Growing up in Bangladesh, Nusrat Jabin had to choose between what society thought she should be and her own dreams.

“Being from a middle class family and being a daughter, I grew up within a social pressure that my life is restricted in many sectors just for being a girl.”

Gender discrimination is pervasive in Bangladesh; girls face many obstacles in their development from the time they are born. They are often considered to be financial burdens on their family, and they receive less investment in their care, education, and health.

Bangladesh’s rates of child marriage and adolescent motherhood are among the highest in the world. Most girls are married before they are 18; 33% are married before age 15.

Not Nusrat. With quiet determination and encouraged by her parents, she decided to take the road less traveled and pursue big dreams of going to college, seeing the world and becoming a doctor. The way to achieve her goals, she believed, was through studying.

“I was never encouraged for any extracurricular activities like most other middle class families in Bangladesh. I was always taught to be focused on getting high grades so that I could get into medical school.”

But along the way, another door opened up and Nusrat chose to walkthrough it.

“I decided not to study in medical school, rather to study at an international university (Asian University for Women) in Bangladesh and when I was in my 3rd year, I went to study in France with the students from sixteen different countries.

The journey was not smooth ... but I did not walk back. I learned to adapt in the new environment leaving my family and my small home town...and became the first member of my family to study abroad.”
After graduating from college with a degree in public health, Nusrat was offered a job at Innovations for Poverty Action Bangladesh (IPA), an international non-profit organization that evaluates the effectiveness of programs and policies aimed at helping the poor in 20 countries.

Once again, she faced a choice.

“I faced so many pressures to get married, as the cultural context of my country is that a girl should get married at an early age. But again I did not listen to the orthodox society voices; I listened to my inner voice which kindled me to focus on my work.”

In less than a year, Nusrat's dedication and hard work earned her two promotions. She is now the most junior and the only female research associate at IPA.

“In Bangladesh where poverty, gender inequalities, lack of proper sanitation, and political conflicts still reign, I want to work for an improved health system in the country, and my special focus is on better health facilities for girls and women.”

Toward that goal, Nusrat now also volunteers with HOPE XXL, a global movement based on a long “action list” of achievable goals for the world, including international cooperation, human rights, economic balance, peace, and freedom and protecting the environment. HOPEXXL wants all people to be able to grade their lives as 'good.'

For Nusrat, life is good and getting even better as she continues to make the dreams of her childhood a reality.

“I have taken new challenges in life and tried to accomplish my goals with dedication and passion,” says Nusrat. “It is true that I get upset when I cannot reach the desired destination, but I believe that all the rejections we have in our lives make us stronger. Hence, never stop facing challenges and never stop if you fail.”

Nusrat’s new goals include continuing her education abroad, getting her Master’s degree and then going on to a Ph.D.

“Since higher education for girls is still challenging in my country, I want to inspire other girls to go for higher studies through my participation. In the future, I will work in the education sector and also continue research work to ensure better health, human rights and the well-being of the girls and women in my country.”

**Growing up in Bangladesh, Nusrat Jabin had to choose between what society thought she should be and her own dreams. She decided to take the road less traveled and pursue big dreams of going to college, seeing the world and becoming a doctor. In 2015 Nusrat Jabin was selected by Wedu Fund as part of their rising star leadership program. She is currently doing research at the Innovations for Poverty Actions in Bangladesh and hopes to work for the reproductive health of women and a more healthful and promising future for adolescents.**