

The logo for ActionAid, featuring the word "act:onaid" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. The colon is replaced by a stylized human figure with arms raised, also in white. The logo is positioned in the top right corner of the page.

act:onaid

UNSUNG HEROES

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Unsung Heroes: Youth Leadership

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The background features a collage of overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in various colors including orange, green, blue, purple, and yellow. Some shapes are outlined with thin lines in white or blue. The overall composition is dynamic and layered.

UNSUNG HEROES
YOUTH LEADERSHIP

This story book is dedicated to
Archbishop Desmond Tutu
(1931-2021)

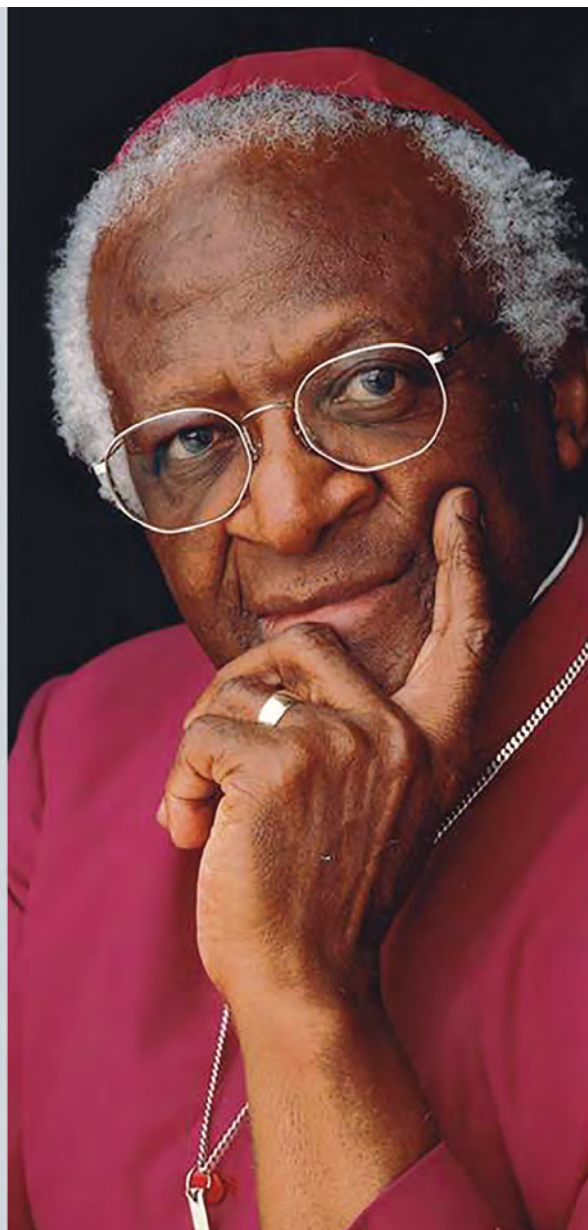
“

*If you want peace,
you don't talk
to your friends.
You talk to
your enemies.*

”

-Desmond Tutu

Rest in power and peace.



FOREWORD



Young people are the agent of transformational change in the community, and many become influences and leaders. Where there is any injustice, inequality, exclusion, and national emergency, young people are the first responders as is evident in our work experiences.

Young people have the courage to challenge unjust social system and offer innovative solutions for achieving desired social and political changes. Therefore, it is high time to recognise our unsung heroes who have made significant contributions to this process in their communities thereby to Bangladesh.

With this in mind, ActionAid Bangladesh is publishing the 'Unsung Heroes: Youth Leadership', 2nd Edition. It will feature the transformational leadership stories of 25 young women and men across Bangladesh. Each story reflects the dedication, willpower, and solution-oriented mindset of young people. I congratulate all the young people whose stories have been featured in this publication. I believe you will find these stories inspiring, and relevant as well as encourage you to support them. I hope these stories will inspire other young people to do good for their respective communities.

I ardently believe the stories of these young people will motivate all to support their initiative and future endeavours.

Farah Kabir

Country Director, ActionAid Bangladesh.

