Hobby: **Travelling and Reading**



Md. Irfan is passionately working to promote the use of organic fertiliser to help the farmers cope with changing climate.

Due to the adverse geographical conditions exacerbated by climate change, the farmers of Shatkhira used chemical fertilizers on agricultural land to increase the production of crops without taking necessary precautionary measures. They started to suffer from various physical ailments, and excessive use of chemical fertilizers in agricultural land reduced the fertility. Fertilisers used on agricultural land would get washed by rainwater and mix into ponds and rivers, which disrupted the aquatic environment. Realising the enormity of the harm imposed, Irfan started making the farmers aware of climate resilient and alternate livelihoods.

Irfan identified great quantity of solid waste are generated from cattle rearing. He started producing vermicompost and tricho-compost, set up a network of local distributors, and also continued to sell the fertiliser online. While urea fertiliser is sold at Tk. 26 per kg, Irfan sells his vermicompost at Tk. 10-12 per kg. He has also built the capacity of 120 farmers to produce and use organic fertilizers and encouraged the smallholders to initiate the practice. Around 70 women are involved in the distribution process.

He aims to popularise mass use of organic fertilizers as an alternative to chemical fertilizers. He also wants to create awareness so that the farmers themselves can produce the best organic fertilizers and build confidence in chemical free organic crops at the consumer level.



KURAISH BIN QUADER CHOWDHURY



"I aim to provide an alternative urban green transportation solution to reduce carbon footprint for a sustainable future by using technology to make an impact in the lives of people."

Age: **27**

Location: **Dhaka**



Kuraish Bin Quader Chowdhury is an entrepreneur living in Dhaka. He is working to develop sustainable, climate resilient solutions to improve the lives of the people of Bangladesh.

He became concerned about climate change and its impact on the lives of people during his undergrad. He understood the impact of global carbon emission on the Global South and pondered on the use of clean and affordable energy. While studying engineering, he started working on sustainable solutions for the community by integrating technology to bring about a shift.

He is the founder of MILE, which he initiated in 2020. The initiative is SDG oriented, and largely addresses SDGs 9, 11 and 13. It is a next generation mobility startup that provides an alternative urban green transportation solution to reduce carbon footprint and traffic congestion. Currently, they make electric-powered cycles, an alternative to fuel-powered vehicles. At the same time, they are working on developing an inter-operable charging ecosystem.

So far, the startup has saved 55,000 kgs of carbon emission from its trips, which is equivalent to planting 2500 trees.

He has graduated from the incubation program of YY Goshti and Youth Colab as a social entrepreneur and has worked with UNDP Bangladesh.

Kuraish is currently focusing on scaling his startup. He aims to secure fundings and investments, necessary public and private collaborations and partnerships to establish these as a successful climate-tech startup.



Youth Leadership in **Emergency and Humanitarian Response**

FAHIDA SULTANA RIPUGHNA



“Our society is riddled with prejudices against women. The government and the policymakers need to take strong measures to uproot such mindset and practices to establish gender equality- simultaneously through policy formulation and budget allocation. Women leaders and volunteers should be recognised widely for their work, as it is more challenging for them to climb these ladders.”

Age: **23**

Location: **Noakhali**

Hobby: **Travelling and Playing Sports**

Fahida Sultana Ripughna is an inspiring young leader avidly working towards breaking social stigma and stereotypes and initiate women-led emergency response.

She founded Service for 'Human Being Organisation (SHBO)' in 2020, that works on ensuring women empowerment through economic and skill development, and engagement in unchartered fields such as emergency response and ensuring climate justice. Currently, she is serving as the President of SHBO.

She believes that hurdles that affect women's rights can be eradicated through critical engagement of women in different fields. In 2018, she engaged young women volunteers to raise fund for the Sirajganj flood. With time, the confidence of these



women heightened. In 2022, SHBO engaged 50 young women in fundraising. 3 young women leaders remained thoroughly involved in the emergency response in Sylhet, Sunamganj and Hatia through 'SHBO with Disaster Victims' team. Emergency medicines, essential relief materials and dignity kits were distributed to around 1850 families on time.

