



My name is Saika Kibria, and I am presently a ninth-grader currently attending John Marshall High School, located in Los Angeles, California. Recently my family and I traveled to Bangladesh over the summer vacation of 2009 where we explored the rich diversity and culture of our heritage. The experience had been absolutely amazing, giving us an unforgettable trip we will bear with ourselves forever. I had enjoyed reconnecting with relatives, undergoing the adjustment to a completely different environment, and exploring the nation. Although the expedition had been a refreshing change and provided me with amusement and relaxation, I believe that the most important issues I had encountered in Bangladesh had been participating in an activity coordinated by DCI.

In the past few years, my parents, sibling, and I have been actively involved with DCI, Distressed Children and Infants International, an organization working to eliminate poverty in Bangladesh through making payments for education and suitable living conditions, therefore granting poor schoolchildren the opportunity to become successful, productive members of the society. My family has donated cash for the Sun Child Sponsorship Program, volunteered for the association, and stayed committed to continue providing DCI with work and support. I firmly stand by the principle that in order for programs offering charity towards the poor and underprivileged to be beneficial and effective, people living a consistent, comfortable lifestyle should make various contributions so that everyone has access to rights for a proper edification.

On July 27, 2009, my family and I drove from the capital city of Dhaka to a small rural town, Habiganj. The area was mostly set on dirt roads, surrounded by clear, green ponds and grassy plains. However, our primary task did not include sightseeing. Our family had an important duty to fulfill on behalf of DCI. It was essential for us to interact with the union through communication involving actual students gaining academic progress through use of the donations offered to them. When I met the first batch of young children struggling in the mass of poverty they have been placed in, I felt a strange, pulling sensation. We had taken video tapes, recording the event in a precise manner, and encouraged mothers to continue supporting their sons and daughters to further continue pursuing an education. Meeting these children triggered strong emotions within me. I felt devastated at the sight of their environment and their capacities of coping. Seeing their parents turned me over a new page, and brought a sudden wave of grief, compassion, and pity.

I had spoken to several schoolchildren about what they had learned so far in school, their development in learning abilities, and the facilities available to them. DCI has been able to create a systematic setting for the schools, while granting them the provision of all the needs and requirements attained through the process of attending school regularly as a pupil. Textbooks, school materials, and teachers are all contracted, and arrangements have been made for an appropriate and disciplined atmosphere. Knowing that donators and volunteers like me have helped these children overcome their harsh living status to some extent, made me feel proud that I can change their lives. And moreover, I realized at that moment, how much that trip had been a life-changing experience for me as well.

Visiting these unfortunate people has given me a new sense of values and reproaches of what I need to do to make this world a better place. I want to be a part of a future where there is improvement in the daily life of each and every living individual. I want to indulge myself in activities that help me become a better person, and reach out to those that live past the boundaries I am limited to. I want to promote change, and isolate poverty from education. These are the exact goals I felt the necessity to undertake when I met the poor children of Habiganj. There should be no reason for secluding any man from his natural rights given at birth. Equality is a price no one should have to pay for. I know for a fact that it is possible for those students to become prospective doctors, lawyers, and other useful associates in the future. The journey to Habiganj opened my eyes to significant factors that concern me immensely. I am able to view poverty in a whole new perspective, and I am inspired to continue my services and efforts for DCI.



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