

Championing positivity and self-acceptance through art and storytelling

LABIBA KABIR

Growing up in a country driven by conservatism, we have all faced gratuitous judgments regarding our skin, height, weight and appearance from those around us. In one way or another, we have been conditioned to face society's unrealistic expectations and beauty standards, which has instilled certain insecurities and anxieties in us. With an aim to give voices to people who face such insecurities and to inspire their journeys towards self-love and acceptance, the social media platform, Amader Skin, was founded. Amader Skin's journey began with Co-founders Avita Farhanaz, Fayizah



Rahman, Sumaita Mahnur, Tashfia Bari, and Zahra Zillur having a chat about the different skin tones and conditions they share. Their conversation led to the realisation that despite having such different skin and body types, they always faced similar judgments from people, including their own family members and peers. From being taunted for not being fair and light enough to having occasional breakouts, hyperpigmentation and dark circles, the founders

combated several skin conditions and uncalled for comments, which took a toll on their self-esteem throughout the years. Their platform welcomes people to open up about their personal battles with their skin conditions, weight, height, appearance and other issues. "Once we started sharing our stories, the people that we grew up with shared theirs and we came to realise that so many of us have to deal with our own insecurities on a daily basis," says Tashfia. "In a community like ours, we felt that there was no forum that encourages people to be comfortable in their own skin and promotes body positivity." Amader Skin constructs connections and empathy through first-hand accounts and real-life stories. They also raise awareness by addressing and advocating against bullying, demeaning attitudes and double standards. They administer their posts and stories via their Instagram handle with captivating artworks and illustrations. In the span of just two months, Amader Skin has reached out to a vast audience, creating a gender sensitive and all-inclusive environment for people to share their hardest life experiences.



Amader Skin's stories and illustrations advocate against bullying, demeaning attitudes and double standards, and encourage self-acceptance.

ILLUSTRATIONS: COURTESY OF AMADER SKIN

Enabling underprivileged communities through education and employment opportunities

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

AIM Initiative Foundation is a youth-led social organisation working to improve the lives of underprivileged children since 2016. The organisation primarily intends to eradicate poverty through education, skill development programmes and healthcare facilities for these children. The Founder Md Sayed's mother used to buy vegetables from some children on the streets. "The fact that these kids did not go to schools concerned me, and I wanted to help them," he explained. In 2016, he came across a kid who had to take a three-year gap after finishing his PSC exam, due to financial limitations. "I tried enrolling him in nearby schools but no one was willing to take a student with an education gap. I later realised that there were many such students who cannot attain quality education due to financial struggles, study gaps and age differences," he further said. As a result, the foundation's members identified the root cause of the problem

while visiting nearby slums. They found out that poverty and unawareness were the major obstacles to overcome. Through regular awareness programmes, they taught the slum dwellers about the importance of education and after two years, they established the AIM School at Meradiya, with free education, skill development programmes and healthcare facilities for their students. The school currently hosts 101 students, with classes from kindergarten to Grade 5, following the NCTB English version curriculum. "We strongly believe that quality education should not be a privilege; it is a basic human right," said Shabbir Ahmed Robin, Vice Chairman of the organisation. Through the project, 'Tele-education', teachers of the AIM School are calling up their students to deliver lessons, and giving them homework assignments, so that they can continue studying from home. The organisation is looking for donations to continue this project. Since most of their students do not have access to the internet,

they intend to continue this initiative until schools reopen. The foundation's annual activities include distribution drives of iftar packages during Ramadan, as well as winter clothes and Eid gifts. Through their project, 'Shobar Jonno Boi', they collect books to distribute amongst their students, every February. 'Ghure Darao', is the organisation's signature project that ensures employment and self-sufficiency for low-income families by providing them with rickshaws, sewing machines and vans, among other resources. "We help them with designing their employment strategies and provide them with adequate training," shared Ruhul Qudus, a student of City University and the General Secretary of the organisation. "For now, we aim to create self-employment opportunities for 2,000 low-income families, once the pandemic subsides." The AIM School also educates their students about environmental protection with their event, 'Share Happiness



AIM Initiative Foundation members and volunteers distributing PPE kits to healthcare workers earlier this year.

through Recycling', during which they recycle plastic waste for toys. Their initiative, Project HER, is a menstrual hygiene and health awareness campaign initiated in 2019 that intends to raise awareness among young women, while breaking the taboos associated with the matter. "Through this project, we have reached out to more than 1,000 young women from seven different educational institutions of Dhaka in 2019. Due to the pandemic, we have now shifted the project online," added Tahiya Islam, the Director of Media and Publication of the organisation. The foundation's members also provided 100 PPE kits to healthcare professionals in five different hospitals amid the pandemic. They also distributed free face masks and soaps among underprivileged families in Meradiya, as a way of raising awareness about the coronavirus disease. They also provided food packages to more than 2,600 people, including daily wage earners in Dhaka, Tongi, Rajshahi, and Sirajganj. AIM Initiative Foundation is also running awareness campaigns through social media videos, infographics and live sessions about mental health, productivity and creativity, among other matters, amid the pandemic. With the goal of enabling underprivileged communities, the organisation marches on with their committed members and volunteers.



The foundation's members and volunteers with the students of their school.

PHOTOS: COURTESY



www.youthop.com

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES Her Abilities Awards 2020 for Women with Disabilities

Her Abilities is the first global award honouring women with disabilities who have achieved greatness in their life or field of work. It is a pioneering initiative, launched in 2018 by Light for the World along with Right Livelihood Award winner Yetnebersh Nigussie.

DEADLINE: September 27, 2020 | Awards

International Student Festival in Trondheim (ISFIT) 2021 in Norway

ISFIT is the world's largest international student festival, taking place in February in Trondheim, Norway. The festival is arranged every other year, and each year has a theme related to social and political topics with international relevance. Here, over 450 students from all over the world gather to attend 18 different workshops and take part in the cultural program of the festival. The next festival will be held in February 2021 and the theme is 'Creating Knowledge'.

DEADLINE: September 27, 2020 | Conferences



Asian Development Bank Paid Internship Program 2020-21

The Internship Program is a project-oriented learning opportunity for graduate students to gain experience through research assignments based on ADB's current operational needs. ADB advertises internship assignments twice a year and welcomes motivated, open-minded, and self-directed individuals to apply.

DEADLINE: September 30, 2020 | Internships