Fahida has received the best 'Organiser of the Year' award in Amra Golap Youth Volunteer Award in Noakhali in 2022.

Fahida is associated as an Associate Trainer at Global Platform Bangladesh and is an associate member of Mastul Foundation. She wants to break the prejudices and stereotypes that riddle the society, and empower women so that they can claim agency in the decision-making process.

ABU TALHA



“As Sunamganj is a heavily flood-prone region, there needs to be a special protection mechanism to help these vulnerable people in times of sudden calamities- with boats, funds, and manpower- so that we can avoid such severe loss and damage.”

Age: **21**

Location: **Sunamganj**

Hobby: **Volunteering**

Abu Talha is a young leader, passionate about improving the standard of lives of the climate-vulnerable community and ensuring the fulfilment of their rights.

Talha was deeply distraught when he witnessed the sufferings of the marginalised community during a flash flood 2017 in the Greater Sylhet region. He incessantly volunteered on every emergency response since then. In 2021, He founded Youth Social Connectivity-YSC, a voluntary youth-networking organisation addressing emergency response. He is working as the Chief Coordinator of YSC.

When the flash flood suddenly occurred, Talha and his family rushed to take shelter in a two-story building. As far as the eyes



could see, there was only water. Soon, he joined forces with local administration in aid distribution in a boat. He raised a fund of sixty five thousand taka, and distributed cooked and dry foods worth two lakhs taka among approximately ten thousand people during this response. Inspired from his initiative, about 25 young people joined him.

He is associated with Volunteer Opportunity and Bangladesh Youth Initiative as a volunteer, and with Brighters Society of Bangladesh as a Climate Advocate.

Talha envisions to capacitate the youth in emergency response through efficient leadership, so that they can come forward to help the vulnerable, marginalised population .



Youth Leadership in **Upholding Social Cohesion and Peacebuilding**

LILY PRUE MARMA



“The context of Bandarban is challenging when it comes to youth leadership development. It would make the journey of a lot easier if the local communities and administration came forward with sufficient budgetary allocations and advisory support.”

Age: **23**

Location: **Bandarban**

Hobby: **Painting**

Lily Prue Marma is an indigenous social worker. She is passionate about the development of her community and is working relentlessly towards its betterment.

As a member of the indigenous community living in remote area, where citizen amenities are difficult to access, and as a woman- Lily faced a lot of adversities in her life. However, it did not daunt her determination to contribute to the society.

In 2018, Lily initiated 'Desperately Seeking Bandarban (DSB)'- an online platform to sensitise the tourists visiting Bandarban on environmental pollution and for providing an engagement opportunity to the local youth, and started offline activities in 2019. She is also affiliated with Volunteer for Bangladesh



(VBD) as Vice-President.

Campaigns under DSB have expanded into an environment-friendly movement, where they have engaged the youth and marginalised community in Bandarban in collecting plastics and selling them to recyclers. She is also working to eradicate stigma, superstitions and prejudices that riddle the Marma community. Currently, around 155 volunteers are working actively with DSB.

Lily wants to eradicate the obstacles impeding the access to education and create a platform for skill development for the indigenous youth, that makes them well-equipped to face the challenges of the modern world.

JAHIRUL QUAYUM FERROZ



“My strength is in writing. I feel good how my writing showcases inspiring individuals and organisations. It encourages more people to engage in voluntary and development work. The ones showcased, delve in their work with renewed zeal and dedication. There is an active effort from my end to feature stories from the grassroots for the true unsung heroes in action.”

Age: **25**

Location: **Kumilla**

Hobby: **Playing Chess**



Jahirul Quayum Feroz is a young writer and journalist. He is passionate about spreading positivity and motivation among the young people through highlighting extraordinary initiatives creating a social impact in the grassroots level.

He is currently working in the feature section of Daily Ittefaq.

Feroz has been writing since 2016. In 2019, during the plague of dengue in Bangladesh, he wrote about the contributions of social organisations for the first time- a full feature in Daily Ittefaq on Victory of Humanity, a youth organisation based in Laksam, Kumilla- where like-minded organisation came together and conducted camps on dengue awareness, diagnosis, and free medical services in joint initiative with local administration. The response he received

from the readers and the rise of interest of young people in humanitarian work after the feature, has heightened his conviction to carry forth his work.

