

SWAPNAJAYA

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GRASSROOTS
YOUNG
WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP
PROGRAMME



This is a publication by ActionAid Bangladesh. ActionAid is a global movement of people working together to further human rights for all and defeat poverty. We believe everyone has the power within them to create change for themselves, their families, and communities. ActionAid is a catalyst for that change.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Editing this collection of stories from Swapnajaya has been both a profound privilege and a humbling experience. Each narrative holds within it a depth of emotion and resilience that extends far beyond the challenges these young women have encountered. Their voices reflect a fierce determination and strength so powerful that it inspires admiration long before the final word is read.

What began as a scattered field notes, community reflections, and personal testimonies gradually unfolded into a powerful tapestry of lived experiences. Every story stands uniquely on its own, yet together they form a collective voice bound by a shared spirit of transformation.

Within these pages live the voices of 20 young women, each carrying the same bold energy, aspirations, and courage that empower countless young women across Bangladesh.

As this book reaches your hands, may it carry the spirit and unyielding hope of the young leaders whose stories fill these pages. And when their voices pause, you will discover blank pages waiting quietly at the end of this book. Those pages belong to you. Write your dreams and the change you want to lead.

Let's begin the inspiring journey of Swapnajayas and yours...!

Elma Hoque Sharna

Programme Officer- Knowledge Management,
Outreach and Media Engagement
ActionAid Bangladesh





MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR

Swapnajaya tells the stories of young women discovering their voices, trusting their steps, and awakening the power that has always lived within them. Across remote villages, vulnerable coastal belts, isolated char regions, and crowded city neighborhoods, they have stepped forward bravely often when opportunities were scarce, support was limited, and challenges pressed heavily upon them.

The Swapnajaya programme continues to push boundaries, challenge social norms, and empower young women to overcome obstacles. This publication captures the lived realities, struggles, and triumphs of our Cohort III leaders. From confronting social taboos and resisting early marriage to advocating for safety, inclusion, and dignity, these young women are catalysts of change in their communities. What began as a training programme has grown into a collective movement, rippling across seven districts, touching families, schools, local institutions, and community

leaders. The young women featured here remind us that leadership is not defined by position or privilege but by purpose, courage, and conviction.

As you turn these pages, you will witness stories that challenge norms, illuminate realities, and inspire new possibilities. This book is both a celebration of the young women leading change today and an invitation for others to believe in their own power. With pride and gratitude, I dedicate this publication to every girl who dreams of a better Bangladesh and a better world.

Farah Kabir
Country Director
ActionAid Bangladesh

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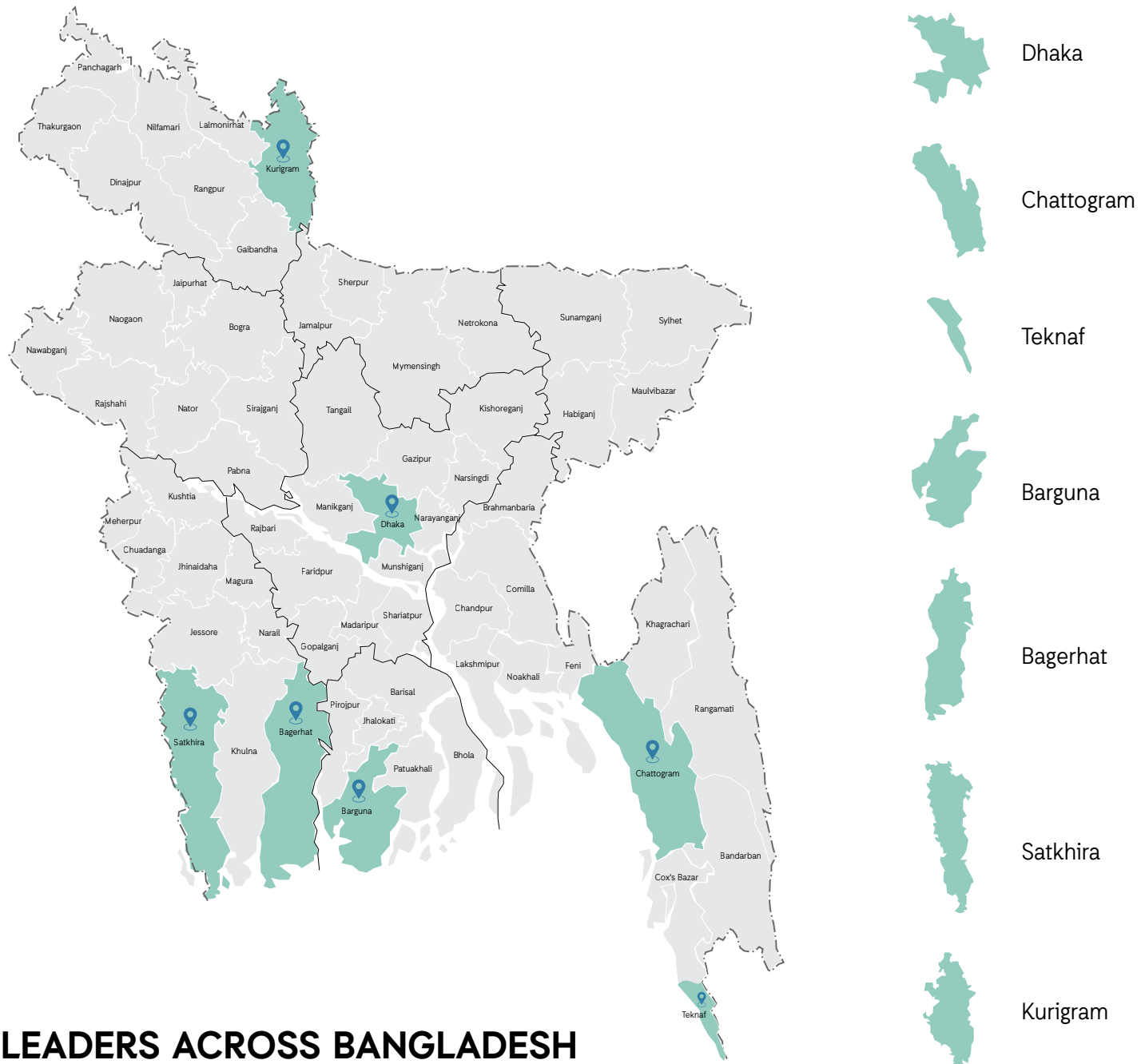
SWAPNAJAYA COHORT III: FROM COMMUNITY SURVEY TO COMMUNITY ACTION

