

Travelettes of Bangladesh

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Generally, our society simply does not allow women to go outside the house without their male counterparts. No matter how much we tried, we were never allowed to travel alone. So, I formed an organization along with my best friend to empower women through traveling. Travelettes of Bangladesh, which started on 27 November 2016, currently has 33,000 female members of different ages. The organization aims to empower women by encouraging them to leave their homes and showing them what it feels like to be independent. I would not say that I came up with a full solution. But this initiative was a start to dealing with an issue like this. Now more and more women feel liberated. More and more organizations are following in our footsteps. And the best part? These women are all different ages. It may seem like only the younger generation would be interested in an initiative like this. But no, older women are tired of being caged for so many years. They want to go outside and chase their dreams. Travelettes of Bangladesh received “Joy Bangla Youth Award 2018”, an award given to the youth leaders of the country. Recently, I was invited to Malaysia to attend a conference and talk about female empowerment. Finding a solution is never an easy thing.

One issue that we are currently facing in Bangladesh is that women neglect their menstrual health. The use of sanitary pads is still not an option for many due to cost and availability or a lack of knowledge. We have been working on this issue for the past year and a half. We ride through districts around the country and talk with school-aged girls about their menstrual health, a taboo topic here.

We ride through the districts on bikes, so that they can see what a woman is capable of. I must add, this is a very rare sight in Bangladesh. We are still addressing these issues.

Our work is at grassroots level. I made it my mission in life to encourage school-aged girls to use sanitary pads rather than unhygienic pieces of cloth, teaching them about menstrual health and educating them about the female reproductive system, which is a taboo topic in our country. Our group has interacted with more than 40,000 girls so far.

As a doctor myself, it seems a bit easier for the girls to confide in me about their problems with menstruation. They are not allowed to talk about menstruation, even with their parents. In some places in Bangladesh, people have not even heard of sanitary pads (let alone tampons or other types of menstrual products). Education on this topic is compulsory all over the country, yet this taboo topic is ignored and neglected by the local population.

We follow up with the girls as well. We provide them with our phone numbers and they

contact us to consult about any health-related issues.

We also talk with the girls about how they can defend themselves. We hold workshops in all 64 districts of Bangladesh. The number of rapes and cases of harassment are gradually increasing in the country. We realized that women should know how to defend themselves when needed, so we teach them basic life-saving skills.

We have currently finished travelling to all 64 districts in Bangladesh, earning praise from hundreds and thousands of Bangladeshis. Our work was featured in all the leading newspapers of Bangladesh, one Italian newspaper and even in the BBC World Service and BBC Breakfast.

We believe our work is not yet finished. We plan to form teams in every district that can continue our good work and make Bangladesh a better place.



I was invited by Marina Mahathir, the daughter of Mahathir Mohammad, to talk about women empowerment in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



Our last workshop in Dhaka on 5 May 2019 with 3,000 girls in attendance



At Rangmati (one hilly district), we interacted with a large number of young girls.



We traveled together with 100 girls. As women are not allowed outside home, our initiative made girls feel confident and empowered.