

What I Treasure in My Drawer

When I was in elementary school, my father used to work in Malawi in Africa as a member of an overseas aid organization. My mother, brother and I decided to take this opportunity and visit him in Malawi. My father said he would introduce us to the villagers. I thought it would be nice to become friends with the children there. But how? My mother said, "Why don't you show them how to make origami?" I thought that would be a good idea. Since I could not speak any English, I learned just one English sentence, "Let's make an origami crane, shall we?" I looked forward to meeting them.

As soon as we arrived at the village, we set off on our village tour. I followed my father with the origami paper in my hand. At the first house, I met a girl who was about my age. I handed origami paper to her. She looked fascinated by the beautiful paper. I said, "Let's make an origami crane, shall we?" but she only gazed at the paper. She wouldn't fold it. I wondered if she could not understand what I said. But the same thing happened at the next house, and at the one after that. I was so disappointed and frustrated by their attitudes because they destroyed my plan to enjoy making origami together.

Some months ago, I was cleaning my room. Then, I found a crumpled origami crane in my drawer. When I picked it out from the drawer, the memory of Malawi suddenly flashed back. That evening I told my parents about it. My father said to me, "You should know this. It's very difficult for people to get paper in developing countries like Malawi. Those children probably couldn't even imagine playing with the paper." I was shocked to hear that. It is unbelievable that there can be a place where people can't easily access paper.

In Japan, we can get anything and everything we need. Take supermarkets and department stores for example. They are flooded with a variety of items. We can buy them and use them as we please. We don't have to worry about food. We don't have to bother ourselves about where to sleep tonight. We don't have to fear for our safety. It seems to me that everybody takes this for granted.

However, what we regard as normal is not the case in some other countries. The other day, a developing country was featured on TV. The children there were using slates for notebooks. They didn't have desks or chairs. They didn't have a school building, either. They were having class in the shade of a big tree! Now I know that there are a lot of children who can't go to school because they have to work and earn money for living. Millions of homeless children are forced to sleep on the street. And many of them starve every day. They are struggling to survive today, and so they can't afford to think about their futures.

Although I'm merely a fifteen-year-old girl now, it's time for me to start looking toward my future. I hope I can support those suffering people someday. I only have a vague idea about it now, but there must be something I can do for them. In the near future, I'd like to see what is happening in the world with my own eyes and find out what to do. Until then, I think I should study hard and acquire the basic qualities needed to work for others.

I'll keep the origami crane in my drawer. When I see it there, it will always remind me of my determination to help others in the future. Thank you.