**Describe a personal life experience that has had particular significance for you and highlight the reason(s) it was significant, whether it had an impact on others, and any insights or understandings you gained from it. (800 word maximum)**

Last summer, I went to Kei Island, a remote island in Maluku, Indonesia for community service in collaboration with doctorSHARE, an established non-profit humanitarian organization that focuses on health services.

“Many locals are experiencing diarrhea, possibly coming from their consumption…” stated Dr Vanessa during the program introduction. Being a water geek, I jumped at this chance to ask about the water condition there. Although she wasn't sure, she claimed that their water contained white residue.

It goes without saying that this information piqued my interest. Asking for several litres of water samples to be sent to Jakarta, I tested the water at the Indonesian Government’s water testing facility and discovered that it contained high calcium carbonate levels, which can cause heart rhythm disturbances and kidney stones.

“A water filter would definitely help to reduce the contaminants,” I thought. I consulted with a water specialist to ask for his advice on the water filter’s layers. After that, I got in touch with Dr. Vanessa once more to confirm that all of the materials for the filter's layers were accessible and available on the island.

I spent several weeks prototyping the water filter and testing it out on the water sample. Using a small prototype, the percentage of contaminants did, in fact, decrease by about 17% when the filtered water was retested in the lab. Unquestionably, a larger one would significantly remove more contaminants.

When I reached the island, I explained my findings and the effectiveness of the water filter to the residents of the doctorSHARE compound. Given the short amount of time I had there, I decided to conduct a demonstration on how to build a scaled-down model. While I was thoroughly cleaning the materials for the model, the residents there would approach me, take a look at the materials, and ask questions on the purpose of each layer. I would also ensure that they truly understand how to build each layer before moving to the next one.

To guide with the filter's construction, I then distributed an instruction manual I had created. Soon realizing that I have only spreaded the idea of this filter around the doctorSHARE neighborhood area, I decided to teach a few boarding school seniors on my water filtration system. I made a powerpoint presentation and walked them through an explanation of the necessity of the filter and a step-by-step tutorial for making one.

My time in Kei Island wasn’t only limited to sharing about this filter. During the free time there, the locals would teach me their morning dances, show me around the traditional markets, teach me how to prepare their traditional cuisine (which I’m pretty sure is the hardest task of all), take me to different beaches to collect unusually shaped seashells while narrating the histories of each beach, and share their various cultures with me. One tradition that I found unique was that the men had to give the women a cannon as a sign of gratitude and respect before they got married. Not to mention, they would also climb the trees to fetch some fresh coconut water to sip while we enjoyed the sunset at one of the beaches. Among the many unique things the island has to offer, these are just a handful of the things I was able to experience.

These unforgettable moments helped me to see that there is truth to the adage "happiness in simplicity."  Living in a humble abode, sitting next to a fireplace and sharing our life experiences by the beach, never had I imagined that I could enjoy such simple moments. Being isolated from the social media world and having little to no information about whatever happens online or back at home for once became invaluable for me. These allowed me to put my studies on hold, just sit still, and enjoy all the little pleasures in life—something I wasn't aware of at the time.

But more importantly, this experience made me appreciate how fortunate I am and that there are tons of opportunities out there for me to make an impact, starting from helping the people of Kei Island to enhance their health quality. In order to do so, I believe that having access to clean water is what they needed most. I explained the importance of clean water and how it could impact our life. As they grew more conscious of the water they were using, they became motivated to start building their own water filter. When I left, the students were going to propose the water filter implementation idea at their school assembly, sharing the instruction manual throughout their neighborhood, and the doctorSHARE’s residents are currently building their own water filter.

My experience and the knowledge I acquired while creating the water filter have further fueled my desire to get more active in addressing issues related to water security and accessibility, whether it be by raising awareness online or by starting a non-profit organization aimed at facilitating the availability of clean water in rural areas.

Hi Victoria,

What an impressive feat! I really like how you’re a go-getter and both environmentally and socially conscious. Your passion is also something unique: water quality and availability. Bravo!

I do feel although your essay has displayed your capabilities as an applicant, your personality has not been fully revealed. I’ve left specific comments above, and I believe that some parts can benefit from more refinement.

Remember the prompt of the essay is asking for something highly personal to you and why a particular experience matters. The latter part of your essay has given us details, but I think your essay can be stronger through the use of more emotional angle and descriptive words.

Best of luck!

Melinda