



Qamar Ahmed Saimon (middle), Sarah Afrin (middle) and Rubaiyat Hossain (far right)

# AN 'OPEN DOOR' EXPERIENCE

## - RUBAIYAT HOSSAIN

For three years, South-Asian countries are being highlighted in this initiative. Last year, Rubaiyat Hossain, Qamar Ahmed Saimon and Sarah Afrin successfully participated in this initiative. Rubaiyat Hossain will also be present this year to represent Bangladesh. She talks about her experience in the festival thus far.

Locarno Festival hosts the Open Doors platform with the purpose of training and promoting filmmakers from diverse regions. In 2016, Locarno Open Doors started its three-year focus on eight countries in South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Last year, Bangladesh was one of the main countries of focus, and Bangladeshi filmmakers participated in all three sections: Open Doors Hub, Open Doors Lab and Open Doors Screening.

Ishtiaque Zico, Kamar Ahmed Simon and Sara Afreen participated in the Open Doors Hub with their respective projects:

*Cinema, City and Cats* and *Day After Tomorrow*. I participated in the lab along with Abu Shahed Emon and Aadnan Ahmed. Mostafa Sarwar Farooki's *Television* (2012), Kamar Ahmed Simon's *Are You Listening* (2012), Abu Shahed Emon's *Container* (2012), Ishtiaque Zico's *720 Degrees* (2010) and Mahde Hasan's *I am Time* (2013) and my second feature *Under Construction* (2015) were screened as part of the Open Doors screenings. Kamar Ahmed Simon and Sara Afreen's film *Day After Tomorrow* won the "Best Project Grant" (\$30,400) by Vision Sud Est and "Arte International Prix" (\$6,600).

The purpose of Open Doors is to explore films from countries that are relatively or totally unknown in the circuits of global film festivals and film markets. In the Open Doors Lab, producers are trained through workshops and one-to-one meetings where they learn how to develop their projects through the stages of script development, financ-

ing, production and distribution. The Open Doors Hub is a co-production market where filmmakers participate with their films that are in various stages of development. These filmmakers get a chance to receive intensive pitching training, meet producers, distributors, sales agent, etc. The filmmakers who participate in the Hub section also compete for award of grant money that will help them towards materializing their projects.

For me, last year was overwhelming. For the first time I was being exposed to the world of European film festival and film market. The sea of information I received often left me devastated and I felt I couldn't do it. I felt lost. However, the lab mentors and speakers were extra kind in always offering consultation and counseling. The head of Open Doors Lab, Paul Miller, said to me on the second day, "Listen Rubaiyat, showing up is winning half of the game." So I stopped feeling defeated and started being more attentive

during the sessions with my notebook. It was like a classroom for me. I took detailed notes and followed up with the mentors regarding any questions I had. Everyone was very busy, but I realized if approached, people would find time, even during their meals to answer your questions. It has been a great learning curve for me, because it was by following up what I learnt at Open Doors, now I am better equipped to navigate with my project.

The best part was being with the other filmmakers. More than anything, we enjoyed each other company and gained energy from each other's visions and dreams. Locarno Open Doors gave us a chance to create a bond that I consider a precious gift. That was a special moment, a rare bond created among us through our love and dreams of cinema.

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By Rubaiyat Hossain,  
participant at this year's Locarno Festival's  
'Open Doors'



Sarah Afrin and Qamar Ahmed Saimon



Open Doors in Progress