My family and I were travelling to a small village on an island south of Indonesia. The village we visited was very different from the city I live in—everything from the infrastructure, roads and people were in stark contrast. At one sunny day in our vacation, I was chewing on a chicken cutlet that felt like a tire and tasted like cardboard. To my surprise, the young girl who has been sitting next to me asked for my leftovers.

She was a young girl, around the age of 5, who should’ve been in school, studying. Instead, there she was, begging for my leftovers. After witnessing how poverty traps affect these people—these children—first hand, my desire to help them grew.

When I organized my school’s community service to a smaller school near a local tourist attraction, I started to see the extent of the impact from educational inequality in my city. Whilst I was happy to help clean the rivers across the school and teach their students simple English, I felt like the impact I had, though positive, was temporary.

Hoping to bridge the educational barrier, I built a learning platform where I collaborated with some friends from multiple schools with different curriculums. Resources like notes and practice papers of core subjects ranging from Math, English, Biology, Chemistry and Physics were uploaded together with a 24-hour Question and Answer service; all provided at no price.

Additionally, I formed an association with representatives from 6 different high schools in Malang, inviting over 16 schools to participate, called Malang Youth for Change. Like minded students virtually meet twice a month to raise awareness and find solutions to contemporary issues. With teachers and corporate representatives as guest speakers, our frequent meetings resembled a conference, where students had the opportunity to voice out and defend their opinions. Everyone will then work together to draft open letters on the solutions proposed. This helps students challenge both their critical and leadership skills when working with others.

I believe that any goal would be meaningless without a clear purpose in improving other people’s lives. I hope to continue using my knowledge to better the lives of others.