

## **Sadia's Dream of Creating a Digital Bangladesh**

Since my childhood, I have seen my family is different from others. My family knew the importance of girls' education and establishment. It's a rare scenario for the village people like us. Maybe because my mother is the only earning member of our family. She works outside and does household chores to maintain our family of five. She did not let us work to help her because she always wanted us to study and get in a better position. My father is deaf and unemployed and my mother is a family planning field worker. We are three siblings, I have one elder sister and one younger brother and I am the second daughter of my family. My mother tried to provide us with all the necessities, but at times it was difficult for her to maintain everything. I won't blame my family for being biased, they tried to give me the best opportunities as much as they could afford. But at times I felt mostly my brother used to get more priorities over me.

Living in a lower-income setting, from my childhood I was determined that education is something that can shape a brighter future for me. My family always provided full support for my education. Unlike other girls in my village. They were mostly married off soon after they reached their teenage years. However, I never got to study in a good school. It's because the village I was in had no good primary school. I had this urge of studying at a good school and my family agreed to admit me to a better school during the secondary level. However, I could not pass the admission test at that time. Because I had a lack of quality education and didn't have enough support to overcome that. I could not afford to go to coaching for good preparation and ended up being in a poor quality education cycle. I had no idea how to break it. I used to dream of getting into a good college after my SSC exam. With that target, I studied very hard. I saved money to attend the coaching and be well-prepared for the exam. I tried every possible thing to make sure I got good grades. Because my main target was to attend a good college.

After the SSC exam, the education board declared that this time the admission process will happen online. It was completely new for me. I went to the small computer shop in our village and asked them to fill out the form for me. Being a village girl I never got a chance to learn or operate a computer. So I had to completely rely on them. My first choice was one of the best colleges in our village, and I wanted to study there. I asked them to apply there, and just to fill in the other two options they selected two other colleges. I had a decent result in the SSC exam and I was quite sure that I would get a chance to study at my desired colleges. My application procedure was done and now I have to wait for the result. With their assurance, I went back home. A few days passed but I got no results. I visited that shop but didn't get any updates.

One day someone beside my house told me that she had already been admitted to her college, and I was shocked. Because I did not receive any update and I rushed to that computer shop again. This time, they said, they have forgotten to tell me the result has already been published for two rounds. I immediately checked the results and found my application got accepted for the first two colleges but the timeline to accept the offer has already passed. Since I missed this information, I missed the opportunity to study in my desired college as well as the next better college that was available in my area. So the only option for me to continue my intermediate education was to study at the third preferred college on the list. I was devastated, but I had no other choices. I was cursing myself, was it just my luck? I asked myself why I

was not informed, why I had to completely rely on the people of that computer shop! With no other choices I had to admit in the third preferred college with a heavy heart.

I was thirsty for knowledge, but the librarian of my college was often absent. So I could not utilize the library resources properly. The computer and science labs, I only saw from the outside of the window. We had to memorize everything in the ICT class, as our teacher only wrote everything on the board. During our practical, we sat down and our teacher would show everything on the projector. I never felt good about studying there and always felt when the classes would be over when I could go back home. Many students never attended class; they would only sit for exams. I never knew the exact number of students in our batch. We mostly depended on private coaching. When I passed my HSC and started sitting for the university admission exams, I realized I had a major knowledge gap. I realized I lack some of the basic things. And I could not get a chance to study at any public universities. My family could not afford to let me study at a private university. So I ended up studying computer science at a national university.

This time too, I was upset with the quality of education. And I decided to continue preparing for next year's public university entrance exam while studying there. I lived in a dorm with 8 people, and that dorm had a very bad ragging culture. There were times when I could not study and cried all night. I felt like I was in a living hell and I used to pray to Allah (SwT) to save me from this situation. When I heard about this AUW opportunity, I thought maybe I will never get a chance there. But it will still be worth a try. I filled up the application and prepared for the exam. To my surprise, I passed the test and got into the interview. I was struggling to speak in English but the interviewer was helping me to express my ideas. And after a few days, I received a call that I got selected to study there.

I jumped out at joy hearing this news. I thought finally my door has been opened to gain quality education. And finally, I got a chance to study at an international institution with a full scholarship. I don't have to think about the poor quality anymore. Here I can read any books from the library, use the computers from the lab, and even by talking to my peers from different countries I learn so many things. This is a true dream come true for me! When I think about my past I get goosebumps thinking about all those struggles I went through in my search of getting a quality education. And this is why I want to go back to my village Eshibpur as an ICT teacher and give hands-on experience to the students. I want to teach the students the effective use of computers so that they do not need to rely on the people of the computer shop. I want to teach the girls so that they do not miss any good opportunities. I am planning to crowd source to establish a computer lab in my village. I want to continue teaching them skills they can also opt for outsourcing and other things that will open new doors for them. It will contribute in the making of a digital Bangladesh. By being an ICT teacher I can pay back and empower more girls in my village.



This life story is about Sadia An Adiba, a 21-year-old girl from Sherpur, Maymansingh. Her hobbies are drawing, traveling and book reading.

#### [About the author](#)

Nujhat Jahan is working as a Research Assistant for the In-Service Master of Education (M.Ed.) Program at Asian University for Women.