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9-12 minutes

Sheikh Iraj

Everyone has a right to education. It is one of the basic rights of a citizen of any country. In our country, the government has made primary education from class 1 to 8 compulsory and free. However, there are still many underprivileged children who



don't have access to education. Many of them live in slums in our

cities, or have to work to help their families. To provide education to such children, a number of charity schools have been set up over the years by different youth related organisations. In these schools, most of the teachers are young and yet to finish their own education. They teach out of love and compassion for the children, and give very little importance to any monetary benefit for their services. They are the real unsung heroes of our society.

To mark World Teachers Day, which is celebrated on October 5, Y&I spoke with some teachers, students and parents of different charity schools of the country. They described their journey, dreams and future plans.

Rita Akter, Student/ Teacher

I used to be a student of Shakti Bidyalaya, then I joined a primary school in Mohakhali. Right now, I am a student of class 8 and believe it or not, I also teach in the preschool section of Shakti Bidyalaya. It's quite the fate that I became a teacher at the same place where I studied. Of course, I teach only some basic things, but my parents and I are proud of the fact. In our class, we have about 50 students and since I live just beside the classroom, they all know me. They are not scared of me and I have a lot of fun while I am teaching. In our society, some people still think girls don't need much education, but that is totally wrong. My parents want me to finish SSC, and I want to study further than that.

Md Shahadat Hossian, Teacher, Shakti Bidyalaya

I am studying statistics at Jagannath University. I first came to know about this particular free school through my roommate. He used to teach there and one day, I became curious and went with him. I always wanted to help the underprivileged and I thought it would be

a good opportunity to do that, so I joined. I take classes here six days a week, but teaching does not cause any problem to my studies. We have seven free schools in Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Doyaganj and Korail slums. We have about 500 students. We also search for any children who don't go to school and bring them to our school. Students here can study up to class three. I teach English, Bengali, Math and General Knowledge. My parents and friends appreciate what I am doing; even my students and their parents respect my work. After completing my studies and joining somewhere, I would like to continue to keep in touch and would like to help in any manner possible.

Zerin Akter, Teacher, Mojar School

We have four schools in Shahbag, Kamalapur, Sadarghat and Agargaon slums. I have been teaching in the Agargaon slum school for the last three years. Besides teaching here, I am studying English Literature at Dhaka International University.

I came to know about this school through one of my friends. Now teaching here has become a part of my life. I teach out of love and a sense of responsibility for these children. Here, we teach from playground to class one. We follow three national curriculum text books _ English, Bengali and Maths; we also teach general knowledge. Overall, there are 250 students in our schools and we always try to motivate them to continue their studies. Most of the parents of these children stay busy throughout the day, and some of the children even work themselves. But whatever the students do, they regularly attend classes. I think the most important thing is that their parents come to us and are happy that their children are learning. We also provide them with all kinds of reading and writing materials. I am happy with what I am doing and I want to continue

to work here.

Istiaque Ahmed, Teacher, Jaago Foundation

From a very early age, I wanted to work for underprivileged children. After completing my graduation, for the last two years I have been teaching in Jaago's Banani school. In our branch, we have around 300 students who regularly attend classes. They can learn up to class four. Parents come here as well. We talk about how their children are doing, what else we can do to help more. Those who study here do not get much care back home, and we try to provide that care with a smile. Their smile means a lot to me. We teach Bengali, Math, Social Science and English. My parents appreciate what I am doing. Right now, I am happy with what I am doing. Even if I get some other job, I will always try to keep contact with these children.

Khadiza Tul Kubra, Teacher, Obhizatrik School

I am working as a volunteer teacher for Obhizatrik School since 2013. I am also studying Architecture at Military Institute of Science and Technology. I live in Mirpur and one of our schools is in Duari Para slum. Every month, we visit different houses in the slum, there are about 2,000 families living there. I do it because I feel the urge to do something for the less fortunate children in our society. I do not take any money for it. We have seen that many families do not send their children to school, because they worry about paying for their pencils and paper, and uniform. That's why we provide all those things to them on a monthly basis. To tell you the truth, some of my friends have been inspired and they want to contribute, too. We follow the national curriculum text books. Those who are interested in arts, dancing and singing, we try to organise classes

for them as well. We have two schools and about 150 students. We are planning to open another school in Khagrachhari soon. Students in our schools can learn up to class two.

Mostak Ahmed, Teacher, Poverty Fighting Foundation

I have been teaching in the Uttara school of Poverty Fighting Foundation (PFF) for the last six months. We have another school in Khulna. Children here can study up to class five. I am in Law final year at South East University. I teach five days a week, each class is about four hours, and it does not hamper my studies. I have worked with underprivileged children before. The school is near my house and PFF follows the English version of National Curriculum Text Book (NCTB), I found that quite fascinating. We have about 50 students in this branch. Before the class starts, we have someone who goes around the houses of the students and brings them to class. In the future, if I change track or go somewhere else for job purpose, I would still like to help underprivileged children.

Shapan Rana, Teacher/ Founder, Shopner Allo

I started Shopner Allo in 2013 and have been teaching since then. We have one school in Uttara. I started this foundation because I really wanted to do something for street children, and for those who can't afford to go to school. Children in our school can study up to class two. In our area, there are many street children who fool around all day just because they don't go to school. We ask them to come to our school. Most importantly, I have seen that parents love the idea of their children going to school. Students here mostly come from poor backgrounds, but we never let them feel low about that. Different university students come to us and donate books and other materials. I want to do business after completing my studies,

and I can assure you I will always try to help these students in any way I can.

Sumaiya Jasrin Chowdhury, Teacher, Human Aid Bangladesh

I am studying in the final year of medical school. I have been a volunteer teacher here since 2013. I teach two days a week and always make sure my studies are not hindered. We have two schools, in Dhaka's Kalyanpur and in Comilla. I teach in the Kalyanpur Number 8 slum branch. We teach from preschool to class two. We have about 350 students. We had more students, but earlier this year there was a fire in the slum and many families left the place after that. I always wanted to work for a good cause, but I also came to understand the fact that I alone can't do much, that's why I joined here. We do not take any money from the students. We teach Bengali, English, Math, and those who are interested in dance and singing, we teach those as well. When I enter the slum, everyone praises me. I am glad that I am able to continue.

Sofiya Begum, Parent

I am glad that our children are able to study for free. Poverty Fighting Foundation teaches them different subjects, and also gives them different stationery material. The children are also learning computer and drawing, that's more than we can ask for. I am very happy with the kind of service we are receiving from PFF.

Julfcar Ali, Parent

My daughter is 9 years old and she is reading in class two in a free school of Human Aid Bangladesh. I am a carpenter and my wife works as a housemaid, we can't afford to spend much on our daughter's education at the moment, that is why I really appreciate what Human Aid is doing. I am illiterate, but my wife has some

education, she is the one who pays more attention to our daughter's studies. I hope that my girl will become a doctor one day.

Khadija Akter, Parent

I am happy that my boy goes to school now. I work as a housemaid in two different homes, and my husband is a rickshaw-puller; we really don't have that much time to give to our boy. One can't explain the joy when your child comes home and talks about what he has learned that day at school. We don't have a luxurious life, but we find happiness in the fact that our child is learning.

Noirit Mustapha contributed to this article.