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**YOUTH LEADERSHIP
FOR CHALLENGING
SOCIAL STEREOTYPES**

JAMIL KARIM

Age: 17
Location: Sylhet
Hobby: Volunteering



Jamil Karim is a young leader from Sylhet. He is passionate about helping people fight for social equality. Jamil found himself as a child empathizing with people who were marginalized in the community. There on, he gradually engaged in efforts for eliminating their suffering.

In 2021, he formed an organisation along with several other enthusiastic young people from his community. He named it United Students Organisation of Social Services (USOS). Through this organisation, he aimed to engage students for social development and environmental wellbeing. They worked with limited resources.

During the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020/21, Jamil initiated the 'Ekti Loan' project, lending 4000 BDT to 5 unemployed and distressed persons to enable them overcome their livelihood challenges. Eventually, 3 people became financially and socially resilient. He also started a school program to prevent dropouts due to the outbreak of the pandemic. The program was able to support 105 students to return to their school life.

Jamil's organisation, USOS, is today expanding beyond Sylhet and creating an interest among the youth to work with the organisation. He envisions a sustainable financing model for his community and beyond that can help build resilience among marginalised communities.



MANISHA MEEM NIPUN



Manisha Meem Nipun is a transwoman and human rights activist. Over the past seven years, she has been passionately advocating for the rights of people of diverse SOGIESCs* in the south-eastern part of Bangladesh.

In 2021, Manisha initiated the Pathchola Foundation to support the marginalised transgender community in building resilience during the COVID-19 crisis. She distributed food, financially supported 1112 people, and also

Age: 25

Location: **Chattogram**

Hobby: **Volunteering**

provided legal aid to 180 women and transgender survivors of violence.

80 transgender people were supported for continuing their education and provided with vocational training to get employment and start small-scale businesses. She stood by more than 325 women and transgender sex workers, providing them physical and mental health support and training during the pandemic. While it was not an easy path for her, she fought bravely against all the odds to come this far.

Manisha has also been working with Bandhu Social Welfare Society, Save the Children, Man Engage Alliance, Inclusive Bangladesh and other organisations and networks, in the remotest part of Bangladesh, including the Hill Tracts, to provide voluntary social services.

In recognition of her contributions, Manisha has received the Human Rights Defender Award from Bandhu Social Welfare Society, and the Xulhaz Mannan Memorial Award from Equal Platform Bangladesh.

In the future, Manisha wants to continue working so as to ensure a gender equal society for all.

*Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics



MD TAYAB MRIDHA

Age: 20

Location: Mymensingh

Hobby: Travelling, Volunteering



Md Tayab Mridha had witnessed several instances of child-marriage and related violence within his extended family. He struggled to stop

the violence.

He established 'Odommo '19', a youth-led organization. He leads 70 youth volunteers when Tayab was studying in Grade 10.

Along with his team members, Tayab has been capacitating his peers, and designing awareness and advocacy campaigns to stop child marriage, gender-based violence, and child rights violations. To widen the reach of his messages in his community, he has been using graffiti, a uniquely powerful tool.

His initiative helped educate 3000 students on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). He shared free access to materials on menstrual hygiene in three schools and a few colleges. Besides these endeavours, he organized workshops for young people, especially young girls on self-defense and cyber-bullying to ensure safety, security, and protection.

Breaking societal norms and stigma in rural areas is not easy. Many people of his locality still find it difficult to accept the ending of child marriages, and supporting the rights of women and children. Tayab and his team are determined to move ahead with their activism for the rights of children, particularly young girls.



MONTAHER ARAFAT

Age: 21

Location: Dhaka

Hobby: Singing



Montaher Arafat experienced discrimination in his childhood. He witnessed the violation of children's rights in his society and family. He was only 14 years old when he began advocating for child rights and child protection in his community. For the last seven years, he has been working tirelessly to end child marriage, drug abuse in children, and advocating for child rights in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Montaher first joined Ghashful Shishu Forum as a community volunteer. Where he served as the secretary later. He led the platform with the intent to give a voice to the children for their rights and demands, and worked towards a child-friendly, safe society. At present, he is an advisor of the Forum and continues to mentor its new volunteers to carry the children for their rights and demands. He worked towards a child-friendly, safe society. At present, he is an advisor of the Forum and continues to mentor its new volunteers to carry on the child rights movement forward. To strengthen his movement, he uses tools like- street theater, courtyard meetings and seminars with the local government, local community leaders, and local people.

