



Footsteps designs social ventures to address three key areas: water and sanitation, climate action, and public health.



PHOTOS: COURTESY

## FORBES 30 UNDER 30 ASIA CLASS OF 2022

# Footsteps nurturing community resilience

Now earning global recognition from Forbes, Rafayat and Taqi are motivated more than ever to make their dreams come true: empowering more marginalised Bangladeshi communities to become self-sustaining and self-resilient.

SHAMS RASHID TONMOY

In the latest iteration of Forbes' 30 Under 30 Asia class of 2022, seven Bangladeshi youths made the prestigious list of global entrepreneurs and thinkers of tomorrow. Two of them, selected under the Social Impact category, are Shah Rafayat Chowdhury and Mohammad Taqi Yasir, co-founders of the organisation, Footsteps Bangladesh.

As a non-profit initiative focused on overcoming a multitude of social challenges, Footsteps designs social ventures to address three key areas: water and sanitation, climate action, and public health. They work with



Shah Rafayat Chowdhury

marginalised communities by developing their capacity and transforming them from being dependent on aid to becoming self-resilient. Since 2013, Footsteps has impacted over 300,000 people across 27 districts in Bangladesh.



Mohammad Taqi Yasir

Footsteps currently has four active projects: Project Trishna, where they provide clean water and sanitation; Disaster Resilience Program, where climate-vulnerable communities are trained to combat natural and social disasters, particularly in the aftermath; Shushasther Odhikar Shobar, where they work on improving healthcare infrastructure and services in remote communities; and Project WECan, where the goal is to create a green economy based on renewable energy.

"We call ourselves a 'next-generation organisation' because we work to create sustainable changes that last a lifetime," said Rafayat. According to him, instead of simply providing access to basic needs, Footsteps focuses on the bigger picture: building self-sustaining communities. He added, "We provide knowledge and capacity to marginalised communities so

they can overcome poverty barriers on their own without the constant need for donor support."

When asked about the application process for Forbes 30 under 30, Chowdhury stated that the selection process is based on public nominations. "Based on the nominations, judges at Forbes conduct a thorough check and shortlist the names. Afterwards, they ask us to fill in a questionnaire. Our responses are then sent to distinguished individuals in similar fields as us, and they make the final decision," added Taqi.

Footsteps started in 2013 with a winter clothes distribution drive, where Rafayat and Taqi gathered around 300 volunteers to collect second-hand clothing, medicine, and aid for people in need in North Dhaka. Since then, they have been working with both public and private organisations, including the government, to set up clean water systems across Bangladesh and reach out to underprivileged communities.

It wasn't until 2020 that Footsteps received their first recognition, the Joy Bangla Youth Award. "It took us seven years to come this far, and we poured our hearts into Footsteps," added Taqi.

Now earning global recognition from Forbes, Rafayat and Taqi are motivated more than ever to make their dreams come true: empowering more marginalised Bangladeshi communities to become self-sustaining and self-resilient.

The author is a sub-editor and feature writer at Toggle, The Daily Star. Email: rashid.tonmoy@thedailystar.net.

## NURTURING DREAMS

# Hafsa's remarkable feats in community development

SHANIZ CHOWDHURY

Hafsa Tasnim, a student of Bangladesh Agricultural University, received the IVD Bangladesh Volunteer Award 2021 for her activities in community development. The event, titled "Volunteering Contributions towards Community Development in Bangladesh", was organised by the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives, UNV Bangladesh, UNFPA, VSO, and WaterAid.

Hafsa's tireless efforts to coordinate female self-defence training and raise awareness against dowry violence for Bonhishikha granted her the 6th position among 20 volunteers. Bonhishikha is a Dhaka based feminist, not-for-profit organisation that advocates for gender equality and the emancipation of women.

"One of the many challenges I face is the lack of proper facilities, such as clean toilets or safety. I do not always have the opportunity to participate in field activities or even when I do, I have to leave early as I have a strict curfew," she expressed.

With the hope to enlighten, enrich, and entertain the youth, Hafsa and her friends founded Team Utsav. It is an organisation for people who love celebrating festivals – both religious and seasonal. When Hafsa began her university life, there were no arts clubs or faculty, to her dismay.

"I am a fun-loving person who believes that the pursuit of cultural traditions should be an extension of curriculums. Nothing brings people together like festivals, because they teach us the importance of community and strengthens the tenets of a society. That's why my friends and I felt the need to start Team Utsav during our first year of university," shared Hafsa.

Team Utsav ties in with her future goals which are to continue working to improve upon the lives of farmers. For that, she believes she can put the skills and lessons she has learned from her undergraduate degree to good use.

"I want Team Utsav to grow and have branches in other universities. My goal is to encourage social cohesion through all kinds of festivals and bind people from every religious, economic and social background together," said Hafsa.

Hafsa is also involved in Green Voice Bangladesh, an environmental youth organisation.



Hafsa Tasnim received the IVD Bangladesh Volunteer Award 2021 for her activities in community development.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Moreover, she is working to establish schools for underprivileged children in her home district Khulna.

Hafsa is currently working at Bangladesh Betar and hopes to be a news presenter soon.

The author is a student of BRAC University, and a freelance journalist. Email: shanzaychowdhury@gmail.com.

## INTERVIEW

# Aspirations of a young animator: Antik Mahmud gets candid

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Mahathir Mahmud Antik is popular for his YouTube videos and cartoon vlogs among the youth. He has made a name for himself as an animator, author, and a cartoonist. He worked on his first book, "Bhallagena", with Ayman Sadiq, which was published in 2019. His thriller novel, "Chol", was published by Addhayan Publications in 2020, and was recently adapted into an interactive tele-fiction by Bongo BD. Last year, he released another book titled, "Tin". He also wrote and illustrated comics along the way, including the "Noman" series and "Perahin". We caught up with Antik to learn more about his work and experiences.