In 2025, ActionAid Bangladesh's Youth and Just Society Programme launched the third cohort of Swapnajaya. It was a seven-month leadership journey designed to strengthen the voice, agency, and feminist leadership of young women across Bangladesh. Through immersive learning and community engagement, the participants challenged gender stereotypes, strengthened their political awareness, and developed the skills to critically analyze and address issues that shape their lives. This cohort placed a strong emphasis on challenging gendered stereotypes, understanding the political and social lens behind everyday actions, and developing the ability to critically analyze a problem to collectively design solutions.

Twenty young women from **Dhaka, Chattogram, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Kurigram, Barguna, and Teknaf** conducted a community survey with 140 respondents to identify the most pressing challenges faced by young women in their respective areas. Guided by the findings, each location selected a thematic priority, deepened their understanding through **Key Informant Interviews (KII)** and **Focus Group Discussions (FGD)**, and designed a community action initiative aimed at addressing the identified issue.

Throughout the journey, these young women learned to ask difficult questions, confront harmful social norms, and work together on solutions that protect dignity and promote rights. Their actions stand as evidence of what young women can achieve when they are trusted, supported, and empowered.





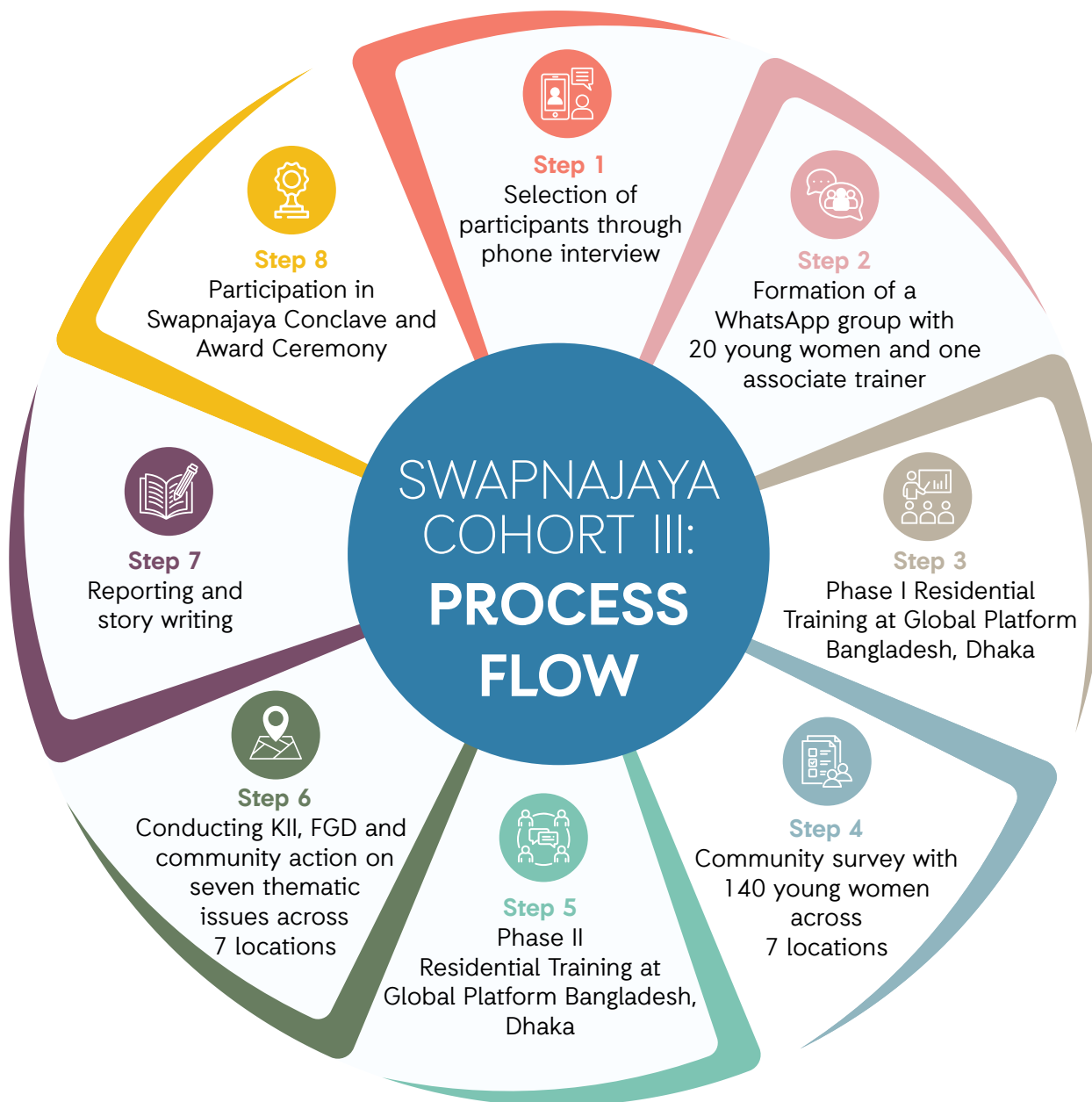


Fig: The Journey of Swapnajaya Cohort III

SWAPNAJAYA COHORT III: LEADERS ACROSS BANGLADESH



SWAPNAJAYA COHORT III: COMMUNITY ACTIONS



SNIPPETS OF THE SURVEY RESULT

Swapnajaya Community Assessment Findings

Total Respondents: 140 young women	Divisions Covered: 7 (20 respondents per division)	FGDs Conducted: 8	KIIs Conducted: 8
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Key Findings by Division

Dhaka Stars:

Young women face the highest challenges from **cyber threats**.

