



Children from Shampriti Orphanage in Eidgor with their red kits, curated by Foundation 21.

**YOUTH IN ACTION**

# Combating the stigma around menstruation

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Foundation 21 was initiated by a group of friends in March 2018. It aims to combat period poverty, and create awareness about menstrual hygiene. Abreshmi Anika Chowdhury, Arish Islam, Mashrur Rahman Khan and Sayem Ibn Alam, founded the organisation.

Foundation 21's Talk Period, Bangladesh, is a Facebook group with around 1,800 active members, who regularly engage in discussions about menstrual health. Professor Rashida Khanom, a gynaecologist, conducts interactive sessions with the group, live on Facebook.

Foundation 21 has collaborated with platforms like Swayong, Put a Period, TransEnd, Project Purple, Safe Pad Bangladesh, and Fashion Park on different initiatives.

The organisation's monthly webinar, 'Mashik Adda' was launched during menstrual health week this year. Their campaign, 'Keeping up with the Cups' highlighted experiences of menstrual cup users. "We also shared infographics on how to use a menstrual cup and a guide with links to online pages selling these cups in Bangladesh," Abreshmi added.

During the pandemic, the organisation donated 60 reusable pads to students of OBHI-ZATRIK Foundation under 'Project Mashik'. Through this project, they plan to conduct



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF FOUNDATION 21  
Team members of Foundation 21 preparing to send out the red kits.

workshops to create safe spaces for discussions about menstrual health. They will also train women and marginalised groups on the production of reusable sanitary napkins.

Abreshmi, a student of UWC Atlantic College, started a Foundation 21 chapter at her institution. "We held multiple fundraising events for Foundation 21, and hosted a special week where we took over different councils to discuss period policies, sustainability, mental health, and current issues surrounding menstrual health," she said. Foundation 21's

platform, Moner Reetu, raises awareness on mental health and menstruation.

The organisation received a major funding for Project Mashik from Go Make A Difference, a grant scheme available only for UWC students. They received another grant from UWC Lighthouse for workshop equipment. Lastly, the team also won the Lighthouse Prize 2021.

#PeriodBeyondGenders, a campaign by Foundation 21, intends to bust myths about menstruation, and emphasise that periods are beyond gender identities. The organisation collaborated with Dhaka Doctor and DaktarBhai to arrange discounted appointments and fees for people who have had unpleasant experiences with gynecologists and those who simply cannot afford appointments with gynecologists.

Foundation 21's Project Red Kit provides basic hygiene products that would last a year. Each red kit consists of 4 reusable sanitary pads, 3 underwear pants, 2 soaps, a sanitiser, some wipes, and a pouch. Recently, they sent out 156 red kits to orphanages under Bidyanondo Foundation.

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**INSPIRATION**

# Leading the youth towards positive changes

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

Md Tajdin Hassan started exploring marketing trends soon after he graduated from BRAC University. He won the YWN Marketing Excellence Award 2020 from the Asia Marketing Federation under the category, 'Top Outstanding Youth Marketer of the Year'. Currently, Tajdin is the Chief Strategy and Digital Transformation Officer at The Daily Star.

He participated in the 2019 International Visitors Leadership Programme (IVLP) in the USA under the 'Youth and Civic Engagement' category.

"Meeting 19 other young leaders was very inspiring. Their stories of trying to bring about positive changes in the world have stayed with me," shares Tajdin.

At the IVLP, he explored methods for empowering the youth through networks, exchanges, and opportunities as well as elevating youth voices.

After returning from the IVLP, Tajdin initiated youth-based activities in Bangladesh through Torun Digital, a platform he co-founded with Sonia Bashir Kabir, Founder of SBK Tech Ventures and SBK Foundation, and Shuvashish Roy, Head of Business of The Daily Star.

Through collaboration with different universities and events such as Youth Skills Summit and Business Competition Library, Torun Digital has successfully reached out to youngsters. The platform also provides internship and freelancing opportunities to students, equipping them with hard and soft skills.

Tajdi strongly values cross-mentorship, and believes that although young students may lack experience, they always bring fresh perspectives to anything they work with.

In 2020, he founded Mission Save Bangladesh (MSB) with Imran Kadir from The Daily Samakal and Adnan Imtiaz Halim from Sheba.xyz, to support daily wage earners during the coronavirus pandemic. The organisation provides daily wage earners with food packages and other basic necessities. MSB has collaborated with Dabur, Dano, IPDC, and Pathao, among other organisations that share the same objectives as them.

"We also share success stories of social workers to inspire others to serve the community," Tajdin adds.

MSB received the Joy Bangla Youth

Award in 2020 for collecting nearly BDT 20 million, and helping over 0.1 million people. International media outlets, such as Washington Post, Yahoo News, and Toronto Stars, have featured the organisation's initiatives.

Being a keen reader himself, Tajdin has co-authored the books, "Personal Branding", "The Transition", and "Think Like CEOs". He also shares significant insights for the youth into topics like marketing, e-commerce, sustainability, and social welfare, on his blog.