**Tell us a little about 'Chol'.**  
"Chol" revolves around Rakib,

the protagonist, and his buddies, who are looking for one of their lost friends, Maleeha. As the story progresses, they come across different allegations against the girl. At its core, it is a tale about friendship and every character in this book has their own stories. "Chol" is my first solo book. I wanted to experiment with a storytelling method and see if I could have several narratives scattered in different places with different characters, connecting to a bigger plot.

**How did you find your passion for animation?**  
I was skilled at video editing and cartoon drawing, and I started making animated clips by combining the two. Later, I joined 10 Minute School as a creative executive. In 2021, I founded Antik Animated Studio, which is dedicated to animation and comic books. One of our biggest projects till date is the music video for "Behula" by Shunno. I am self-taught, as I picked up the skills for animation from YouTube but I wish I got more professional guidance. This is precisely why I created an animation-learning course with 10 Minute School for beginners.

**What are some challenges you have faced along the way with your studio?**

To be honest, my crew is pretty creative, so I do not have any issues when it comes to executing ideas. One drawback would be that none of our members come from a corporate background. Nevertheless, it is a great learning experience.

**How does it feel to see your novel be adapted into a tele-fiction?**

It feels great, and I am very proud of what we have done. It was a good start, and I am hopeful for the future. A group of talented professionals invested their valuable time behind this book.

The author is a student of IBA, DU and a freelance journalist who likes reading, scribbling, and blogging. Email: mislammonamee@gmail.com.



Mahathir Mahmud Antik



An animated avatar of Antik appears in most of his videos.

## GUIDES

# 5 tips for starting A YOUTUBE CHANNEL

USRAAT FAHMIDAH

Anyone can start their own YouTube channel these days. In this digital age, video content is ubiquitous. Here are five tips for starting a YouTube channel.

**Set up your YouTube account**

If you are starting out as a YouTuber, you need to set up your YouTube account. Create your account, and fill out the details carefully. Add details to the "About" section, and try to include what your channel is about. Link your other social media accounts. You can customise with a profile photo and cover banner. The YouTube channel name is important as it becomes your brand later on.

**Find your audience and niche**

You need to find your own niche audience with your video content. With millions of videos out every day, you need to create your own niche of videos that sets you apart. The best way to increase views and follower count is engaging your audience. When you attract a certain niche, you'll have a stable views and followers count.

**Create a strategy for growth**

You can build a solid online presence and brand identity around your YouTube channel. For that, you need to put effort into increasing your

subscriber and view count. A Growth strategy like planning your content and deciding on one content category like: Travel, Cooking, Lifestyle, Tutorials etc. Connect with your audience and go the extra mile by giving them

**equipment**

The beauty of technology is that you can do anything on your mobile phone these days. If you don't have a camera, you can use your phone's camera. Although you'll be compromising on the video quality here. It's recommended that you invest in a reasonably priced good camera if you want to be a content maker in the long run. You don't need fancy expensive equipment starting out.

The most crucial aspect of videos is how you edit them. Turn simple footage into something gorgeous with editing. Learn how video editing softwares work. Windows Video Maker and Apple iMovie are built in video editing softwares on iOS and Windows. The more advanced tools are Final Cut Pro and Adobe Premiere Pro.

**Learn analytics and SEO**  
Learning analytics and SEO is one of the most important skills

for the digital age, not just for your YouTube channel but across all social media platforms. Learn how analytics and SEO work, so that your videos get more visibility on search engines with one search. With analytics, you can understand how trends work, and get an idea about your audience's preferences to create content accordingly.

The author is a freelance journalist.

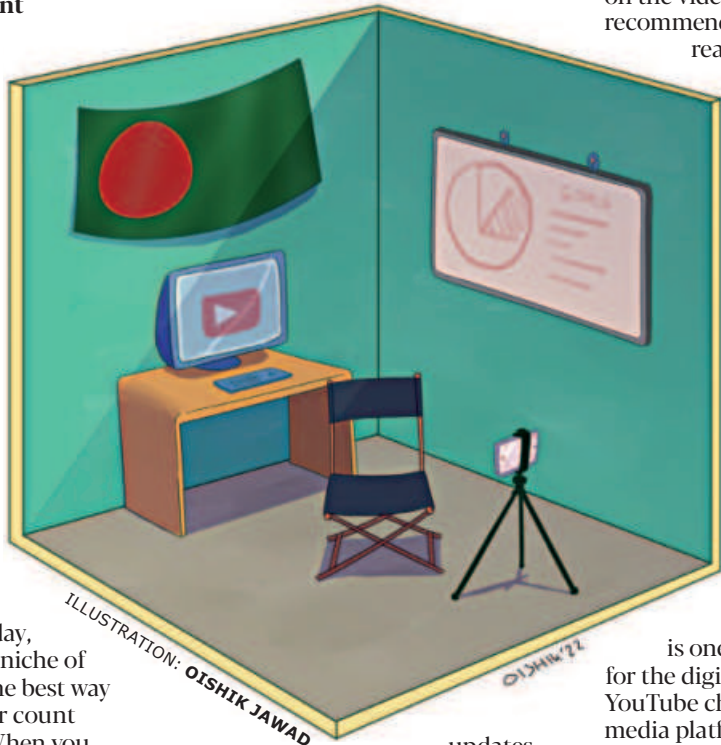


ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

updates about your life on

other social media platforms. Finally, keep your content engaging, and fresh. You need to keep an eye out for the latest video trends and make videos accordingly.

**Pick your editing tools and**