Montaher also founded 'Madok Shunno Bangladesh', a youth platform, to create awareness in children aged 12-18 years about drug abuse. For his contribution, he received recognition as an "Ashoka Young Changemaker" in 2020.

Montaher currently contributes to other platforms like Caritas, SERAC-Bangladesh and World Vision as a volunteer for adolescent rights, SRHR and youth empowerment.

He envisions that more children and young people from all corners of Bangladesh coming forward to speak up for their rights and demands, and leading the social change movement.



UZZOL MIA

Age: 16

Location: Netrokona

Hobby: Working with Children



Uzzol Mia is a child rights activist, child journalist and volunteer. He has been supporting two child forums for fighting social and economic barriers for children in Bangladesh.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, with the help of the Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Upazila Women Affairs Officer and Thana Office-in-Charge, Uzzol succeeded to stop 12 child marriages in 2020. To support the survivors of child marriage in continuing their education Uzzol provided financial aid to the children through crowdfunding.

By designing different awareness campaigns, and learning sessions on the negative impact of child marriage, Uzzol has been advocating with the community, particularly, parents, family members, religious leaders, and elective local government representatives to stop child marriage in his community.

Uzzol believes that if each citizen is respectful of others, and carries out their social responsibility, development is possible. He dreams of securing a safe and equal society for every child by transforming the community through his work.



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**YOUNG PEOPLE
FIGHTING FOR
ENVIRONMENT AND
CLIMATE JUSTICE**

FARIAH SULTANA AUMI



Fariah Sultana Aumi hails from a semi-urban area in Khulna, where nature and human lives go hand in hand. When she moved to the city area for her higher studies, she experienced a harsh city climate.

Curious that she was, she began to learn about climate change and global warming from the newspaper and various articles. To know more about the impact of climate change through practical experiences, she joined Brighters Society, a youth-led organization of like-minded activists working on climate, gender, and education issues.

In 2019, Fariah organized a climate strike to bring mass awareness about the climate crisis. This strike caught the attention of people across the nation. From there on, she kept organizing climate strikes

Age: 22

Location: Jamalpur

Hobby: Traveling

each Friday in solidarity with the global movement #FridaysForFuture. These strikes were organized in 64 districts of Bangladesh.

Presently, she coordinates Fridays for Future Bangladesh chapter, and contributes to the local, national, and global movement. To educate youth at the grassroots on climate and gender related issues, Fariah has been organizing different learning workshops, seminars, study circles, and awareness campaigns. She is actively involved in massive tree plantation programs as well.

Fariah has observed that the engagement of young women is exceptionally low in climate justice movement at the rural level. Hence, going ahead in the future, she wishes to involve more women in the climate justice movement so that their needs and demands are articulated and secured.



HUMAYARA AHMEAD JEBA



Humayara Ahmead Jeba is a young climate activist from Sylhet. She started to work on climate change issues when she was an early grade student. To discover more about the factors triggering climate change, she joined several climate change-related workshops and trainings.

Humayara is currently designing several school campaigns on climate change issues. She is working to establish different agencies to raise a collective voice in her community. Some of the

Age: 19

Location: Sylhet

Hobby: Helping People

other initiatives taken by Humayara include planting trees, advocating with local, national, and international pro-climate leaders for climate-friendly policies, budget, and adaptation plans. She is also working to reduce carbon emissions and advocating with private sectors to contribute to this end.

Humayara is the Coordinator of YouthNet for Climate Justice, Sylhet Chapter. She is also one of the master facilitators for the network.

Humayara demands climate justice for all and dreams of an equal society where everyone can lead a life with dignity.



JIMRAN MOHAMMAD SAIK



Jimran Mohammad Saiak, is leading climate action movement in Cox's Bazar, one of the longest natural beaches. Cox's Bazar is

listed as red zone.

Jimran leads campaigns, arranges local climate strikes and advocates for climate-related issues which often create vulnerability for his community. To ensure transparency and accountability on the usage of the climate trust fund, he has been conducting social audits. He also monitors utilization of the climate budget towards running their projects and that all funds are spent as per the agreement.

Age: 19

Location: Cox's Bazar

Hobby: Gardening

He constantly encourages and involves his team to stand beside disaster-affected people, and advocates for their rights, and where applicable, demands compensation. Utilizing the power of social media, he speaks for community demands and mobilizes people towards climate justice.

