

**Community Service (LEADS)
As Done By
Students of Sunnydale
Class XI, Batch 2016**



What is LEADS?

In a country like Bangladesh, where trying to see through the end of the day is a struggle, it is sometimes very difficult for the parents of low income groups to send their children to school. Even after they do, they have to face the nightmares of poverty; lack of hygiene and a proper diet leads to malnutrition and sickness. As a result, dropout rates remain high.

This is where LEADS steps in. It is an organization which is committed towards the development of the underprivileged section of the society. It provides support towards the poor children who are enrolled in different government primary schools with a better and more effective learning process by following the existing government curriculum. It also looks after the nutrition and hygiene needs of the children, and tries to provide these in the best way they can.

Our Work and Experience

Community service, which is an extra-curricular activity is essential for any student of Sunnydale after they start their Advanced Level course. Therefore, a team of eight people had been sent to this organization and volunteer for any help they required. They are listed as follows:

1. Rian Rahman Faisal
2. KaziTowsif Ahmed
3. TahsinSamia
4. RabitaBinte Rashid
5. OrobiBakhtiar
6. Arif Arman
7. IhfazTajwar
8. Mostafa Ishmam
9. AdibaFarheen
10. AninditaSejuti

Arif Arman says:

As children from well-off families, working in LEADS have helped us in more than one ways. It gave us a broader perspective in life. We had the opportunity of getting to work with so many different lives. Each and every one of them had a different story to tell. Story of hardships. Stories of pain. What they had gone through in their ages is a bit unsettling, because when we compare our own siblings of the same age as of them, we can see that our brothers and sisters, including ourselves, have been pampered so much that we've become something similar to farm animals.

Each of us have had a different experience, and we're grateful for being able to do so. Below are some words by us regarding what we've seen and how it made us feel like.

"It is perhaps fortune or sheer luck that, that took me to that little neat classroom on the second floor of a curious apartment block. But whatever it was I am eternally thankful for it, for what I learned in that room over the past few months, I will cherish it for the rest of my life. I would like to think of LEADS as an event in my life, one that may seem unremarkable at first, but upon closer inspection, the profound effect it had on me becomes clear.

A couple months ago, I started volunteering at LEADS, an organization which taught underprivileged children, for a meagre fee. I was assigned to a student named Rana, an SSC candidate, who was just a year younger than me, if not less. I was to teach him Mathematics, a field in which I had good authority. However, looking back now, I feel as if Rana taught me way more than I could ever teach him.

I must admit, at first, my heart was not in it. Teaching Rana was just another simple task for me, another hurdle I had to cross to get another certificate. But that soon changed. I found I had a lot to learn from him. His sincerity was what struck me the most. The boy had less than ¼th of the privileges and comforts I had but put in four times the effort. It was astounding, and at the same time humbling. I also noticed how he helped out his teachers, and also the people around him in general. He would come in everyday after school, study there, do chores and even teach some of the younger students. That's what amazed me. Teaching him was easy too. He was exceptionally smart and caught on quickly. I'm sure he is going to come out with exceptional results.

Whether it was by chance or luck that I happened to teach at LEADS, I hope that I was able to change some aspect of someone's life during my time there. Although time constraints prohibit me from volunteering there anymore, I have many fond memories to hold onto for the time to come. Here's to LEADS, not just a classroom, but a way of life."

TahsinSamia says:

"I was assigned to teach the students of class three every Sunday and Tuesday from 2 pm to 4.30 pm in September. There were five students in my class, every one of them brighter than the other.

The best thing about my students was their enthusiasm to learn. Their determination to do something big in life surprised me. Their hopes and dreams were bigger than any of ours, even though they have to struggle much harder than us to study. Getting a chance to be their guardian for some days, to get to know them and to influence them was one of the best experiences of my life.

One day, Al-Amin, one of my students, asked me what I wanted to be when I grow up. I replied that I wanted to be an engineer. Fariha, a rather shy and bright girl asked, 'Really? Can a girl actually become an engineer? I always wanted to be one, I really like science but I'm a girl.' Her innocence and the new spark of hope in her eyes surprised me. I explained to her that if she really wanted it and gave it her best, she could be whatever she wanted to be. I made her a promise that she would keep trying hard and do whatever she can to be an engineer one day. All the other children told me about their aspirations, and I made them all promise the same thing. That day, I could feel new hopes and dreams rising in those children and I felt extremely lucky to be a part of it.

Teaching class three students might sound very easy, but teaching them from their textbooks was not my only task; I also had to develop them as human beings. The lessons learnt at this stage are the ones that influence their character. Therefore, I did what I thought was best for them in order to raise them as good human beings.

I have learnt many things from my students too. To be their idol, I had to try to be a perfect person too, and it changed me for the better. I realized how lucky I was to be able to go to an English medium school with everything handed to me by my parents, while on the other hand there were children who sacrificed their

daily meal in order to study. It encouraged me to continue helping people because happiness of helping the needy and influencing their lives in any way is greater than any other joy.”