Chattogram Fireflies:

Young women face increasing threat from **eve-teasing** and public harassment.

Oporajita Borguna:

Lack of awareness on **menstrual hygiene** and limited access to **SRHR support** in schools.

Satkhira Warriors:

Negative **social perception** and stigma against women leaders remain major barriers for young women in Satkhira.

Bagerhat Leaders:

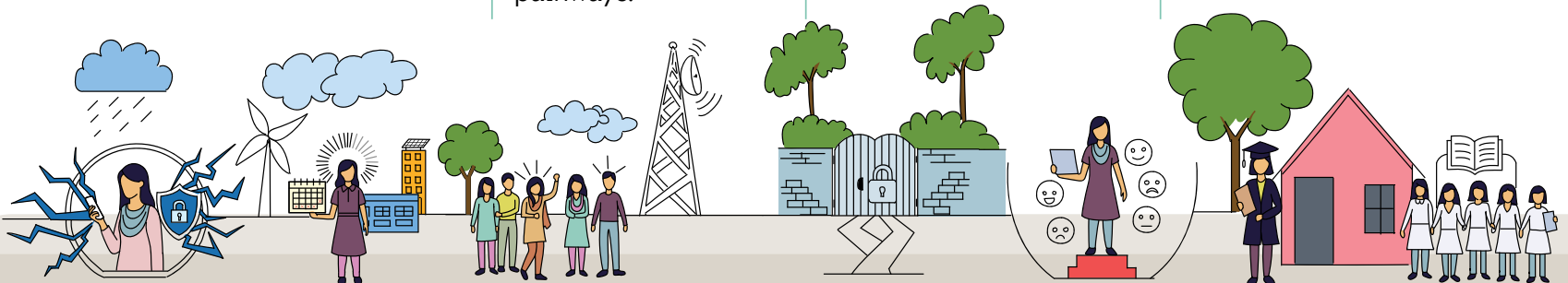
Limited **education** and **employment opportunities** continue to restrict women's progress in Bagerhat.

Kurigram Dreamers:

Persistent **early marriage trends** hinder girls' education and leadership pathways.

Teknaf Visionaries:

Communities face **threats of trafficking**, making young women more vulnerable.





COMMUNITY ACTIONS

TEAM DHAKA STARS



Awareness Campaign Against Cyberbullying and Cyber Threats

Number of people reached: **97**



Location:

Suborna Shishu Kalyan School Kallyanpur
Pora Bosti, Dhaka.



Key Objectives:

- ✓ Increase Awareness on Cyber Harassment
- ✓ Promote Safe Internet Practices
- ✓ Empower Girls to Report and Seek Support



Key Outcome:

- ✓ Increased awareness among adolescent girls about cyber harassment, online threats, and safe digital behavior.
- ✓ Formation of a local female led peer-support group
- ✓ Increased involvement of parents and teachers, strengthening the community's role in protecting adolescents online.

TEAM BAGERHAT LEADERS



Advocacy Campaign on Advancing Women's Education and Economic Opportunities

Number of people reached: 111



Location: Gilatola, Bagerhat



Key Objectives:

- ✓ Raise community awareness about girls' safety and protection in the workplace and public spaces.
- ✓ Promote community responsibility to ensure girls' dignity, safety and freedom.
- ✓ Strengthen communication between girls and their caregivers to improve trust, reporting and protection.



Key outcome:

- ✓ Community members became aware of the social attitudes and behaviors that contribute to girls' independence and freedom to work outside home.
- ✓ Girls and parents openly discussed issues like harassment, safety concerns, and mobility restrictions, which were previously unspoken.
- ✓ 5 young girls landed on jobs due to the job network created through this initiative.

TEAM OPORAJITA BARGUNA



Campaign on Menstrual Awareness and Establishing SRHR Corner

Number of people reached: 111



Location: Basugi, Amtoli, Barguna



Key Objectives:

- ✓ Raise awareness among women and girls about their rights to access SRHR and basic health services during menstruation or personal health needs.
- ✓ To educate community members on the importance of timely access to health facilities so that women do not feel embarrassed or restricted.
- ✓ To inform the community about available SRHR services and emergency reproductive health support.



Key Outcome:

- ✓ Increased awareness among women and girls about their health rights and the availability of SRHR and reproductive health services.
- ✓ One SRHR corner has been activated at Amtali Mofiz Uddin Girls High school along with a SRHR maintenance committee.
- ✓ The Upazila Executive Officer also promised to establish 3 more SRHR corner at 3 other public schools at Borguna.

TEAM CHATTOGRAM FIREFLIES



Street Drama To Raise Awareness Against Eve-Teasing

Number of people reached: **61**



Location: Tulatuli, Chattogram



Key Objectives:

- ✓ Raise awareness about the harmful effects of eve-teasing and gender-based harassment in the community.
- ✓ Promote respectful behavior and gender sensitivity, especially among youth
- ✓ Encourage collective responsibility so that everyone contributes to creating a safer and more respectful community environment.



Key Outcome:

- ✓ Increased awareness among community members about the impact of eve-teasing and why it must be prevented.
- ✓ Formation of stronger networks of youth volunteers who now advocate for respectful behavior and support victims.
- ✓ More individuals are now willing to report incidents and stand up against harassment.
- ✓ Women participating in FGDs expressed strong support and pledged to stand with the initiative, strengthening community ownership.

TEAM KURIGRAM DREAMERS



Awareness Campaign Against Child Marriage

Number of people reached: **86**



Location: Kurigram



Key Objectives:

- ✓ Raise awareness among the community regarding the harmful effects of Child Marriage
- ✓ Engage local leaders-Chairman, Members, Kazi, teachers, parents, and youth-to actively participate in preventing child marriage.
- ✓ Build a youth-led social movement against child marriage in Kurigram.