Currently, Jimran is an ambassador of Ek Takay Shikkha that contributes towards ensuring education for all children. He is also coordinating the Cox's Bazar chapter of YouthNet for Climate Justice.

In future, Jimran wants to focus on food security and support local farmers for developing climate-resilient agriculture in his community.



KATHAK BISWAS JOY

Age: 17

Location: Barishal

Hobby: Singing



Realizing the vulnerability of children, and at-risk groups of people in the coastal areas, Kathak Biswas Joy started 'Aranyak', an environmental organization working for ensuring environmental awareness and child protection.

Within his organization, he formed 'Climate Striking Force (CSF)', an immediate response team, to protect children from any sudden emergency caused by disasters. Kathak also teaches climate migrant children about the science of climate, self-defense during disasters, menstrual hygiene, child rights and protection. Additionally, on each Friday, he and his team organize climate strikes in

solidarity with the global movement #FridaysForFuture.

Kathak is a member of Global Children's Advisory Team of Child Rights Connect which a global child rights network of 85 organizations. He also coordinates the climate actions of his community. As a child journalist, he reports children's vulnerabilities and risks for climate change on national and international platforms.

Kathak plans to advocate for an inclusive curriculum on climate for all early grade students. He also dreams of publishing a monthly journal where children and young people would be able to write on climate change issues.



MOHAMMODO ZAHIDUL ISLAM

Age: 26

Location: Cox's Bazar

Hobby: Tree plantation



Mohammad Zahidul Islam has been leading Samajik Biplob, an organization that works for youth-led agriculture production, food security and climate-resilient agriculture in Cox's Bazar.

Since its inception in 2019, Zahidul trained more than 300 young people on the year-long farming and salt-tolerant rice production. He involved Upazila agriculture officers in the process.

Zahidul and his team have also been supporting 17 families to grow plants with nutritious values on their unused land. Such gardens are new spreading. These initiatives support many families, young

people, and women to not only learn about advanced farming, but also to become solvent financially. Empowering the community and ensuring food security even through a climate vulnerable agricultural paradigm are at the core of these initiatives.

Zahidul also provided food and vaccine support in the mid of pandemic and supported 1050 people to register for vaccines. He also opened a community library in his locality. He has been awarded for his significant contributions.

Zahidul would like to open a school and introduce a climate change-related curriculum in the school. He also wishes to continue advocacy for climate sustainable agriculture, environment, and economic progress with relevant stakeholders, with the intent to contribute towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



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**YOUNG PEOPLE
PROMOTING
DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

