

# RAKIA AKTER

Undergraduate, Elementary Education  
Myanmar: Service Learning | June/July 2018



## GENEROSITY

Working at the monastery school made me feel proud to be in this profession. I was in awe of how the teachers didn't let lack of supplies stifle their creativity. During lunchtime, the students ran to me to share their food. Some only had rice to eat and they still wanted to give me a morsel. I can no longer allow myself to feel ingratitude after witnessing such huge hearts. The teachers and students may not be rich with wealth, but they were abundant with happiness and smiles, which they shared willingly. It was a humbling experience.

*There are some things a college classroom just can't give you. Going abroad gives a feeling that can't be explained in just words.*

*Take a break from reading about the very things that traveling allows you to experience.*

## FAITH

Myanmar is predominantly a Buddhist country. It's referred to as the *golden land* due to all the temples dripping in gold. Just as I was beginning to miss greeting someone with "Salam," my program leaders arranged for me to visit the home of a big Muslim family. I was able to share a meal and some smiles. I was feeling so homesick leading up to that day, but went back to my hotel that night feeling overjoyed with love.



## CONNECTION

I chose Myanmar specifically because there is a growing Burmese community in Buffalo. I felt this program would be a great way to understand and connect with my future students. I learned so much about their culture, religion and language. After the trip, I completed a research project focused on the Burmese refugee population and developed a toolkit of resources to help teachers address the trauma children from Myanmar have experienced. I feel closer to the Burmese living in Buffalo and hope to build strong student-teacher relationships.

