

# Promoting eco-positive sanitary hygiene practices

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Resurgence, a social enterprise founded by Mashiyat Rahman, Naziba Naila Wafa and Rafayet Khan from BRAC University, started off in February 2017. It aims at spreading awareness about menstrual hygiene amongst the underprivileged community of our society by manufacturing low-cost, biodegradable sanitary napkins made out of *kochuripana* (water hyacinth), which is easily available across Bangladesh.

The young entrepreneurs of Resurgence toiled day and night in order to come up with a foolproof plan to restore the rights and dignities of 10 million refugees by 2022. Their products and services aim to reach the lives of millions of refugees through several different phases - employment, rights to sanitation, public health education, improvement of environmental health, and the breakdown of social stigmas.

The team of Resurgence conducted two pilot projects, one in Mohammadpur Bihari Camp and another in Hazaribagh where they reached out to more than 6000 women, most of whom were garment workers and house servants. The major issues faced by the people in these camps centered around food, shelter and sanitation. Appalled at the



Rafayet Khan (COO) and Naziba Naila Wafa (CMO) from Resurgence.

PHOTO: MONON MUNTAKA

unhealthy living conditions of the camps, the team of Resurgence was motivated to do something beneficial for the people. Soon, they came across a company called Jani Pads operating in Kenya that manufactured sanitary

napkins from water hyacinth, which inspired the concept for Resurgence. Even after launching the initiative, it took them quite a while to break the social stigmas surrounding menstruation and explain the importance of

menstrual hygiene to people. Women were unsure and men were not ready to send women to workshops. However, local leaders helped the team to connect efficiently with the people around. Resurgence's campaign titled, 'Let's

Talk Periods', asked people to post their thoughts about menstruation on social media. After getting a hugely positive response, they became more confident about eliminating the misconceptions surrounding menstruation. During another campaign titled, 'Amar Shorir Amar Odhikar' (My Body My Right), they conducted workshops for children to educate them about 'bad touch' and the importance of consent. An art competition called, 'Meye Bolte Ki Bujho' (What Does Girl/Woman Mean To You), invited them to draw anything that came to their minds upon hearing the word, woman. It resulted in plenty of meaningful pictures, portraying powerful messages about women. In yet another campaign titled, 'They Need Resurgence', the team highlighted the different social barriers that they aim to challenge. Resurgence was the winner of Hult Prize 2017 at BRAC University.

Soon, the team of Resurgence will release an online platform which will answer different queries and questions related to menstruation and will be an aid for pregnant women as well. They also plan to keep working more selflessly for not just empowering refugees but also thousands of other underprivileged groups occupying slums and found across many footpaths.

## Inspiring sustainability through recycling



PHOTO: COURTESY

A group of students from the University of Dhaka started a recycling business by collecting garbage from different slums around Dhaka, with the intention of influencing positive changes.

MONDIRA RASHEEK TABASSUM

Known as Inspire, their business aims to buy garbage from the women in the slums who have access to one kilogram of disposable waste every day. They offer low-cost education to children in the slums by taking the garbage as tuition fees, as majority of these children cannot complete their primary education due to financial constraints. The founder and CEO of Inspire, Jahangir Alom, started the initiative along with his partners Swarup Deb and Ruhul Amin Rubel in September 2018. "When people view their garbage as a resource, recycling is incentivised. It is an efficient and practical way to encourage sustainability amongst people," says Jahangir.

The team of Inspire has established a small school for the slum children, in the form of two rented rooms. Two teachers are appointed at the school, and the students

looking to take their business to other major slums in Dhaka as well. They also plan to start collecting organic waste from the different restaurants around Dhaka.

A further positive aspect of the initiative is that they produce an organic fertiliser called, *Chashir Hashi Joibo Shar* (Farmer's Smile Organic Fertilisers), with the garbage they collect, and supply it to farmers at only Tk 24 per kilogram. Given that the high prices of fertilisers in the market is one of the key issues faced by farmers, this approach seemed rather helpful. Another project of Inspire called, *Alo* (Light), aims to provide slum dwellers with small and low-cost solar panels.

With the motto, Green Finance for Education, Inspire strives to work to manage garbage smartly, educate underprivileged children, promote affordable organic fertilisers, support green farming and overall ensure a healthy environment for our nation.



come in six batches. So far, they have 130 students in total and their services have positively affected the lives of 400 families. Their long-term plan includes a scholarship programme for the higher education of their students.

Their work areas currently include only the Korail and Tejgaon slums, but they are

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### Youth Opportunities

#### ZEISS Photography Award 2019 "Seeing Beyond – The Unexpected"

The ZEISS Photography Award is now in its fourth year – and is calling on ambitious photographers from across the globe to present their work around the theme "Seeing Beyond – The Unexpected" to the international jury of experts. It is jointly organised by ZEISS and the World Photography Organisation.

DEADLINE: February 8, 2019 | Competition

WORLD PHOTOGRAPHY ORGANISATION

ZEISS PHOTOGRAPHY AWARD 2019

| "Seeing Beyond The Unexpected"

#### Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships 2019

Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships gives talented students from anywhere in the Commonwealth the opportunity to gain a Master's degree while developing new skills, experiencing life in another country, and building their global networks.

DEADLINE: February 6, 2019 | Scholarship



#### Stipendium Hungaricum (Hungary) Scholarship-2019

Hungary provides high quality education in the heart of Europe. The Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Programme was launched in 2013 by the Hungarian Government. The main goal of the programme regarding the education policy is to support the internationalisation of the Hungarian higher education.

DEADLINE: January 15, 2019 | Scholarship



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