Key Outcome:

- ✓ Community members openly discussed their experiences and understanding of child marriage-revealing many gaps in awareness.
- ✓ Coordination improved between local leadership and administration on tackling child marriage.
- ✓ Youth participation increased-young people began taking active roles in social awareness and prevention efforts.

TEAM SATKHIRA WARRIORS



Community Street Theatre To Break Gender Stereotypes in Satkhira

Number of people reached: **93**



Location: Satkhira



Key Objectives:

- ✓ Raise awareness about gender based violence and discrimination
- ✓ Spread messages of equality and gender sensitivity among youth and parents.
- ✓ Strengthen and highlight the role of women's leadership at the local level through cultural activism



Key Outcome:

- ✓ Community members openly discussed gender-based violence, stigma, and discrimination-topics often avoided.
- ✓ Women participants gained confidence to express their opinions and talk about their experiences.
- ✓ Several youths expressed interest in forming a volunteer group to continue awareness activities.

TEAM TEKNAF VISIONARIES



Community Action to Raise Awareness Against Human Trafficking

Number of people reached: **93**



Location: Teknaf



Key Objectives:

- ✓ To raise public awareness about the risks, consequences, and signs of human trafficking.
- ✓ To educate community members-youth, women, men, elders, and children-on how to stay safe and avoid trafficking traps.
- ✓ To distribute informative materials (leaflets) that explain the harmful effects of human trafficking.



Key Outcome:

- ✓ Increased public understanding of how traffickers operate and the dangers associated with trafficking.
- ✓ Community members became more aware of the preventive measures they can take to stay safe.
- ✓ Strengthened collaboration with local development stakeholders who committed to future support and joint action.



LEADERS IN ACTION



Nusrat Fatema Mahmud Akhi:

“Swapnajaya taught me that dreams don’t just happen, they grow when you have courage, confidence, and a community that believes in you.”

At nineteen, Nusrat Fatema Mahmud Akhi from Chattogram embodies the fierce spirit of a young woman who refuses to stay silent in the face of injustice. Even before joining the Swapnajaya Leadership Programme, she was deeply involved in school and community activities by protesting injustice, participating in cultural events, volunteering, and raising awareness around gender-based violence.

But Swapnajaya gave her something she never had before: a structured space to grow. Through Swapnajaya, she discovered her inner strength and learned that leadership is not about authority but about inspiration. She now feels confident making bold decisions and supporting others around her.

Even with her passion to work beyond the academic curriculum, Nusrat struggled to balance her studies with training schedules. Stage fright held her back often, and expressing her thoughts in front of others made her nervous. Sometimes, self-doubt clouded her confidence. But each challenge pushed her to learn, adapt, and grow.

With consistency, mentor guidance, and strong peer support, she overcame these hardships. Journaling and self-reflection helped her stay grounded and positive. She learned that leadership is rooted in empathy and listening to people's stories, understanding their struggles, and working together to create change shapes people.

Today, Nusrat stands tall as a compassionate leader shaped by courage, clarity, and kindness.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “Believe in your dreams. Keep the desire to learn alive. The path appears the moment you take the first step. So be brave and begin.”

Nusrat Fatema Mahmud Akhi

Age: 19

Location: Chattogram

Hobby: Writing



**Khadija**

"My dream is to free all women from violence because every voice deserves safety."

Khadiza from Nizlathemara Union stands as one of the youngest yet most powerful voices in the Swapnajaya Leadership Programme. Her heart has always been rooted in social work, long before she stepped into formal leadership training. Growing up, she watched women in her community battle silent struggles, harassment, unequal treatment, and violence that was far too normalised. These early observations shaped her purpose to work so that all women can be free from violence.

Before joining Swapnajaya, Khadiza was already involved in various social awareness programmes in Barguna with local groups. These activities exposed her to the realities faced by women and deepened her commitment to justice. Swapnajaya became the space where her passion met structure. She shares, "I believe that joining a leadership programme like Swapnajaya has increased my leadership capacity."

Her leadership journey grew stronger as she learned how to understand people's needs, communicate gently, and lead with empathy. The training opened her eyes to issues of choice, consent, and women's agency.

Challenges were inevitable, and Khadiza stood prepared through all her hurdles. Working on sensitive issues like gender-based violence meant facing resistance. Many community members were hesitant, and some did not want to engage. Yet she persevered with courage and unwavering confidence.

Through community engagement, she learned how to lead a team, evaluate her own abilities, make wise decisions, and handle conflicts with maturity. These experiences shaped her into a grounded and responsible young leader.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: *"To become successful, you need to trust yourself, and move forward."*

Khadiza

Age: 17

Location: Borguna

Hobby: Tree plantation



**Sadiya Afrin**

“Swapnajaya opened a new chapter of confidence in my life.”

Sadiya Afrin from Satkhira is leading an exemplary role as a powerful reminder of what happens when a young woman's courage meets the right opportunity. Before joining the Swapnajaya Leadership Programme, she was already engaged in various school and college-based social awareness campaigns, helping others, leading small groups, and stepping into roles that tested her responsibility. Her love for travelling reflected her curiosity and her desire to see the world beyond her immediate surroundings.

But despite this spark, Sadiya often felt the weight of mental stress, negative comments from society, time-management challenges, and a lack of confidence in certain situations. As a young woman, she faced the quiet but persistent struggle of living in a society that does not always value women's leadership.

Swapnajaya provided her with a powerful platform to acknowledge her challenges and grow beyond them. She learned to communicate her needs with clarity, lead with confidence, and appreciate the diverse perspectives within a group.

The challenges she faced during her leadership journey from societal criticism to internal self-doubt only strengthened her resolve. Whenever she felt stuck, she turned to the lessons of Swapnajaya: leadership, teamwork, and positive thinking. Her family's encouragement and her peers' support also played a vital role in helping her move forward.

