

Maiden's Story

I am Maiden, a girl from Meghalaya, India. I lost my parents when I was 8 years old and from then my aunt took care of me and my 2 siblings. When I was 13, I suffered from high fever because of which I started losing my hearing and vision. I live in a small village and people here are not aware about deafblindness and they make fun of me. I cannot study here in regular school.



I got admission at Bethany Society, school for deafblind supported by Sense India in Shilong. There I learnt sign language and English. There I was lucky enough to find a teacher who cared for me like a mother. She gave me strength and encouraged me to try new things and learn. I am now 21 and can communicate mostly through sign language. I was doing ok at Shilong except the fact that I could not clear grade 10th despite trying twice because of my low vision as I could not read for long hours. Things suddenly changed after this pandemic broke out.

Once lockdown was announced nationwide, I had to move back to my village. There I do not have any friends but I work at my home all the time. I could no longer communicate in sign language. People here in my village don't know how to sign so I could not communicate with them. Fortunately, I had managed to buy a smart phone for myself and explored to learn to use WhatsApp. Now at least I could message everyone and stay in touch. I also make video in sign language and share it with those who can communicate in sign language. One thing I am worried about is my brother's education. He studies in Bangalore in grade 12th. Last year I could pay his school fees from the scholarships I got in sports but this year I have nothing so I could not pay his education fees. Being the eldest of my siblings it is my responsibility to be able to take care of them. The illness I suffered earlier has also left me weak and because of it I cannot work at our farm to provide for my family.

I have kept myself very busy during the lockdown period. I love to cook and make cakes so I try to cook different dishes. My sister always loves my dishes. I also use google to search and learn new things. I am now using internet to learn more sign language and other things that will help me. None in my village helps me so I try to learn new things on my own. There are four other children who are deaf in my village but unfortunately no one is here to teach them sign language. I used my time during lockdown period to teach them sign language.

Now I only hope situation would be better soon and I would be back in Shilong and will be able to finish school to pursue my dream of studying outside Shilong and become a well-known Baker. I want to be independent enough to be able to financially support my family so that we wouldn't need to be dependent on others.