

My ambition to help overcome poverty

Masahiro Kurehara

Good afternoon.

Like many first year students, I entered college to find what I want to do in life. One thing for sure, I want to go abroad and see the world. Now, with the experience I had this summer, I found a purpose and it changed me.

This summer I went to the Philippines to study English. When I got out from the Manila airport, I was very excited and my heart was beating so hard. Everything was new to me--people, language, food, and culture.

Like any developing countries, the Philippines has various problems. The road is NOT basically paved like a gravel road--which was even fun to drive, water and electricity supply are not stable, and frogs come into the bathroom!

The most surprising thing was the street children. One day, some street children were trying to sell me flowers. The flowers were handmade and very cheap. I asked one of them why he was selling flowers. He said that his family is poor and he wants to help them. After talking with him, I could not say no and I bought some flowers from them.

I felt that this is a very serious, so I searched the reasons of this problem. 40% of the population in the Philippines is poor. So, that's the main reason children have to work to help their families. Because of this, children cannot go to school. More importantly, there are about 14 million elementary school children and about 30 percent of them drop out. Only 50% of them go on to high school after. When it comes to college, only about 10 percent can go.

Clearly, this is a big problem. One of the other reasons is that the elementary school is far away; there is no transportation to the school, so students cannot go to school. Moreover, students cannot understand the dialect that is used in class. For those who have been working since they were little, they have not received any education. Therefore, they cannot find a good job when they become adults and they stay poor. This is the poverty cycle in the Philippines.

I felt the need to stop this cycle of poverty for these street children to get education for a better future. In order to stop this cycle, I thought to provide jobs for their parents would be the key. If parents have jobs and receive enough salary, their children do not have to work and can go to school. At this moment, I am shortage of business knowledge. Therefore, during my university year, I would like to acquire some business knowledge and also I would like to understand deeply about this situation to get better ideas for them. So my dream is to make sure that street children get an education and let them have a dream. It is not easy but I believe that I can do it. Thank you.