HM HRIDAY KABIR

Age: 24
Location: Lalmonirhat
Hobby: Travelling

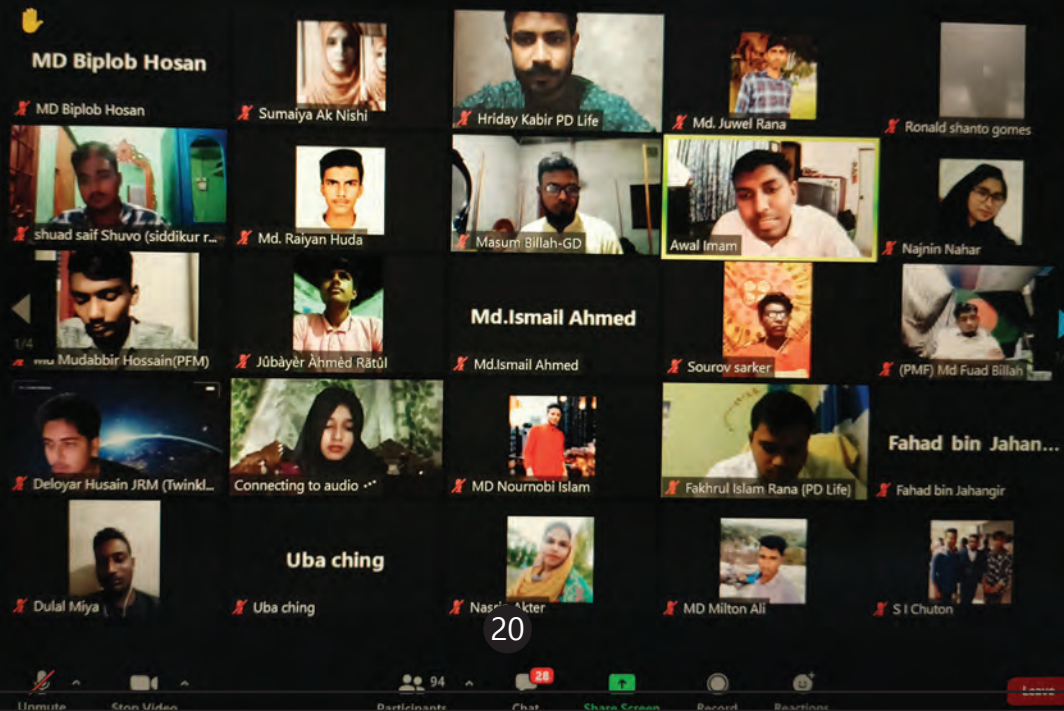


Amid the pandemic, when many young people lost their jobs and struggled to survive financially, HM Hriday Kabir decided to create livelihood opportunity for himself and others. He thought of learning freelancing online and graphic designing for income generation. Thus he enrolled himself in the courses online.

Initially, people around him were not supportive enough. However, after completing these courses he was able to sign onboard several accounts in the online marketplaces and began earning revenue.

Building on his success, Hriday established an IT firm and generated multiple employment opportunities for young people. He has trained 500 young people, and 50 of them are earning from the online marketplaces.

In the coming years, Hriday will look to provide 100 financial grants to young people coming from low-income backgrounds. He envisions a goal of creating 1000 entrepreneurs in the Information and Technology sector.



MD TORIKUL ISLAM ONTOR



Torikul Islam Ontor leads a volunteer team named 'Alor Pothe Shomaj Kollyan Jubo Shongho' in Satkhira, in the south-western coastal part of Bangladesh.

Torikul noticed that in his area, the owners of industries, mills, and many non-formal working stations do not fulfill worker's rights, safety, and security in the workplace. They do not ensure equal wage, work contracts and practice gender indiscrimination.

Torikul and his team started working on decent work through generating evidence and advocating with different stakeholders i.e., industry owners, local government, elective representatives, hotels, and other informal sector business owners. He also ran awareness campaigns for the informal sector workers to demand their rights.

In 2020-21, Torikul supported many young dropouts, encouraging them to enroll in different training programs of Technical Training Centre (TTC), Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), Department of Youth Development (DYD), Department of Women Affairs (DWA) in his working area.

Working to ensure decent work for youth was challenging and often threatening for Torikul, since he and his team members were frequently

Age: 21

Location: **Satkhira**

Hobby: **Giving Presentation and Speech**

intimidated by the industry owners and the proprietors of informal sector businesses. However, Torikul is determined to overcome all the barriers and continue this movement until every worker gets equal rights.

In the future, Torikul wants to ensure quality training opportunities for workers of informal sectors, and builds awareness for a decent work environment.



SNIGDA FATEMA

Age: 20

Location: Bagerhat

Hobby: Travelling



Since 2019, Snigda Fatema, a youth volunteer of Badhon Manob Unnayan Sangstha, Bagerhat, has been advocating for budget allocation from the local government for the skill development of the young people.

Prior to working on this issue, Snigda did not have knowledge on how the local government can initiate youth skill development programs utilising the annual budget allocation. She received trainings from ActionAid Bangladesh, and realized the significant impact this could create in helping upskilling the youth of her area.

Snigda today believes and strongly advocates for the fair allocation of the budget of the local authorities to promote young workers in developing their skills and generate income for themselves. As a result of her constant advocacy, her Union Parishad allocated BDT. 4 lac for youth and women's skill development.

She also campaigned for the UP chairman to organise skill development trainings on outsourcing. She further assisted the Union Parishad authority to design and implement the entire process.

Snigda is the president of Dhumketu Youth Group in Bagerhat. She wants to work on youth employment and rights in her area in the future.



TAMANNA TANJIN

Age: 21
Location: **Satkhira**
Hobby: **Public Speaking**



Tamanna Tanjin has been a long-time volunteer with Meghna Samaj Unnayan Jubo Sangha. Inspired by her mother she engaged in social activism. Tamanna observed that informal sector industries often do not provide a decent work environment for their workers. Again, workers were also unaware of their rights.

