



Sonajan Akter,
The selfless midwife

Sonajan Akter of Chowbaria at Manikganj has been serving as a midwife for the entire village as well as at least 15 other villages for the past 50 years. She does not accept any payment for her services despite her family being extremely poor.

She takes care of the mothers, and later, their babies, for up to 10 days after birth. Relatives and acquaintances testify she looks after the mothers and children just as a grandmother would – with utmost care and affection.



Shahida Akhter Shorna,
Malala of Bangla

For her work against child marriage, Shahida Akhter Shorna was dubbed the “Malala of Bangla” by Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg at an international conference of Plan International, an organisation that works for children’s rights worldwide.

Shorna endured pressure for early marriage like all the other girls in her village. Her elder sisters, all four of them, had given in without a protest when their time came. But Shorna did not. She was adamant

that completing her education was her first priority.

It was her wholehearted campaign for girls’ education in her village that put her on par with Malala Yousafzai. Although there were no gun-toting Taliban insurgents patrolling her village, hers was no less challenging a task than Malala’s.

President of Gazipur’s Mawna Union Shishu Forum of Plan Bangladesh, where she joined in 2006, Shorna is now a marriage-buster in her community and also an icon. She has stopped six child marriages in her union so far.

Shorna always took it upon herself to organise students for different events. She showed her leadership quality during those programmes. Shorna, who once wanted to be a doctor, now wants to serve the society by becoming a university or college teacher.



Maftahul Jannat Likhon,
The light of Joypurhat

Because Maftahul Jannat Likhon decided to install solar panels free of charge in three villages two years back, students from the poorest families can now study at night in these villages of Joypurhat’s Panchbibi upazila.

When many people would leave empty handed from her solar power sales centre because of the high price, she started to feel the problems children faced in those families. She felt children from the poorest of families should have a fair chance to go to school and having bright lights to study at night

could boost their morale.

Nowadays, the three villages are collectively called “Solargram” and 148 families have solar lights because Likhon felt that she had to do something to help.

But bright lights are not enough. One also needs books. In March this year, Likhon visited her Solargram with bundles of children’s books to be distributed for free. From solar lights to light of knowledge, Likhon has them all.


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