Today, Sadiya leads with empathy, clarity, and conviction. She believes that real change begins with connection.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “Recognise the strength within you. Conquer your fears. Move forward with confidence. Swapnajaya is not just a training, it is the beginning of a new vision.”

Sadiya Afrin

Age: 20

Location: Satkhira

Hobby: Travelling



**Rashmin Akter**

"I have learned so many things which I cannot even express in writing. Swapnajaya was a beautiful beginning for me, I love Swapnajaya."

At nineteen, Rashmin Akter from Puraton Pollen Para shines with the vibrant energy of a young woman who has always carried big dreams in a small world. Before joining the Swapnajaya Leadership Programme, Rashmin's life revolved around the things she loved most - her student life, going out, taking photos with her friends, and, of course, endless shopping.

As she grew up in a conservative society, she often struggled with confidence, especially when it came to stepping into unfamiliar spaces. Swapnajaya became the turning point she didn't even know she needed. Through every session, she began to discover her courage, her curiosity, and her ability to lead with grace.

Swapnajaya taught her to approach people with kindness, to understand their perspectives, and to win their hearts through gentle behavior. What once felt intimidating such as communicating openly, standing in front of others, building connections, slowly turned into her second nature.

However, the road wasn't smooth for Rashmin as she faced hurdles to come out of her home and participate in capacity-building training. However her experience working with her team taught her that dedication, politeness, and patience can turn challenges into opportunities.

Today, Rashmin stands as a young woman who is confident and ready to step into any unknown future with courage.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: *"Learning has no end. If you have the will, you will find a way and when you find a way, it always brings benefit."*

Rashmin Akter

Age: 19

Location: Teknaf

Hobby: Singing



**Hasna Akter Ity**

“I learned how to lead, how to attract people’s attention in meaningful ways, and how to execute my action plan in my own district.”

Hasna Akter Ity from Mia Saheber Danga, Satkhira carries the spirit of a young woman who learned to rise above fear, hesitation, and social judgement. Before joining the Swapnajaya Leadership Programme, her world was filled with simple joys singing, creating art, and spending time nurturing her creativity. She had dreams, but the path to pursue them was not always open.

Ity's biggest transformation came from discovering a new form of leadership within herself as she joined Swapnajaya. She says she truly learned what leadership means only after the training: Her mindset began to shift, especially around women's rights, equality, and the fight for dreams that society often tries to silence.

But the journey was far from easy for her. During the training and community action, she faced sharp criticism. Community's harsh comments hurt her spirit, but she pushed forward with determination, learnt to ignore negativity and focus on her purpose.

Her community action revealed something powerful, that countless girls in her village have dreams they suppress for the sake of family, while others fight through hardship to fulfil theirs. Their stories taught her resilience, courage, and hope.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “Do not let people’s words hold you back. Keep moving forward and help other girls do the same.”

Hasna Akter Ity

Age: 19

Location: Satkhira

Hobby: Singing and painting




Mukta Rani

“Swapnajaya brought us together so that we can write a new future together.”

At twenty-two, Mukta Rani from Barguna embodies the voice of a young woman grounded in connection and communication. Confident in expressing her thoughts, she thrives in conversations that bring people together. Yet behind her vibrant personality stands a determined leader who has long been committed to advancing the rights and empowerment of women in her community.

Before joining Swapnajaya, Mukta was deeply involved in various development activities in her area. She regularly participated in training to hone her skills, and she made sure to share that knowledge with other girls and women around her. Whether it was self-employment, awareness sessions, or helping vulnerable women access government services, Mukta was always present as a quiet force of change long before she formally became a leader.

Swapnajaya expanded her horizon. Listening to the powerful stories of other young women strengthened her own resolve. Their courage, confidence, and clarity of voice inspired her.

The training equipped her with new tools. From planning and leadership techniques to community engagement strategies. These lessons came alive during her community action on menstrual hygiene awareness and establishing SRHR corners. She admits that she herself had misconceptions about the topic, just like many community members. But through action, reflection, and dialogue, she witnessed change unfolding, as girls feeling less shame, communities becoming more open, and misinformation slowly breaking away.

Her path towards leadership was far from smooth. Initially, community members hesitated to speak openly, and some felt shy or uncomfortable sharing information. Communication barriers, teamwork challenges, and even report writing felt overwhelming. But Swapnajaya taught her to handle people gently, positively, and patiently. With guidance from mentors and support from peers, she overcame every challenge.

Today, Mukta is an exemplary female leader in her community, inspiring all class of people wherever she goes.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “Have courage. Believe in your dreams. Hold each other’s hands because together, we are stronger.”

Mukta Rani

Age: 22

Location: Borguna

Hobby: Socialising





Purnima Rani:

**“Swapnajaya taught me to move forward to dream,
and to turn dreams into reality.”**

Purnima Rani from Amratata represents the gentle but unshakable strength of a young woman determined to claim her place in leadership. Though quiet and introverted by nature, she has always spoken firmly when it comes to women's rights and dignity.

Through Swapnajaya, she learned to navigate challenges with clarity, uplift others and stepped into leadership with a confident voice.

Like many young women in Bangladesh, Purnima has confronted the harsh reality of gender-based violence, a critical social barrier that continues to adversely impact the quality of life especially for young women and children. Working on such a sensitive topic meant facing resistance from the community, especially from those unprepared for this change.

Her courage and determination helped her to stay adamant to her goals. She believes that leadership is not only about guiding others, it is also about choosing resilience for oneself.

Embarking on the community action challenge shaped her visions as she first-time experienced people's perspectives, respecting their readiness for change and giving space. These realizations were the key learning she will carry all her life before taking pivotal decisions ahead.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “If you face challenges along your way, it means you are working for something meaningful, so keep moving.”

Purnima Rani

Age: 19

Location: Borguna

Hobby: Singing



**Ripa Akter**

“Swapnajaya began with my volunteer work and opened the door to who I could become.”

At just twenty, Ripa Akter from Teknaf carries the determination of a young woman shaped by courage, community, and compassion. Before joining the Swapnajaya Leadership Programme, Ripa lived a life deeply rooted in learning and exploring.

