5. Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?

“We’ll be back in a month.” my mom said. With news that my sister has been diagnosed with cancer, my family immediately raced to Singapore for treatment. Since we figured it would be over in a month, We quickly hugged goodbyes and I stayed in Indonesia for school.

Taking matters into my own hands, I ensured both schoolwork and household duties were organised. But I quickly learned that cancer is complex: every small step forward always had a force holding us back. A month's stay became two years and counting, as though there is no finishing line. My optimism started to diminish and I was losing hope, shattering my independent front.

After a while, juggling both school and household chores alone drained me. I couldn’t focus and time passed by in an instant. I missed deadlines and my grades started slipping. It didn’t take long for me to notice that no matter how hard I tried to do two tasks at once, having two brains at once, there was only one Shelby.

Unwilling to let this continue, I decided to reach out for help.

I started to ask my aunt if she could help me with the household, my classmates for a study group and my teachers for extensions. I admit I was scared. Asking for help was new to me and I feared getting rejected. To my surprise, people around me were very welcoming and it increased my confidence. I slowly started to catch up with deadlines, took care of the house and continued my club activities.

This sparked a big change, I began to understand the importance of collaboration. Instead of preparing alone for math competitions, now I would study with friends, sharing new concepts; eventually winning medals! Even my organisation, love.achelois, which started out as a personal blog, grew to become an international community of youths helping one another.

With my sister’s diagnosis, I handled it all myself thinking it’s the best way. Clearly, I was wrong. I realised the combined potential of working together can create such a monumental outcome, that it overweighs what one does alone.