Feroz has featured about 20 organisations and individuals through his writing. He highlighted the stories of numerous local and national level organisations in Daily Prothom Alo, Ittefaq, Samakal, Bangladesh Pratidin and BanglaNews.

The initiatives he featured had successfully availed more visibility and opportunities for fundings, partnerships and collaboration for the featured organisations. Feroz could also recall young people, were inspired by their peers and took initiatives to help marginalised farmers with the harvest and mask distribution during covid.

He is also working with Better Earth Movement as a Co-founder and with Service for Human Being Organisation and Victory of Humanity as a Media advisor.

Feroz wants to continue writing and changing lives. He wants to bring out the changemakers of the future and support them in their journey with the visibility they deserve.

ABU SAYED BISWAS



“The projects we work on- Climate Action, Ichchhapuron for connecting the stakeholder and the marginalised, Prekkhapot for empowering lives through transforming futures, Oxygen for emergency response, Library and Medical Services- strengthens youth engagement while also contributing in the welfare of the society.”

Age: **23**

Location: **Kushtia**

Hobby: **Volunteering**

Abu Sayed Biswas is a young leader working on youth engagement at Kushtia. He is passionately engaging the youth in humanitarian work and promoting social cohesion in the process.

In 2015, Sayed was young, but knew by heart that he wanted to contribute for the betterment of his community, so he founded Smile for All- SFA, a youth organisation. He is currently working as the Executive Director and Fund Raiser in this organisation.

Through SFA, Sayed has engaged the youth with different kind of initiatives. He has involved them in climate action through



organising climate strikes and movement for sustainable embankments, and in providing emergency medical services. He has also built the capacity of young people through different trainings.

Currently, 95 people are mobilised through his organisation. In the last 8 years, almost 11 thousand people were reached and benefitted through the interventions of SFA.

Sayed believes that with the utilisation of our demographic dividend, we can fully ensure the welfare and betterment of our community. He therefore aims to develop platforms for young people to hone their skill and put their potential to the best use.



Youth Leadership in **Ensuring Climate Justice**

SUMAIYA PERVIN



"I demand proper restoration of areas affected by climate change. Permanent and sustainable embankments should be constructed in coastal areas, and its maintenance should be ensured through allocation of emergency funds. The government, with an intensive engagement of climate activists, should do everything in their power to leave the world a better place for the future generations."

Age: **19**

Location: **Shatkhira**

Hobby: **Standing by others in times of crisis.**

Learning something new.



Sumaiya Pervin is a climate activist and a fierce frontline fighter against child marriage and gender-based violence from Shyamnagar, Shatkhira. She is vocal about the right to compensation for loss and damage for vulnerable countries, better management of climate funds and ensuring the sexual and reproductive health rights of young women in coastal regions. She has been recognised as a 'Shornokishoree' in appreciation of her work.

As an inhabitant of Shyamnagar, she observed how women continued to suffer due to climate-induced economic repercussions. Owing to her earliest affiliations with different organisations as a volunteer, she met some of the influential young climate activists of Bangladesh, which strengthened her resolve to work on climate action.

As a result of saline water intrusion, there has been a spike in cervical conditions, often exacerbated by the use of unhygienic menstrual practices. To sensitise young girls on the issue, Sumaiya with her team of 8 young girls- Team Pipilika, have conducted advocacy to set up menstruation corners at different school, which are being implemented now. So far, six such campaigns have been conducted, reaching about 300 young girls.

Since 2021, she has been a part of the climate strike movement and demonstration demanding sustainable embankment in Shatkhira.

In her relentless fight against child marriage, Sumaiya has been able to prevent 18 child marriages till date.

Sumaiya is associated with ActionAid Bangladesh as an Activista.

She understands the grassroots reality and is working towards building a legacy of women leaderships. She wants to keep herself engaged in developing skill and leadership quality among young girls, so that they attain the confidence and determination to overcome the societal barriers.

