What is the hardest challenge I have faced and how has it defined me?

I was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. My family and I lived there until 2010. The political and economic issues going on in Ethiopia had made the country neither a comfortable nor a safe place to live. Life was difficult, and with my father having to travel to far states for long periods of time for work, it became even more challenging. Basic things, such as water and electricity were scarce and very difficult to come by in Ethiopia. The water pipes and the electricity lines would suddenly stop working at any given moment without notice. Where we lived, electricity and water were only available to us every other day. The days would often interchange. On one occasion water and electricity were gone for a whole week. During those times, food in refrigerators would spoil, and phones will stay dead for days (making it very difficult to communicate with others). Whenever water was unavailable, my uncle and I would have to go buy water from other areas where there was still water and carry it back in containers. Water consumption had to be very low to make the most of the water so showers and other needs were kept to a minimum. Electricity was also another problem on its own. At night, we had to use candles and flashlights to have some light in the house.

Getting a good education was very difficult as well. I didn't go to any schools nearby because their education was inadequate, so my mother decided to send me to a private school far from our home. My mother and I would have to travel almost 25 miles to get to my school. We would wake up very early in the morning and leave the house two hours before school starts to make it on time. We would sometimes be late because getting transportation was rigorous since we needed to catch four different busses to get there. I went to that school for three years. After three years, my little sister had become old enough to go to school however, my mother could not afford to send both of us to a private school. She was unable to afford neither the transportation fares nor the school fares, so we both enrolled in a mediocre school nearby.

Living in Ethiopia and having gone through what I have been through has made me who I am today. It has made me stronger mentally. It has helped me to mature as a caring and loving person. But mainly, it has made me appreciate life and work hard to reach my goals. Seeing the lows of life has made me thankful for everything I have ever been given. The hardships I have faced have defined me as a person, and my goal is to one day be able to help people going through what I went through. A good education is needed to help solve many of the problems in Ethiopia. I believe University of Maryland-College Park can provide me with the knowledge and skills I will need to help my home country.