But long before Swapnajaya, Ripa was already stepping into leadership without realizing it. She participated in theatre, volunteered in her community, and served as the Women and Child Affairs Secretary in a local organization. These early experiences introduced her to advocacy and sparked her commitment to social change.

Her leadership journey took a new direction in August 2023, when she began working for local causes. Swapnajaya strengthened this path by giving her new sets of skills, community engagement, and confidence to lead women-centered initiatives.

Being a female leader in a conservative community awaited her some harsh realities. Teknaf is a place where women stepping outside the home to work is still seen negatively. Ripa faced resistance, criticism, and judgment. As she says- “In Teknaf, girls working outside the home is not supported by society. I had to use my skills to make people understand, raise awareness, and involve the community.”

Throughout this journey, what helped her rise above these challenges was family support, her new skills, and her self-confidence. These strengths enabled her to continue the work despite social barriers. Her community actions taught her to identify problems in her area and explore how to solve them.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “Every girl should develop her skills and use them to solve the problems in her community.”

Ripa Akter

Age: 20

Location: Teknaf

Hobby: Reading books and travelling



**Ifratul Jahan Shopna**

“Swapnajaya is the most inspiring chapter of my life it taught me what true leadership means.”

Ifratul Jahan Shopna, hailing from Chattogram shines with the quiet confidence of a young woman who knows that real change begins in the community.

Long before joining the Swapnajaya Leadership Programme, Shopna was already active in social initiatives. She worked on women's development, reducing child labour, speaking up for the rights of marginalized people, conducting community surveys, and organizing programmes on social harmony. Her heart was already shaped by service and Swapnajaya helped redefine herself as a community leader.

Throughout the cohort III journey of Swapnajaya, she learned about women's leadership, inner strength, and how to identify and use the abilities that women often hide within themselves. She reflects, “I learned the qualities of leadership and discovered the inner power within me.” The programme didn't just change her understanding it changed her responsibility. She now actively spreads leadership knowledge among women in her area who have never received such training.

Her leadership journey, however, was filled with silent battles. While training, her mobile phone broke which is a major hurdle because she relied on it for communication, coordination, and documentation. She also faced difficulty managing the children for her community action theatre. Some children were hesitant, and coordinating the group felt overwhelming at times.

But Shopna rose strong. She visited children's homes, respectfully explained the purpose to their parents, used patience and role-play techniques, and slowly gained their trust. “We learned that when you explain something with politeness, people accept it more easily.” This learning shaped her leadership deeply.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “Learn with your heart. Move forward with courage. Change begins with you.”

Ifratul Jahan Shopna

Age: 19

Location: Chattogram

Hobby: Travelling





Harisa Khanom Sukhi

“Have the courage and start. That one line changed how I see my life.”

At just eighteen, Harisa Khanom Sukhi from Chittagong, Patenga brings the vibrant energy of a young woman whose passions lies in arts and crafts. Before joining Swapnajaya, she was involved in climate work, skill development activities, and food & nutrition programmes, building a steady foundation for the leader she would one day become.

Her journey with the Chattogram Fireflies began with uncertainty. She shares, “When I first joined Swapnajaya, I wasn’t sure where this journey would take me. I just knew I wanted to grow, to learn, and to believe in myself a little more.” To speak up, to lead and to share her ideas felt intimidating at first. But the supporting environment of Swapnajaya filled her heart with courage, and she began to transform.

Each session taught her that bravery is not the absence of fear, it is about conjuring up the courage to take the first steps.

As the leader of Chattogram Fireflies team, Sukhi learned what it truly means to inspire and be inspired. She discovered how to listen deeply, work with intention, and move forward despite challenges. Her leadership journey was submerged with obstacles as shifting community mindset is a long battle, and unexpected disruptions such as environmental or technical issues often disrupted her plans.

But she overcame these barriers through patience, structured discussion, teamwork, problem-solving, and by celebrating small victories to motivate her team.

Her greatest learning from community action was to realise that, problems do not disappear if one walks around them, one must confront them to solve them.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “In life, you may pause but never stop. Pausing is temporary, stopping is surrender.”

Harisa Khanom Sukhi

Age: 18

Location: Chattogram

Hobby: Crafting





Sumaya Khatun

“When one woman rises, a hundred more find the courage to stand.”

Sumaya Khatun raised in Rampal, Bagerhat carries the fire of a young woman who dreams beyond her circumstances. She loves travelling, exploring new places, and observing the world with open curiosity.

Before joining the Swapnajaya Leadership Programme, Sumaya was actively participating in social work. She has been participating in climate action, women's rights awareness, and several community initiatives. She regularly spoke about women's rights, engaged in social work, and worked closely with people in her area to raise awareness. These experiences planted the earliest seeds of leadership within her.

However, her true leadership journey began from a deeply personal place. As she observed, many grassroots women had potential but lacked opportunity. Seeing this reality awakened her desire to lead not for herself, but for others. Swapnajaya turned that desire into direction. Swapnajaya helped her strengthen her voice, understand responsibility, and become confident in guiding others. With each session, she began to see herself not just as a participant, but as a catalyst for changing narratives.

Her journey wasn't without obstacles. Many grassroots women lacked confidence, societal attitudes towards female leadership were dismissive, and managing time, planning, and teamwork was difficult. She faced resistance, confusion, and doubt. But she did not stop. With positivity, patience, team support, and mentorship, she moved past every barrier.

Her community action deepened her understanding: real change begins by touching the human mind. She learned to encourage participation, build trust, and take small steps that lead to big change. She even created a job opportunity network for women, helping eight young women secure work is one of her proudest achievements.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “Leadership is not about being in the front, it is about showing the way. Believe in yourself, trust your team, and walk with your community.”

Sumaya Khatun

Age: 18

Location: Bagerhat

Hobby: Travelling



**Tasmina Ali Shaki**

“My Swapnajaya journey is a story of confidence, struggle and discovering my own strength.”