SM JANNATUL NAEEM



“Working on climate action in the grassroots poses unique threats- because of the socio-political context, nature of our movement, and due to the reluctance of the family members who question the outcome of our mission, and lastly due to the lack of financial means. The misconceptions are slowly beginning to be lifted.”

Age: **21**

Location: **Shatkhira**

Hobby: **Teaching**

SM Jannatul Naeem is a fearless climate rights activist, leading the movement demanding sustainable embankment in Shatkhira fervently for the last four years.

He grew up observing the harsh consequences of climate realities of Shyamnagar. He learned more about climate change and climate justice through a training at Global Platform Bangladesh, that contributed in honing his perspective on climate action. In 2020, he decided to form Sharub Youth Team, addressing SDG 6, 7, 13 and 17. He is serving as the Executive Director of the organisation, and involved as an Activista in Global Platform Bangladesh.

Embankments with weak, faulty foundation



tend to damage every year from strong tides in Shatkhira, flooding and submerging village after village and causing acute loss and damage. In demand of the restoration of the damaged embankments and construction of sustainable ones- a demand that resonates with the 47 lakh inhabitants of the coast- Naeem organised a sensational demonstration with a placard that said, "I'm up for sale, I want a durable embankment in exchange". As a result of his advocacy, the damaged embankment was restored. The construction of the much-required permanent, sustainable embankment has also begun.

Currently around 300 young people are mobilised from Sharub Youth Team, in demand of climate justice. With them, he organises climate strikes every Friday to grab the attention of the policymakers of the developed countries.

Nayeem aims to continue his work to ensure a sustainable future and a sustainable earth for the generations to come. He wants to explore innovative ways to curb the climate induced challenges at the grassroots and engage the young people in his endeavour.

MAHABUL ALAM TAMIM



"I do not work on climate change justice just as a leisure activity.

I work in order to realise my demands, to protect my existence and my community and to protect my homeland. As long as people remain in distress, I will continue this work to ensure justice."

Age: **22**

Location: **Kushtia**

Hobby: **Working with underprivileged children**

Mahabul Alam Tamim is a climate activist, passionately leading the climate movement in Bangladesh in demand of climate justice and action.

His community suffered gravely from river erosion. People were losing all kinds of assets, including homesteads, were being lost in the ravages of Padma. Tamim's insatiable curiosity led him to explore deeply about climate change, and soon, he discovered the role of humans in it.

Tamim started a movement in 2018 with the demand of building a permanent embankment in Doulatpur, Kushtia. Soon he started working with ActionAid Bangladesh as an Activista. He led strikes demanding



climate justice in more than 50 districts of Bangladesh from 2020 to 2022. The young people engaged by Tamim congregates every Friday to demand for climate justice now.

Tamim is the Founder and Executive Coordinator of Sustainable Environment, Empowerment & Community Transformation Organization Bangladesh - SEECTO Bangladesh, a youth organisation working in demand of climate justice, engaging around 1500 youth from 7 districts. They also run Green New Deal Hub Kushtia, promoting the use of renewable energy.

He is currently affiliated with Global Platform Bangladesh as an Associate Trainer. He is also working as the Bangladesh Coordinator of Fridays for Future International Youth Climate Strike Team.

Tamim wants to work in the development sector with an aim of empowering the marginalised communities. He wants to continue engaging the youth in the climate movement by enlightening them about climate change issues using scientific methods, so that those who suffer the most can be the most vocal about their rights.



Youth Leadership in **Ensuring Youth and Gender- responsive Public Services**

MAHFUZ ALAM



“The hijra and gender diverse communities are deprived of all their rights. As a member of this community, I am working to create youth leadership in the community to help them attain and exercise their rights.”

Age: **23**

Location: **Sylhet**

Hobby: **Participating in Humanitarian Work.**

Travelling

Mahfuz Alam is a human rights activist. For the past four years, they have been working relentlessly to claim the rights and ensure a better quality of life for the gender diverse community in Bangladesh.

Mahfuz has lived a life full of hardships due to their identity. With the determination of improving the life standard of the community, Mahfuz founded 'Ashar Alo Jubo Shangha' in 2019, which was registered with the Department of Social Welfare in 2021. Currently, they are serving as the President of this organisation.