KaziTowsifAhmed says:

“Providing service for LEADS game me a picture of the real world. That inequality and poverty exists. LEADS took an initiative to close the gap of equality by providing basic education to underprivileged children of society. This amazing work is done almost free/at minimal tuition. Teachers and us volunteers give our full effort to give them the same quality education as normal children would receive. Not only did I manage to develop teaching skills, I also got to look into the lives of each student; where they came from, what they eat and what they plan to do. We are really lucky to be so privileged. My experience in LEADS was eye opening and definitely worth a great cause.”

IhfazTajwar says:

I have volunteered in LEADS from November to February. I tried to give as much time as I could, taking classes along with some of my classmates during my free time. I worked a total time of approximately 12 hours. I used to teach a boy named Rana General Mathematics who gave his SSC exam this February. Occasionally, I also took classes of grades two and four. Rana was an extremely talented student for his age. I, being from an English medium background, had some difficulties teaching him completely in Bengali. So I used some English terms and statements at times. To my surprise he had no problems in understanding what I taught. He was a very well-mannered boy. No one would be able to tell that he belonged to a low-income family at first glance. All the other children were equally talented and well mannered. I learnt a lot from them. How they were serious with their studies despite getting such a short time for doing so. At times I would wonder how fortunate I was. I would go back home in an air conditioned car, get good food and be able to spend time on recreation. Whereas these unfortunate children could not get any of these luxuries. They would have to go back to work after they were done with their classes. Some of them shared their experiences with me. One of them, only 8, worked at a tea stall and came to study at LEADS whenever he got some time free. These children motivated me to work

harder for my own goals. They influenced me to pursue my dreams no matter what the hurdles are.

Rana has given his SSC exams and his results will be published soon. I'm anticipating a terrific result from him not only in my subject but in all of them. I'll be looking forward to contributing more to LEADS in the future and help them fight illiteracy in the young generation.

OrobiBakhtiar says:

"I was assigned to teach sixth grade children. Through teaching them I had learnt many things about their lives. The hardships they had to face every day were overwhelming to hear. What inspired me the most was their eagerness to learn. The children used to be prepared with their homework even before I could start the class. Everyone wanted to participate in class and performed their given tasks with enthusiasm. Among them, a girl named Lamia, daughter of a local rickshaw puller, was the most enthusiastic one. It was a pleasing experience.

I have LEADS and Sunnydale to thank for giving me such a gratifying experience. I have learnt that poverty cannot diminish the need for knowledge. LEADS has provided the opportunity for students like me to give back to the community. It was an honor to provide education to these children. I am sure they have a bright and thriving future ahead. To witness the lives of these incredibly talented children and play a part in their lives was humbling."

Rian Rahman Faisal says:

"Children at LEADS, according to me, were quite well behaved. I had a lot of fun teaching them. Not only did I teach them, they also taught me many things. I loved the fact that classes there were so interactive. As I took classes, I understood how hard it is to be a teacher; the patience you need to have is tremendous. Educating the children here, and seeing them bring positive results was a matter of pride for me. Also, I'd like to thank the Principal of LEADS for always motivating us. At LEADS, it didn't matter where you came from. We were like one giant family."

RabitaBinte Rashid says:

Being a part of Leads was a matter of privilege for me indeed. It was an amazing experience altogether. I was assigned to teach the students of class I and II.

Their eagerness to learn, to know something new, was what amazed me the most. Though they were really cooperative, but handling naughty students was not my cup of tea. It was little difficult at first but later on, I realized this is what I would miss the most-their mischievous deeds every class.

I remember two of the girls from my group- Rani and Asiya. They were the naughtiest yet the best students from the group, and hence my favorites. I still remember the glow on their faces on scoring the highest in my tests. They would come to Leads every day after school, and what they did first was clean the floor and the whole room. This is what made me love them more. They never forget their responsibilities.

This opportunity to teach them helped me develop not my teaching skills and patience, but also sincerity towards my work. Even the smallest of gifts gave them unbound happiness. Thanks to Leads to give me the opportunity to volunteer these little children. Due studies I am not being to volunteer for the time being, but I wish to be a part of Leads once again.

Mostafalshmam says:

I started working at LEADS with the responsibility of teaching English to children of class 6. Initially, I was a bit overwhelmed with what I had to do. When I was introduced to them, I felt nervous and wondered if they'd ever accept me as a teacher. But time went on, and my fears had gone before I even realized it. Despite being a bit naughty, they were wonderful to be around with. It was a treat to see the way their eyes lighted up when I filled their copies with stars; it was as if they were the happiest children in the world when they got them.

After a while, I was responsible for teaching English to Rana, an SSC candidate there. Teaching him was quite a different experience, because as I did, I saw none other than an average teenager just like me within him. It was not always easy to teach him due to some of the difficult language found in the textbooks which are often quite unnecessary, but we managed to pull through together.

LEADS has helped me understand an entire different strata of the society we live in, and I am grateful towards it for all it has done and is doing.

Conclusion

Working at LEADS has opened up our eyes to so many new perspectives of life. When we first joined, I'm pretty sure most of us didn't really thought of putting in much effort into it. But as we spent more days there, we felt like it would be morally wrong not to give our maximum effort into volunteering at LEADS. What they're doing for the society is wonderful. What we've learnt is that it is important to give back to the society. Our days at LEADS might have ended, but our duty towards the society will never end. Keeping that in mind, we hope that we could cause enough good to bring a change in our country. A change for the better.