

Essay by Andrew Dodoo for the Ambach Scholarship at FBC Needham

In Ghana, West Africa 2016, I was brutally attacked by a tenant who poured acid on me in my father's house. I was severely burned, not knowing if I was going to die or not. I was feeling intense heat and pain, I could see my skin melting. I ran straight to a friend's house and wept for help. I was devastated. I thought this acid burn was going to end my life.

I was hospitalized for seven months in Ghana. I was 16 years old and also on a soccer team. I was not able to continue school or soccer. I was fighting for my life, and it felt like I would never get better. I was vulnerable, incapacitated, and sad. I was dying. I was so scared I thought nothing could be done, but I never lost hope,

As my health was deteriorating my brother made contact with a hospital in the United States so that I could have a more successful treatment. I was brought to Boston, MA to get my medical care from Shriners Hospital for Children. At Shriners I had over 23 surgeries. Amazingly, I was able to go back to school and to play soccer during my treatment. There were times when I could have given up, but I never did. Because to me, giving up is not an option.

I am currently in my final year of high school and eager to continue my journey through college. This acid burn experience has taught me a lot about life. I am a very ambitious person, who has always had hopes and dreams to become a professional soccer player. Honestly, all the struggles that I have been through have made me stronger. This experience has been an opportunity in my life, even though it is not a good thing, still it has made me who I am and has gotten me to where I am today. I have come a long way and I can't just give up no matter how tough things get. Nothing can stop me from achieving my dreams.

I am grateful to God for still being alive. I feel so blessed and happy even though it was a huge setback for me. I was out of school for about two years, nonetheless I knew that it was never too late to pursue my dreams. I still have time to do everything I have always wanted to do. I have learned what real hope is, how to always focus on the positive and see what is possible, recognize the good that comes out of the bad, and that everything happens for a reason. This experience taught me how to overcome any kind of obstacle I might encounter. I am alive and with God's help nothing can stop me. Our greatest glory in life is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall. I will always keep my faith high and strong, no matter what happens, I will stay positive.