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PHOTOS: PIYAS BISWAS

# TEAM BONNA

## Standing beside flood victims

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Recent floods have had catastrophic effects on the lives of many people across the country, causing severe insufficiency of resources, along with the increase of water-borne diseases like dengue at an alarming rate. In order to tackle such problems, Team Bonna, a flood relief campaign initiated by young students from different universities of Bangladesh, in collaboration with Ghashful Shishu Forum, addressed the urgency to respond.

Together, they have helped close to 125 families by providing them with necessary resources like food, medicines and sanitary napkins. The project, which is the brainchild of Shabnam Sharmin Swarnali from the Institute of Business and Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka (DU), received enormous support from various sources as people stepped in to help each other and create a platform for uniform distribution of resources. Shabnam, despite being a business student, has always been more interested in the development sector and is an enthusiastic social worker who also ran projects for street children under her organisation, Jhilimili.



"The agony of people as shown in the news, struck me deeply and I was determined to do something in order to help them. As a result, I formed Team Bonna and gathered members who would help me in the campaign," said

Shabnam. Initially, they collected funds from their friends and batch mates and after gathering a handful amount, they approached Alamgir Kabir, the Founder of Ghashful Shishu Forum, to guide them in the field work.

"We knew how to plan the distributions and strategically use our saved funds, but the actual field work is quite a different job and we needed experienced people to carry out the campaign efficiently. That's when we approached Alamgir for help," she added.

"We received unexpected help from different sources," shared Nowshheen Kamal Smita, an active member from the team. "Sokhipad, a local sanitary napkin manufacturing organisation donated 1000 pads for this campaign." Another woman working at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital helped them gather medicines for distribution. Students and faculty members from North South University, BRAC University, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh University of Professionals and DU, came forward to help as well. With funding from various sources, Team Bonna targeted three villages in Dewanganj, Jamalpur, for the campaign. To ensure productive distribution, they carried out a token system collection method after conducting a brief survey at the region.

"It has definitely made us more empathetic and inspired us to continue such campaigns," said Arif Rayhan, another member of the

group. "My personal takeaway, is an old man coming over to bless me as he kept his hand over my head with tears of happiness." He expressed that the project helped them gain exposure to the harsh lifestyles of people residing in disaster-struck areas.

The team members were also determined to make menstrual hygiene a prominent part of the relief campaign, as it is generally overlooked as a necessity. They distributed five pads to each family and tried to familiarise them with the use of sanitary napkins. Witnessing the dangers closely while staying with a host family, they were able to comprehend the dire circumstances better. "The people, despite losing everything, were immensely hospitable and left no stone unturned in making arrangements for us," informed the team.

The team further plans to set up a tube well and arrange rehabilitation for the affected people, with an attempt to generate employment. "This is a long-term project and over time, we shall focus on various other social issues and try to help more people," shared Team Bonna.



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### YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

#### Internship Opportunity at BRAC 2019

BRAC is looking for Interns for their Human Resource Division (HRD). This internship intends to give fresh graduates practical, hands-on experiences in the area of human resources. The intern will assist HRD personnel in various projects and will have the opportunity to see and learn the business realities of sustaining a development organisation in different countries.

DEADLINE: August 31, 2019 | Internship

#### 9th International Youth Camp Nepal (IYCN)- Apply Now

You are welcome to apply to attend the 9th International Youth Camp Nepal (IYCN). IYCN is an experiential learning programme designed for young people from different corners of the world. International Youth Camp Nepal highlights cross-cultural exchange, self-exploration, leadership development, global friendship, collaboration, sustainable development goals, and youth empowerment.

DEADLINE: November 30, 2019 | Exchange Programme

#### Commonwealth 100: Free Online Leadership Development Programme

Commonwealth 100 is a free, crowd-sourced, experiential, online leadership development programme that aims to equip a new generation of young leaders from the Commonwealth with skills relevant to the 21st century, with the Open Source Leadership model. Commonwealth 100 aims to produce a more socially-conscious generation of leaders, create a network of young leaders who are well-connected to each other, foster current and future global partnerships between young leaders, and frame a fresh and principled network of Commonwealth leaders for the future.

ONLINE | Miscellaneous

## DIU's Department of Innovation & Entrepreneurship sets an example

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

Daffodil International University (DIU) launched their Department of Innovation & Entrepreneurship in 2015. DIU is the first university in Bangladesh to offer a four-year Bachelor's degree solely on entrepreneurship. The programme focuses on both theoretical knowledge and practical learning.

Mohammad Shibli Shahriar, Head of the Department of Innovation & Entrepreneurship, shared his ideas and aspirations for the department. "Our mission is to create young leaders who will be able to solve social problems and fulfil the needs and wants of the people," he said.

After launching the department, many graduates and professionals started seeking similar entrepreneurship programmes. As a result, diploma courses and MBA on entrepreneurship were also introduced. The curriculum of the department allows students to explore their own ideas and decide on the kind of learning opportunities they want out of the degree. This approach is the first of its kind in Bangladesh. The students gain the opportunities to find their passions and to truly understand their abilities through the



PHOTO: PIYAS BISWAS

creative and practical programme.

Currently, there are 51 students in the department, with three batches in each term. The students have to participate in a project in each term. Throughout the course of the four-year programme, students can launch their own start-ups.

"Being able to test our own start-up ideas in the real world is a great opportunity and the department goes out of their way to help the students in this regard," says Tisha Farhana, a

final-year student from the Department of Innovation & Entrepreneurship. She recently launched her own startup, Craftiques.

Himel Hasan, another student from the department, is the Founder and Managing Director of Twisted Cafe. "All the faculty members of the department are very cooperative. My teachers help me immensely in both my coursework and in managing my restaurant. I could not have done this without the financial and mental support from my

department," says Himel.

The department offers 100 percent scholarships to deserving students. The students can also participate in exchange programmes in other countries, as a part of their degree. Bangladesh Venture Capital Limited invests in the student startups in the early stages and students receive funds-based on their ideas. There is also an entrepreneur development fund, which provides an interest free loan of up to BDT 50,000 to the students. Moreover, if any student fails to repay the loan on time, their deadline can be extended.

This innovative department also provides a 'Maker Space', where the students create their own products, learn to build the products and simply have fun. The department also offers an industry academy lecture series, which is conducted by prominent CEOs and entrepreneurs of the country.

Atikur Rahman is the very first graduate from the Department of Entrepreneurship & Innovation at DIU. He believes that the department has truly set an example of a participative and creative educational system in Bangladesh.