

THE DAILY STAR-IPDC UNSUNG WOMEN NATION BUILDERS AWARDS 2021

SIX GRASSROOTS WOMEN CHANGEMAKERS RECOGNISED

Unfortunately, the indomitable women who have contributed significantly to the development of Bangladesh surviving all odds of disparity and discrimination are largely ignored. In an effort to correct this historic wrong, the fifth season of the Unsung Women Nation Builders Awards 2021, jointly organised by IPDC Finance Limited and The Daily Star, honoured six unsung women heroes for their exceptional humanitarian and courageous activities yesterday. The winners also received Tk 2 lakh each.

In the virtual ceremony, celebrated women in different sectors presented the stories of the unsung women in a story-style video presentation of each unsung woman's journey. Prominent personalities such as businesswoman and poet Rubana Huq, Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation Shaheen Anam, Country Director of ActionAid Bangladesh Farah Kabir, Founder and Chairman of SBK Tech Ventures and SBK Foundation Sonia Bashir Kabir, novelist Selina Hossain and FCA Chairperson of UCEP Parveen Mahmud were present at

the virtual ceremony as well as Mominul Islam, Managing Director and CEO of IPDC Finance Limited and Mahfuz Anam, Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star.

The Daily Star, in association with IPDC Finance Limited, started this initiative in 2017 to honour unsung women heroes of the nation

and provide them with a platform where they will be celebrated for defying barriers and contributing towards the socio-economic development of the country.

The six unsung leaders who received the prestigious award were Sabina Yeasmin, who ensured breast and cervical cancer treatment for 310 women; Rozina Akhter, who supervised the burial of over 60 people who died from Covid-19; Jahanara Islam, a successful self-made entrepreneur in Cox's Bazar; Fauzia Beethi, a teacher who played a significant role in helping the residents of Bogura during Covid-19;

Farmis Akhter, an entrepreneur who helped feed 700 families in need in Sylhet; and Shapla Devi Tripura, the founder of the beloved "Sampari" in Khagrachari Hill.

To know more about the winners and the award, visit <http://www.uumba.com/>.



Caring for the Unfortunate



Rozina Akhter, the elected member of ward number 7, 8 and 9, Enayetnagar Union, Narayanganj, has set an example of kindness during these tough times amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. After a certain period of time, the number of affected patients started decreasing in Narayanganj while the number of deaths was still increasing. At that time, people of the community faced a scarcity of manpower to wash the female dead bodies. And this is when Rozina stepped up.

With no prior experience,

Rozina learned the method and came forward to help wash the bodies of the female victims of Covid-19. Till now, she has handled and washed 27 dead bodies prior to the latter's burial. Apart from this, Rozina has supervised the burial of 59 more people. Rozina even started travelling outside her designated union to help the other communities. Besides, she formed and is currently leading the group 'Masdair Jubo Kallyan Shingha (MJKS) - Team Rozina Covid-19', which ensures proper burial for the Covid-19 casualties.

A Self-Made Visionary Entrepreneur

Jahanara Islam, the owner of Jahanara Green Agro at Cox's Bazar, is a self-made entrepreneur. She began her venture at a very early age after marriage. She started her journey with a cow and only 4400 taka. With the profits she made from dairying, she opened a poultry farm with 100 broiler chickens with 2000 taka back in 1984. Then she moved on to operating a feed mill for chickens. With the profits from poultry and feed mill operations, she established 11 fish farms in Cox's Bazar. Then she ventured into the hatchery business with the help of BFRI.

She then became interested in home gardening which propelled

her interest in tissue culture. Back in 1983, she observed that Buddhist monks treated algae-based foods as holy and they live a long life. She instantly made a connection between eating algae-based foods with a long life. She eventually formed an active collaboration with Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University. To engage educated youths in order to create a bigger impact, she developed a network of university students who regularly sell her product and earn a fair margin to bear their expenses. So far, with all her activities and with direct and indirect supervision, she has changed the lives of more than 2 lakh people and has become a role model for many.



Awareness on the Wheels



Sabina Yeasmin has been spreading awareness about breast and cervical cancer in the rural communities, mostly in the south-eastern regions of Bangladesh, since 2017. Till now she has covered 33 districts and enlightened women from every social class and age group including women from schools, colleges, universities, garments, etc. She has already ensured proper breast and cervical cancer treatment for 310 women. The most unique part of Sabina's journey is that she went deep into the remote areas of these regions on a bicycle.

