

For the youth, By the youth

Elita Karim

Teach For Bangladesh (TFB) is a non-profit organisation that is focused on reducing educational disparity in Bangladesh through building a generation of highly-effective, principle-oriented leaders. TFB offers a unique Fellowship for high-achieving graduates and young professionals. Maimuna Ahmad, a teacher-turned-entrepreneur, is the founder of TFB. Born and brought up in Washington D.C.,



she moved to Dhaka in 2011 and set up Teach For Bangladesh in 2012. The Fellowship is a full-time, paid, two-year programme that takes exceptionally talented graduates and places them as teachers in disadvantaged Dhaka schools, and develops their capacity as long-term leaders for change. The TFB model addresses two of the crucial root causes of growing inequity in Bangladesh: the disenfranchisement of those who suffer from the status quo and the disengagement of those who have the power to change it. Maimuna herself taught mathematics at Teach For America. She speaks to the Star Weekend about her experience.

What difficulties did you face while setting up TFB in Bangladesh?

A. All of my immediate and most of my extended family settled in the United States decades ago. On a personal level, moving to Bangladesh was an adventure, but as a young, (at the time) unmarried woman, it wasn't always easy. On a professional level, the challenges were a bit different. The work that we are doing has never been done before in Bangladesh. This means some amount of risk, but a great amount of learning and excitement. My team is mostly crews of talented adventurers, who come from many different academic backgrounds, such as Law, or Medical Bioscience, and different professional backgrounds, including both the corporate and

development sectors. I myself am a former teacher and a first-time entrepreneur, who started this organisation three years ago with no previous management experience.

How many teachers do you have at the moment?

At the moment, we have more than 30 Fellows working across 12 under-resourced schools, daily impacting around 3000 students from some of Dhaka's poorest communities. We are currently recruiting for the third Fellowship batch, and will be accepting applications via our website (www.teachforbangladesh.org/register) until August 17. To be eligible for the Fellowship, applicants must complete their undergraduate degree on or before October 31, 2015.

What is the TFB programme like? Do you have your own school or do you go to existing schools and teach?

Successfully admitted candidates who join the Teach For Bangladesh Fellowship commit two years to working as full-time teachers embedded in a low-income school. TFB partners with local government and non-government primary schools that serve low-income communities across Dhaka city. TFB teachers run their own classrooms within these partner schools. This immersive design enables Fellows to build deep relationships within their school community, and gain first-hand perspective of the challenges and joys of being a teacher in that community.

What does a programme like the Teach For Bangladesh Fellowship offer participants?

The training and support that our Fellows receive consists of four components: 1) Intensive training at Winter Academy for six weeks in November, prior to the beginning of the Fellowship. 2) Individualised support delivered by our trained leadership coaches throughout the two years. 3) Monthly skills workshops, leadership seminars and networking events. 4) A Post-Graduate Diploma in Educational Leadership, delivered through our partner, the Institute of Educational Development at BRAC University. Fellows near the end of their second year also receive career counseling and guidance to help connect them with opportunities to accelerate their leadership and its impact beyond the Fellowship.