Tasmina Ali Shaki from Teknaf, Choto Habir Para carries a heart full of imagination and the youngest participant of Swapnajaya Cohort III.

Tasmina was deeply involved in school cultural programmes, debate competitions, essay and speech contests, tree plantation and cleanliness drives, and multiple social awareness initiatives. Every activity helped her develop teamwork, responsibility, communication skills, and self-confidence, but her leadership foundation was strengthened by Swapnajaya.

Her leadership journey faced many hiccups. Coordinating participants, keeping them engaged, and managing time felt overwhelming. She often struggled with her own self-confidence, unsure whether she could truly lead. But through patience, teamwork, positive mindset, mentor support, and a willingness to learn from mistakes, she rose stronger.

Through her community action on awareness against human trafficking, she learned that real change is never achieved alone, progress requires collective effort, shared responsibility, and unity of purpose. Inspired by this experience, she hopes to continue contributing to larger social initiatives in the future.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “Don’t be afraid. Believe in your abilities. Every challenge is a chance to learn. Your small efforts can become the beginning of a big change.”

Tasmina Ali Shaki

Age: 16

Location: Teknaf

Hobby: Hiking





Nurjahan Khatun

“Swapnajaya brought me confidence, strengthened my communication skills, and deepened my understanding of women’s empowerment, dignity, and mental strength.”

Born and raised in Satkhira, Nurjahan Khatun is a beacon of hope to her fellow young girls. Her world has always been filled with curiosity reading books, watching movies, exploring the internet, and engaging in volunteerism. These interests reveal a mind eager to learn and a heart deeply connected to people.

Before joining the Swapnajaya Leadership Programme, Nurjahan was already active in community service. She served as the General Secretary of Satkhira Youth Hub, participated in rover scouts, and volunteered across various social initiatives. Her early activities taught her what responsibility means.

The training helped her see leadership as responsibility, empathy, and the inspiration to create positive change.

But her journey was not without challenges. Ensuring participation, completing tasks on time, and motivating less-interested members were difficult at first. With patience, teamwork, and supportive communication, she overcame these obstacles and became even more confident as a leader.

Her community action taught her valuable lessons in teamwork, patience, and respecting diverse perspectives. She believes these learnings have strengthened her ability to navigate challenges in the future. With renewed confidence, she hopes to continue her social work and inspire other young girls in her community to rise with her.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “Be confident. Stay eager to learn. Believe in your abilities. This training will bring positive change to your life.”

Nurjahan Khatun

Age: 22

Location: Satkhira

Hobby: Reading Books



**Shanta Islam Munni**

“A true leader doesn’t only grow herself, she thinks about the growth of everyone in her team.”

At twenty, Shanta Islam Munni from Dhaka stands as a young woman whose leadership came to her naturally. She finds joy in the world of art and crafting, where she shapes beauty with her hands, a reflection of how she shapes possibility through her leadership.

Before joining Swapnajaya, Munni was an active member of a youth group, volunteering in various social and educational activities. These early experiences introduced her to teamwork, responsibility, and the value of serving her community. She recalls how meaningful it felt to support others and be part of something larger than herself.

From those small beginnings, her leadership journey slowly unfolded. Through group work, she learned decision-making, task distribution, and the importance of encouraging others. Each small responsibility strengthened her confidence and helped her discover her own leadership voice.

Swapnajaya brought a deeper transformation to Munni's life. She describes the programme as a mirror that helped her recognize her strengths, confront her limitations, and understand the impact her actions can have on others. These reflections shaped her into a more resilient person that will benefit her personally and professionally.

As the team leader of the Dhaka Stars, Shanta faced a unique set of challenges. She had to motivate teammates at risk of dropping out, manage tight timelines with limited resources, and resolve misunderstandings while keeping the group united. These constant pressures tested her patience, but with determination and resilience, she managed to guide her team forward.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “Your dream is your direction. Have courage, and you will become a Swapnajaya.”

Shanta Islam Munni

Age: 20

Location: Dhaka

Hobby: Painting





Farzana Akter Jonaki

“Swapnajaya proved me wrong, my voice does matter.”

Farzana Akter Jonaki, hailing from Dhaka represents the brave and bright spirit of a young girl finding her voice in a world that often tries to silence it. She loves travelling, exploring new places, and imagining a life where she can walk confidently into any room, a dream she once feared she could never achieve.

Before joining Swapnajaya, Jonaki was involved with Cyber Shield, an extracurricular initiative where she worked on digital safety. But due to personal challenges, she could not continue the training. This left her unsure of her abilities.

For Farzana, Swapnajaya was not an easy journey, but she received ample opportunities to work with people of all ages and learn things she never knew. The training helped her understand how to greet people, communicate respectfully, and carry herself with confidence.

Her leadership journey brought many challenges. At first, people in her area were not willing to participate. Families of the women she wanted to work with refused to let them join. Community members doubted her abilities because of her age. But Jonaki did not step back.

Through patient explanation, empathy, and determination, she slowly gained their trust.

Her biggest learning came from community actions as she received an opportunity to work with people from diverse backgrounds, overcame harsh comments and social judgements and learned how to effectively position oneself as a leader regardless of age, race and background.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “Rise above people’s negativity and move forward.”

Farzana Akter Jonaki

Age: 16

Location: Dhaka

Hobby: Travelling



**Sharmin Akter**

**"Swapnajaya is a journey of finding courage and belief within myself,
an endless path of growth."**

At twenty-one, Sharmin Akter from Chandrakhanar Fulbari, Kurigram stands as a young woman shaped by curiosity and a deep desire to explore. She loves travelling, discovering new places, and seeing the world beyond her own boundaries. Her heart has always carried a strong belief that change begins when one first dares to step forward.

Before joining the Swapnajaya Leadership Programme, Sharmin was engaged in volunteer activities, giving her an early glimpse into the meaning of community service. These small beginnings helping people, participating in social work planted the first seeds of leadership inside her.



