

Our History

Distressed Children & Infants International (DCI) grew out of the life experiences, values, passion and vision of two Doctors, Ehsanul Hoque and Brian DeBroff. Although they come from ostensibly different backgrounds, they share the common goal of empowering disadvantaged children through education and health care.

Dr. Hoque's lifelong work on behalf of children is rooted in his own childhood experiences. Dr. Hoque grew up in Rajshahi, Bangladesh. He was born with congenital cataracts and, by the age of five, had already undergone eye surgery seven times. His personal struggles with his eyesight have given him a deep understanding of the difficulties faced by the visually impaired and the physically challenged – especially children. This empathetic attitude towards others informed his activities and goals as a medical student.

While in medical school, Dr. Hoque started organizing a number of very basic programs to improve the quality of life in rural Bangladesh. He distributed vegetable seeds to villagers to plant in their homestead gardens, and encouraged women in the villages to spread the message about the importance of proper nutrition for children and the necessity for mothers to eat vegetables during pregnancy. He recruited his fellow medical students to work as volunteers. Terre Des Hommes Netherlands, a charitable organization, contributed to this effort by donating seeds to the villagers.

Through his work, Dr. Hoque witnessed the suffering of many poor, under-nourished, orphaned and, all too often, abused children. He could not help but be moved by the stark contrast between his relatively privileged existence and the harsh reality of these children's lives. He was struck by the profound injustice of this situation: that, through no fault of their own, these children were being denied their fundamental human rights. It was then that Dr. Hoque realized what his true calling in life was. He knew that one day he would found a child rights organization dedicated to helping as many children as possible worldwide.

In March, 2001, Dr. Hoque joined the Department of Internal Medicine at the Yale School of Medicine, where he met Dr. Brian DeBroff, Vice Chairman of the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Science. Having lost his own parents when he was young, Dr. DeBroff has always been keenly aware of the challenges facing orphans and underprivileged children. As a specialist in congenital cataract surgery who has pioneered multiple novel techniques to treat the disease, he was eager to use his skills to fight early blindness in children - a phenomena that occurs all too frequently in developing countries like Bangladesh.

Recognizing that they shared a passion for improving the lives of impoverished children, Dr. Hoque and Dr. DeBroff joined together to create an organization dedicated to that goal. On May 24, 2003, at a meeting at Yale University Medical School, DCI was founded. On April 25, 2005, DCI received official recognition from the US Government, and from the Connecticut Secretary of State soon thereafter. Its journey had officially begun. In January 2006, DCI started its Sun Child Sponsorship Program, which now supports over 800 children. The Sun Child Sponsorship (SCS) Program is designed to help the most vulnerable children of Bangladesh lift themselves out of poverty by providing them with basic life necessities, as well as quality education and health care.