Sabina rode across the villages

of Chattogram, Feni, Lakshimpur, Noakhali, Chandpur and more, with her favourite companion, her bicycle, to raise awareness among the women of these communities about the causes behind breast and cervical cancer, the prominent symptoms, preventive measures and steps to be taken if someone experiences these symptoms. In Hatia, a remote island of the country, Sabina spread awareness to more than 4 lakh people through a local radio called 'Shagor Dwip'. As a woman, Sabina Yeasmin aspires to ensure proper awareness and treatment for every woman in Bangladesh.

A Kindhearted Warrior



Everybody in Bogura's Dhunat upazila knows Fauzia Beethi for her philanthropic works. When Covid-19 hit Bangladesh, Beethi started making masks and produced 400 bottles of hand sanitizers. Beethi provided 18 kg of food packages to 350 poor families who lost their jobs during Covid-19. Last April and May, Beethi sacrificed two goats she and her children nurtured at home and distributed meat among 93 families.

Her early life was so miserable that no one thought that she would ever bounce back. Beethi got married in 1995, but her married life turned unstable within a short time. Her husband and in-laws started torturing her for dowry. They even locked her

in a room to stop her from sitting for her HSC exam. Later, her family members rescued her and she got first division in her HSC. Next year, Beethi got admitted to Rajshahi University. Unfortunately, her husband also got admitted to the same university. In 1998, one day, her husband brutally beat her in the open campus demanding dowry. She divorced him and married Razzakul a year after the incident. This life lesson gave her the spirit to fight for oppressed women. On 9 December 2020, Bogura district administration recognised her as a Joyeeta considering how she bounced back in life and stood beside a thousand unprivileged people in their time of need.

A Selfless Covid Hero



Farmis Akhter is a generous person who always tries to help people around her. Days after the first Covid-19 infection was detected, the country went into a nationwide shutdown. At around 11:30 at night on one of these lockdown days, Farmis was driving home after helping a blood donor in Sylhet city's Kazirbazar area, when she spotted a mentally handicapped man who fell sick. Some street children told her that the man had no food all day. Farmis rushed home, packed all the food she had cooked that night and returned to the spot. She fed the man by hand and shared the food with the street children too. On that day, she realised that people not only would

die of the coronavirus, but some people would surely die of hunger.

That was just the beginning. Farmis withdrew all her savings from the bank and made it a routine to cook and distribute food among 250-300 distressed people in the city during lunch and dinner time till the shutdown was relaxed in June. She also gave grocery packets to 700 families in Sylhet city. Farmis's help reached the stray canines of the city too. Regarding her interest in helping people, Farmis said she attained these characteristics from her father, Abdul Mannan, who was a kindhearted person. It has been her lifelong wish to help people in distress.

Savior of the Hill People

Shapla Devi Tripura is a dedicated social worker and loved by everyone in the Khagrachari Hill District. She has been working tirelessly for the development of society for over 25 years. In 2016, she founded Sampari (a social and charity organisation). The non-profit entity supports education, especially that of marginalised women and children, treatment of women victims of domestic and social violence and maternity expenses for needy women. She has been standing next to the meritorious and poor students in remote areas like a shadow of a

banyan tree. Many of her students are working for the country by establishing themselves in various institutions.

Since Covid-19 hit the region, she has provided relief materials to many helpless people. She has distributed food items among more than 1000 families in remote areas of Khagrachari. In 2018, Shapla was honoured as "Joyeeta" by Khagrachari district administration. She also received the Mother Teresa Memorial Award 2020 for her outstanding contribution to women's rights.



"Women have played a significant role in building our nation from the very beginning. They have helped us gain independence and have made valuable contributions to our community and the overall economy. The main goal of Unsung Women Nation Builders Awards 2021 is to enlighten everyone on the stories of these brave women."

MOMINUL ISLAM
Managing Director & CEO
IPDC Finance Limited



"We have already brought to light the efforts of 30 women who are a symbol of inspiration and courage. We have returned this time to tell the world the stories of the incredible journeys of six great women."

MAHFUZ ANAM
Editor & Publisher
The Daily Star