Tamanna decided to work for creating workers' rights and a decent work environment. She has gone on to train informal sector workers, and advocated with local level stakeholders including the owners so that the workers' rights in her area are upheld.

Some of Tamanna's work is now receiving great recognition. As a result of her advocacy, some informal workplaces have started providing safety kits, employment contracts along with fixed working hours therefore ensuring a better environment for their workers. She regularly follows up and evaluates the progress.

Often facing threats for speaking up for decent work, Tamanna fearlessly continues her advocacy and campaign. In the future, she wants to stand up against corruption and improve the wellbeing of informal workers in her community.



TUSHAR KANTI BAIDYA



Tushar Kanti Baidya is a young educator, peacemaker and human rights activist. He works in Dhaka, to promote peace and human rights through his organisation "Inclusive Bangladesh".

In one of the surveys Tushar conducted, he found out that despite 80% of the local diverse SOGIESC* population having a university and college degree, they were unable to get a decent job. It was because they lacked practical knowledge about the job market. As a result, many of them became victims of modern slavery, human trafficking and were forced to enter into sex work.

To minimize the problem of this community and to train the local diverse SOGIESC people, Tushar has been running a project called 'Sudokkho'. Through this project, he is developing the ICT skills, basic job profiling, appropriate placement and other soft skills of queer community with the intent for them to secure employment.

He additionally provides gadgets/equipment such as sewing machine, mobile phone, bicycle, computer, etc. to those who possess the necessary skills, however cannot afford these equipment.

Till now there have been 3600+ beneficiaries who received trainings. Among them, 617+ have received job support from different companies, and 114+ received bicycle, sewing machine, weight machine, mobile phone to start or expand their own business.

Age: 29

Location: Dhaka

Hobby: Travelling

Tushar envisions to engage himself in developing skills of marginalized people to build a resilient and just society.



*Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics

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**YOUNG PEOPLE
FACILITATING
YOUTH-LED
EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

MAKSUDUR RAHMAN MILON

Age: 27

Location: **Satkhira**

Hobby: **Travelling**



Maksudur Rahman Milon works in the frontline to support victims and survivors of disasters in his community in Satkhira,

Bangladesh. Satkhira, in the coastal area of Bangladesh happens to be the worst affected area due to climate change and disasters. In this coastal area, there has been an adverse rise in the rate of climate migrants.

Maksudur, volunteers with Cyclone Preparedness Program (CPP) to create awareness of villagers on cyclone-related disasters. He also helps women,

senior citizens, and children to move to shelters during an emergency.

Maksudur also formed a youth volunteer group in his village. These volunteers go from house to house, arrange courtyard meetings with villagers to make them aware of disaster preparedness strategies, and pre and post disaster activity plans.

He dreams of forming a dedicated team of young people who will move to serve and save the lives of people in coastal areas, and demand climate justice.



MD SHOAIB ISLAM ARFAT



Md Shoaib Islam Arfat is the founder and Chief Executive Director of 'Street for Change'. He works in Cox's Bazar to support the COVID-19 affected families. During the pandemic, he provided food support to 60 families over a period of 3 months. Additionally, he and his team provided COVID-19 health safety kits to families who did not have access to such health resources.

Age: 23

Location: Cox's Bazar

Hobby: Volunteering

He also took up a distinct initiative- feeding starving horses during the lockdown. These horses are the main source of earning for many people working in the tourism sector of Cox's Bazar. Many horse owners have no alternative sources for livelihoods. Taking care of the horses is costly. Thus, Shoaib's project not only saved the lives of these animals, but also supported indirectly the livelihood of hundreds of people.

In the future, Shoaib plans on generating multifold employment opportunities for young people.



RUKAIYA JANNAT NIJHUM SHAH

Age: 16

Location: Nilphamari

Hobby: Photography



Rukaiya Jannat Nijhum Shah founded 'EK Takar Golpo Foundation', a youth-led organisation. Currently, it has 170 members. Under her leadership, the foundation helps destitute people with food, clothes and other daily necessities during Ramadan, Eid festivals and winter. She also raises funds for impoverished people in need of medical emergencies.