Mahfuz works to ensure human rights, access to housing, healthcare, education, and employment, and provides legal aid and social protection to the transgender, hijra and gender diversity community.



They work with the Department of Social Welfare to create employment, and under the Department of Youth Development and Directorate of Women Affairs to build the capacity of the gender diverse community, engaging 250 young people. They provided legal advice and support to 150 members of the community who have survived violence. They also conducted awareness sessions and advocacy with civil society organisations, journalists, and academics on the community level to promote tolerance.

They are working with Bandhu Social Welfare Society as a change agent and with BLAST as a paralegal.

They dream of a society where people from all walks of life can live harmoniously with their own identity and dignity.

SHAHANA AKTER NUPUR



"We need to address the structural causes that make women vulnerable in the first place. As long as the safety of women cannot be ensured in public spaces, our society will always find one loophole or the other to marry off the young daughters."

Age: **18**

Location: **Dhaka**

Hobby: **Reading**



Shahana Aktar Nupur is a women's sexual and reproductive health rights activist living in Dhaka. She is passionately working to ensure the rights of young women living in vulnerability and marginalisation.

Nupur was involved with several organisations from an early age. During her work, she came to realise that women in our society are neglected, often deprived of their basic human rights and control in the decision-making process. To sensitise women on their health rights, she initiated 'Doyeeta Foundation' in 2021. She is currently working as the President of

Doyeeta Foundation and 'Chaya Poncho Alo Shangathan'.

Unhygienic, harmful practices - for instance the use of soiled clothes instead of sanitary napkins, unhealthy eating habits and stigmatised rituals affect the health of young women in the long run. To enlighten these women about safe menstrual practices, Nupur conducted courtyard meetings, seminars and discussions in various schools, especially in the remote areas. She reached about 2000 women in the process through 30 campaigns. As a result of these initiatives, enrolment of young girls in the schools have increased. Through extended advocacy, awareness campaigns on girls' education and child marriage were also conducted, which played a role in decreased rate of child marriage in the Majhipara region.

Nupur wants to transform the lives of women of Bangladesh. By ensuring women's right to education, healthcare and preventing child marriage, she wants every woman to be able to realise their potential.

IMRAN JAHAN ARAFAT



"As a well-informed, dutiful citizen of the country, getting to work on sexual and reproductive health rights, one of the most important, yet stigmatised issues, is a big achievement for me."

Imran Jahan Arafat is a young leader working on sexual and reproductive health rights. He is the Founder and Coordinator of 'With She'.

Age: **24**

Location: **Khulna**

Hobby: **Reading, Travelling, Playing Cricket and Facilitating Workshops**



The pandemic had inflicted greater risks on women, affecting their access to hygiene products. Realising the crisis, Imran initiated 'With She' during the Covid-19 pandemic to cater to the hygiene needs of women.

Through 'With She', Imran provided emergency services to 250 women in 9 districts via hotlines during the lockdown. To increase health awareness, free sessions were conducted by expert doctors across the country, engaging about 1500 people. 120 people were trained through online training to counter the misconceptions and ill practices prevalent in the society about reproductive health. During the Cyclone Amphan, 'With She' distributed sanitary napkins as an emergency service in cyclone shelters. An extensive campaign was conducted

narrating the necessity of sanitary napkins, particularly eco-friendly napkins, as an emergency aid in the flood affected Koira, Satkhira, Faridpur, Dinajpur and Bagerhat, In total, 2600 women received sanitary napkins during this intervention. A nationwide program was also conducted to ensure menstrual hygiene of women in public places and public institutions. This initiative has been undertaken in several institutions including Shilpakala Academy, Upazila Parishad, local educational institutions under the title 'Bijayini Nari'.

460 volunteers at present are registered in 26 districts with this organisation to increase reproductive health awareness throughout the country.

Imran is also associated with Bangladesh Scouts Rover as a member and with the Disaster Response unit of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, Khulna District as a first aid trainer. He is also involved with Youth Ending Hunger Bangladesh as a Regional Coordinator.

Imran aspires to spread awareness on reproductive health rights among all the people of Bangladesh through With She.

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