Through the training, Sharmin discovered that leadership is not about giving instructions, it is about learning together and rising together. Swapnajaya strengthened her confidence, improved her decision-making skills, and inspired her to create positive change around her.

Despite many setbacks, her strength came from teamwork, frequent discussions, task distribution, and creating an encouraging environment. She learned the value of decision-making with poise, clear communication, and collective problem-solving. Through these efforts, she grew more confident, more patient, and more resilient.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: "Believe in yourself, the power to create change already lives within you."

Sharmin Akter

Age: 21

Location: Kurigram

Hobby: Travelling

**Mithila Akter**

“Swapnajaya is where confidence, courage, and dreams walk the same path.”

Mithila Akter from Dhaka shines with the grace of a young woman whose life has always been intertwined with movement, rhythm, and expression. Dance is not only her hobby, it is the language through which she understands the world. Before joining Swapnajaya, she was deeply involved in dance, music, and theatre, performing at cultural events and learning the beauty of teamwork and creativity. These early experiences moulded her into a natural leader.

But Swapnajaya transformed that spark into strength. Her leadership journey began in gradual participation in school programmes, community events, and group responsibilities. Through these, she learned that leadership is not about authority, but about listening, inspiring others, and walking forward together. Swapnajaya deepened these learnings, teaching her communication, time management, and team coordination.

Although Mithila often struggled with self doubt and found it difficult to process different opinions, her experience in Swapnajaya Cohort III helped her learn how to navigate these challenges with confidence and clarity.

She feels the recognition from Swapnajaya Cohort III will continue to fuel her confidence and inspire her to keep moving forward.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “To bring change, desire alone is not enough, initiative is essential.”

Mithila Akter

Age: 18

Location: Dhaka

Hobby: Dancing



**Soniya Akter Laboni**

“Swapnajaya taught me that, I am not just a leader, I am a team-builder and a motivator, and this is my biggest achievement.”

At seventeen, Soniya Akter Laboni from Rampal stands as a shining example of how courage and belief can transform a young woman's life. Her passion is entrepreneurship, as she proudly lists not as a dream for the future, but as something she already practices and wants to grow.

Before joining Swapnajaya, Soniya was actively involved in cultural programmes, debate competitions, social service activities, and volunteer work. These experiences taught her how to work in groups, express herself, and stand with people in their moments of joy and difficulty.

Throughout the training, Soniya learned what it means to be persistent, when everything feels overwhelming or difficult. She discovered how to guide a group, how to inspire others, and how to carry people with her rather than walking alone.

During her critical times, her ability to keep patience, positive mindset, team support, and belief in herself were the elements that kept her afloat. Each challenge became a lesson that made her stronger.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “Trust yourself. Move forward with courage. Swapnajaya is not just training, it will change you from within.”

**Soniya Akter Laboni**

Age: 17

Location: Rampal

Hobby: Idea generation



“Swapnajaya means taking one step closer to my dreams, every single day.”

Jesmin hailing from Ghagar Kuti carries the thoughtful mind of a young woman whose greatest passion is reading. Books have always been her way of seeing the world, a place where she could imagine possibilities beyond her surroundings. But leadership was not a role she ever imagined for herself until Swapnajaya came into her life.

Before she started her journey with Swapnajaya, Jesmin participated in school cleaning campaigns, tree-planting initiatives, and social awareness meetings. These engagements taught her responsibility, discipline, and the importance of contributing to society.

After joining the Swapnajaya cohort III, Jesmin began to understand leadership in a new way. She learned how to think about community problems, how to solve them with clarity, and how to participate meaningfully in group tasks. Swapnajaya helped her realize that leadership is not about perfection, it is about empathy, patience, and the courage to stand for others.

Despite her good intentions, she faced a lot of hurdles in becoming a leader in her community. She struggled to coordinate the participants for her community action and she lacked confidence in public speaking. These challenges often made her doubt herself. Yet she rose above them with patience, and support from her team Kurigram Dreamers.

Her community action taught her some of the most meaningful lessons, such as the importance of collective action, sharing opinions, building social responsibility, and inspiring others through leadership. She discovered her ability to motivate people, a strength she never realized she possessed.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “Every training is a new beginning. Swapnajaya taught me that no dream is impossible if we try with our whole heart.”

Jesmin

Age: 20

Location: Kurigram

Hobby: Reading Books



**Arzuma Jui Khatun**

“Swapnajaya made me confident and showed me the true light of leadership.”

At twenty, Mo. Arzuma Jui Khatun from Phulbari, Kurigram embodies the strength of a young woman who finds joy in the simplest, gentlest parts of life. She loves gardening, reading books, listening to music, and creating art.

Before her life as Swapnajaya, Arzuma was already rooted in community work. She served as a youth volunteer at “Srijoni Jubo Shongothon,” supported by USS and ActionAid Bangladesh. There, she worked on women’s empowerment, preventing child marriage, and raising awareness on climate change. Participation in community campaigns strengthened sense of responsibility, giving her early experience with social issues and collective action.

Her leadership story began from these small, meaningful actions such as observing people’s struggles up close and wanting to help. Swapnajaya amplified this desire. The training transformed her in profound ways. She became more confident, stronger in decision-making, and skilled in teamwork. Swapnajaya taught her how to be a leader who is sensitive yet capable of inspiring positive change. She learned how to solve community problems, how to motivate others, and how to lead with compassion.

Message to Next Swapnajaya: “Believe in yourself. Each experience will transform you. Don’t fear, embrace the courage to bring change. One day, you too will shine your own light as a leader.”

Arzuma Jui Khatun

Age: 20

Location: Kurigram

Hobby: Gardening

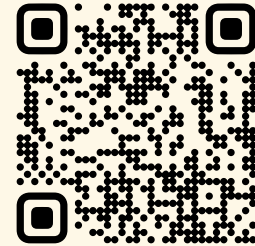




“সাহস করো, শুরু করো!”

SWAPNAJAYA

GRASSROOTS
YOUNG
WOMEN'S
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PROGRAMME



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