Through her "Tonoya" project, Rukaiya along with her team, are breaking the taboo regarding

menstrual health and hygiene and creating awareness among young girls in her community.

Rukaiya is also the secretary of Chayatol Youth Foundation (Rangpur Zone) and the child rights leader of International Youth Change Maker (Nilphamari Zone).

Rukaiya faces challenges in her work. Yet, she is indomitable. She dreams of working for a peaceful and harmonious society for all.



SHAMIM HOSSAIN MUNNA



Shamim Hossain Munna and his family reside in one of the most climate vulnerable areas of Bangladesh, Shyamnagar,

Satkhira, which has been hit hard by the harsh impact of climate change. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened the sufferings of his community since the outbreak in 2020.

Shamim provided masks, hand sanitizers, soaps, and awareness leaflets to hundreds of people in his community during pandemic. He stood by COVID-19 affected families, even when others were afraid of being infected.

During cyclone Amphan, Shyamnagar became completely inundated by flooding. Cyclone Yaash affected his community significantly. To prevent this from happening again, he worked to reconstruct a dam with the help of other youth. Before any disaster strikes, he and his team make announcements in the villages to help them residing in the coastal areas with early warnings of severe weather and enable them to prepare.

Shamim is also engaged with other social works, like safe blood donation, peace building and ensuring road safety. He has been a volunteer and the President of CDOW Bangladesh Peace Club.

Age: 22

Location: **Shyamnagar**

Hobby: **Singing**

In the future, he wants to work on strengthening the safety of people in coastal areas during any emergency by developing efficient disaster management mechanisms as well as building community resilience.



TANZEEL RASHID

Age: 21
Location: **Chattogram**
Hobby: **Debating**



Tanzeel Rashid is an undergraduate student. He is a social activist, debater, and social entrepreneur from Chattogram, Bangladesh. He founded a youth-led organisation 'Ogrograhi' to engage teenagers in the processes for transformational change and support them to refrain from gang culture, crime, and violent school politics.

When faced with any emergency or calamity, like the COVID-19 crisis, floods in Sunamganj and Jamalpur or cyclone in the coastal areas the past few years, Tanzeel's team rose to the occasion with their humanitarian support.

More than 15,000 people and 700 families benefitted from the food support and emergency

toolkits that Tanzeel and his team distributed. During the Rohingya influx in Cox's Bazar, members of his organisation cooked and distributed food for around 20,000 refugees.

Funding remains one of the major challenges for small organisations like Tanzeel's. When he reminisces about how his support provided courage to destitute people to survive in an emergency, he is inspired to extend his support and continue working.

Tanzeel has received the Young Bangla Award, and Ashoka Youth Venturer recognition for his outstanding work.

In the future, Tanzeel wants to work with the social enterprise model for his organisation and continues to implement training of volunteers to raise funds and humanitarian support in emergencies.



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**YOUNG PEOPLE
PROMOTING
YOUTH AND
GENDER RESPONSIVE
PUBLIC SERVICES**

BAHAR UDDIN RAIHAN

Age: 23

Location: Cox's Bazar

Hobby: Travelling



Bahar Uddin Raihan is a youth trainer, volunteer, and advocate for disability rights. Due to an unfortunate accident, he lost both of his hands in childhood. However, his impediment did not stop him from taking the challenge rather, made him confident of being able to provide support to others.

Bahar, as a young social worker and university student, felt the importance of mobile communication for the differently abled people. Unfortunately, people with physical disabilities, especially without hands, could not own their biometric sim cards and IDs. Leading telecom operators were unsupportive and even indifferent to this issue. There were no strict guidelines from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory

Commission (BTRC) regarding inclusion of people with special needs.

Raihan began writing on his experience in the newspaper and on social media platforms which subsequently caught the attention of the BTRC authority. Besides, he held several advocacy meetings with government officials and the authorities. Through his perseverance and efforts, BTRC today allows people with special needs to buy sim cards with an attested document from the Bangladesh Election Commission.

Currently, Raihan is serving as the Head of IT at Apex Club of Chakaria City.

In the future, Raihan is determined to fight for and promote the rights and dignity of people with special needs.