"Watching the news only presents an account of what happened. However, I believe it limits our capacity to build



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MD TAJDIN HASSAN

Isabelle Zsoldos (R), Former Cultural Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy in Dhaka, hands over IVLP completion certificate to Md Tajdin Hassan.

upon our existing knowledge of events. On the other hand, reading expands our horizons and imagination," says Tajdin. "In this digital era, we need to consume video content as well as build a habit of reading to inspire positive changes."

Tajdin believes that young changemakers can function as the building blocks in the growth of Bangladesh. "I only wish to give youngsters a slight push. Dreams do come true, but the courage to act towards achieving one's goals is important for building a modern yet humble society," he concludes.

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**NURTURING DREAMS**

# Thriving with sustainable architecture

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Jannatun Nayeem Nowshin, a young architect and researcher from Bangladesh, won the gold medal in the architecture category of the Asia Young Designer Award 2019. After completing her graduation in Architecture from Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology, she pursued her postgraduate studies in Landscape at YAcademy, Italy. Presently, she is a part of the design discovery programme at Harvard Graduate School of Design and has enrolled at Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia in Spain for her master's degree.

Nowshin developed a passion for architecture when she was in school. In an attempt to explore the subject, she participated in various international architectural competitions over the years. "I wanted to go beyond what was allowed inside the educational scope, stimulating my creativity intensively and searching for innovative ideas while giving effective solutions," she added.

Nowshin also worked on several research publications about the climate crisis. Some of her notable projects include the designs of an eco-friendly hotel in France and a sustainable prototype house in Indonesia. She is currently working on a multi-university based in Uruguay.

Her project in France is regarded as the world's biggest permaculture centre, which also includes an eco-responsive treehouse tourist facility. It is situated right beside the "Château de Vibrac" and adopts an arrangement that enhances the castle's rich heritage and agricultural traditions. The sustainable prototype house in Indonesia is based on the concept of versatile modular design. The house is mainly designed to withstand earthquakes while remaining affordable and sustainable for locals. It uses a modular bamboo frame for seismic design guidelines.

Nowshin's graduation project earned an Honorary Laureate Diploma from the International



PHOTO: COURTESY OF JANNATUN NAYEEM NOWSHIN

Academy of Architecture, ECOSOC, United Nations. She designed an aquarium with traditional waterscapes. "While working on this project, I was thrilled by the idea that designed spaces had the power to transport people and spur certain feelings in them," she explained.

Nowshin represented Bangladesh at Glam Goes Global, an interdisciplinary programme that asks participants to design pieces of wearable architecture, recently. Their two-day workshop sheds light on sustainability and critical thinking in architecture.

Architecture is a tangible opportunity for Nowshin to translate observations into spatial language. "I want to realise my ideas through my master's degree to contribute to responsive architecture with a positive impact on our environment," she concluded.

**YOUNG ACHIEVER**

# A triumphant effort towards social welfare

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

S M Sammam Sakti Ibn Sahadat from Bangladesh won the 4th Annual ISIE INDIA Excellence Award 2021, earning the title of 'Visionary Leader' from the judges of the ISIE INDIA Excellence Award committee. Imperial Society of Innovative Engineers (ISIE) is a renowned international E-mobility learning platform connected with India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Sammam is a student of Mechanical Engineering at Lovely Professional University, India. He always wanted to be a doctor. However, due to the demise of his father just a few days before his HSC exams, he failed to attain an exemplary result. During this time, his mother Ratna Parvin Rupa supported him and inspired him to work for the education of deprived children. He was the Modelling Director of Online



PHOTO: COURTESY OF S M SAMMAM SAKTI IBN SAHADAT

Model United Nations (OMUN), a sister concern of the United Nations that is dedicated to attaining Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He was also the Deputy Secretary-General of International Affered



Education for All' is currently active in 12 nations around the world.

Dialogue, a department under the OMUN.

His experience as an exchange participant in the prominent youth leadership organisation AIESEC, further aided him when he became the Youth Delegate of the Event and Programming department for UNITE-2030, a programme empowering youth leaders towards SDG enactment.

Sammam participated in the SDG-based campaign "UNITE 2030: Youth Action for Better World", where he bagged the title of 'Most Aspiring Youth Activist and Global Youth Leader'.

"I feel proud to represent Bangladesh in different international platforms," shares Sammam. "I have been involved with social organisations based in India such as Harvard Smiles and Eminent Organisation,

among many others. Recognising my passion for social welfare, Lovely Professional University nominated me for ISIE India."

Currently, Sammam is the Global Peace Ambassador of Global Peace Chain, an organisation that works towards SDG 16, promoting just, peaceful, and inclusive societies.

His project, 'Education for All' is supported by the Young Changemakers Programme of The KidsRights Foundation in Amsterdam, Netherlands. 'Education for All' is currently active across 12 nations around the world. "I want to ensure free quality education for underprivileged children globally. I dream of increasing Bangladesh's literacy rate to a hundred percent by 2030," concludes Sammam.