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Featured in this Issue

EdThought

How to Grow Mindfulness in Your School

Stories that Move

Toolbox Against Discrimination

Student Voices

Fault Lines Pastiche

Community Service

The DLSK Club at the International School of Ulaanbaatar

By DLSK Club President and Founder, A.Devi



The association between the International School of Ulaanbaatar and the Dolma Ling Soup Kitchen encourages students and teachers to volunteer on Saturdays during the cold winter months. In December of 2018, I became one of those volunteers.

Prior to my visit, I believed our lives reflected our actions and homeless people were responsible for their hardships. But after meeting and interacting with the people who came for lunch and hearing about their lives, I realised I was wrong. For the first time, I learned people lived in the sewage for warmth, walked up to 10 km for a single meal, and weren't allowed on buses due to discrimination. With this new knowledge came compassion and a strong desire to help them.

Hoping to make a difference, I brought 20 loaves of bread on my next visit. However, its impact was temporary and I realized I couldn't make a difference alone. I started brainstorming ways to help Dolma Ling's clients when I came across a Harvard study that showed how Mongolians are deficient in micronutrients as a result of harsh climate and their traditional cuisine. Dolma Ling had planted a garden during the previous spring so that they could grow fresh vegetables to provide some of these nutrients to the diners, but the growing season is far too limited to supply the kitchen for more than a couple of months. I decided that building a greenhouse was the answer, as it will improve the quality of the food served, offering a balanced meal with both micronutrients and macronutrients that can be grown and served throughout the year.

I contacted Dolma Ling's manager and director to work out the details of the greenhouse and created the DLSK Club to fundraise money. By March, our club had 11 official members including two of our teachers and our youngest member, my sister, Aariya.



Some DLSK members making jewelry (from left: Rachel, Sayako, Haruna, Shweta, Hazel, and Devi)

Resulting from the contribution of 293 people, including teachers, parents, students of the ISU community, Dolma Ling staff, and DLSK Club members, we raised a total of 10,852,650 MNT (approximately 4,000 USD). Thank you to everyone who contributed to our cause making this possible. With that money, we bought two 6 × 10m greenhouses, seeds, transplants, gardening equipment, two security cameras, and installed a watering system.

The culmination of our effort is that Dolma Ling is now serving not one but two bowls of nutritious lunch set. Now, my dream is to enable Dolma Ling to bake their own bread in their kitchen, and serve nourishing sea buckthorn juice grown in their garden, making lunch worth the 10 km walk.