LOKKHI ROY

Age: 20
Location: Nilphamari
Hobby: Dancing



Lokkhi Roy is the Vice Secretary of 'Alor Dishari Jubo Songothon', a youth-led organisation supported by Udayankur Seba Sangstha (USS) Nilphamari. Lokkhi observed how her older sisters were actively involved in social work. Subsequently, she was inspired and joined 'Alor Dishari Jubo Songothon' at the age of 13, as a member. Today, she leads a team of 25 members.

Under Lokkhi's leadership, the youth group is building awareness among her community on different government services available in the community hospitals and advocating with the duty bearers for access to healthcare services.

She also supported opening 'Lal Corner', a corner used for maintaining menstrual hygiene in the community hospital in her area. This hospital provides sexual and reproductive healthcare services to the teenagers. She ran a campaign on execution of 'Right to Information' Act.

Lokkhi supported 30 people to get access to information. This included widows, people with special needs, pregnant women, and senior citizens. These people were not aware about the facilities provided by the local government.

In the future, Lokkhi wants to see that the local government ensures equal access to public services for marginalised people of her community



MILON AHMED

Age: 18
Location: Kushtia
Hobby: Helping People



Milon Ahmed has been volunteering for the last 3 years with 'Unique Youth Group' in his community. After receiving different capacity building trainings from ActionAid Bangladesh, Milon engaged himself in different advocacy initiatives, took up activism and campaigns to ensure social accountability. He has been closely working with local government to make public service accessible for all in his area.

Currently, Milon is working to include fellow young people in the local decision making structures and

creating scope for them to practice leadership. Besides, to ensure youth engagement as well as improving the government health care services in the Bagerhat area, Milon and his team are regularly monitoring the services of the Upazila community hospital.

Milon is supporting youth for social change to come forward. Local people and leaders support and encourage his youth team and listen to them with greater seriousness.

Milon wants to stand by the marginalized and empower them in the future.



SHEIKH IMRAN

Age: 17

Location: Bagerhat

Hobby: Volunteering



At a very early age, Sheikh Imran realized that senior citizens and vulnerable women, old, disabled or widows, are not included in the Social Safety Net (SSN).

Therefore, through his voluntary initiative 'Rising Star', a youth volunteer group, Imran prepared a list of people who were excluded from getting government allowances under SSN. Imran and his fellow volunteers met their Union Parishad Chairman, communicated the messages, and handed over the list of real beneficiaries, advocating for their rights.

They also organized accountability meetings at the Ward level with the community and duty bearers to

ensure the rights of the deprived and vulnerable people are upheld.

Imran's effort is now directed towards ensuring that allowances for hundreds of vulnerable people from his area. Imran and his team are also advocating for a community hospital in his village so as to ensure healthcare for the marginalized people.

Imran is the president of Rising Star Youth Group. He is also a volunteer of ActionAid Bangladesh and Badhon Manob Unnoyan Shangstha.

Imran wants to work towards ensuring the rights of destitute people in the future.

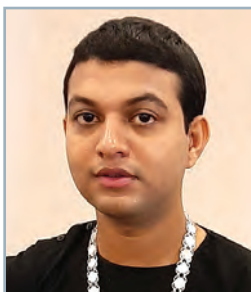


UTTHAN ROY

Age: 24

Location: Khulna

Hobby: Reading Books



Utthan Roy, a gender non-binary activist, has dedicated their last 5 years to ensure social inclusion and for responsive public services for people with gender diversity. The society that Utthan has grown up does not welcome gender diversity.

They initiated, for the first time, a dialogue with the Khulna Medical College Hospital authorities, doctors, and nurses for a group of SOGIESC* people with the intent to make healthcare services accessible and responsive for the 'third gender' people.



This initiative created a welcoming environment for the third gender people in the hospital. They also met the District Civil Surgeon officer and spoke about the mis-treatment that third gender people often face. The discussion helped to open a pathway. The Surgeon's office nowadays invites and prioritizes the gender diverse group in different programs, and includes them in the monthly meetings.

Utthan is the General Secretary of 'Nokkhotro Manab Kallyan Society'. They are also an employee of 'Bandhu Social Welfare Society' and a Fellow at 'Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust' (BLAST). Through active engagement, they are promoting and ensuring gender equality, human rights and inclusion for the third gender community in Bangladesh.

Utthan envisions building a strong network at national and international level to end gender discrimination in Bangladesh.



*Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics






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