to practice self-reliance in a carefully mimicked village home environment before they left the facilities, I was awed at how a nonprofit organisation in such a rural area could run at such a scale. And though I was still nervous at the end of the tour, I was also curious and excited to learn exactly how this centre ran.

My CRP experience began with a day in the Advocacy and Networking department, under the supervision of Zinat Ara Afroze. I sat before her desk, and after I explained exactly what I was doing at CRP, Zinat Apa gave me the task of "planning" CRP's annual Road Safety Campaign, most likely just to see what I could come up with. Once I got over my initial surprise, I sat at the computer and began typing, and within an hour and a half, I had four pages detailing an entire event. Nonetheless, Zinat Apa seemed to like it, and for the rest of the day she gave me similar assignments, such as planning CRP's Annual Sponsored Walk for an Inclusive Society. That introduced me to the fundamental goal ruling all of CRP's operations: to enable the disabled to function and be accepted in mainstream society. This first working day gave me a novel view into the creativity and thought needed to advocate the cause of any organisation. In America I was used to different fund-raisers constantly going on all around me, but I never really thought of what it took to plan these events.

Throughout my first week at CRP I worked at a number of administrative departments. My most memorable experience was going on a home visit with an outreach team from the Social Welfare department, as part of CRP's community rehabilitation programme. A fellow volunteer and I, two nurses, an intern, a community rehabilitation technician, an occupational therapist, a psychologist, and a Social Welfare department official all crammed into a CRP van and forged into some of the most rural areas of the country, beginning my first true viewing of Bangladeshi village life. We visited five patients throughout the day. I cannot erase from my mind the image of one elderly man lying on a mat in one-room clay built home. He had two pressure sores on his lower half, which patients often get from lying or sitting for hours on end. As the nurses cleaned and examined his sores, the man plaintively complained of the heat and his general suffering. The room was dark and the walls themselves seemed to perspire. Children and young women dressed in bright prints crowded at the single barred window, peering inside at the curious scene.

During my second week at CRP I spent more time in the organisation's clinical departments. I observed therapists, in their respective wards as well as in the pediatric department and Halfway Hostel. In the Halfway Hostel, I was truly impressed by the creativity invested in training the patients to become independent.

I even got the chance to work in CRP's own William and Marie Taylor Inclusive School, which serves both normal and disabled children. When I entered my first special needs classroom, I was immediately touched by the children's responsiveness, by their beaming smiles. As I sat down with them, I realised with increasing clarity that despite their problems that technically make them different from "normal" children, they are exactly that at their core: normal children. Like all children, they love to play and be just a little mischievous. Like all children they respond to nothing better than a smile, direct eye contact, and a bright tone of voice. I cannot express the satisfaction it gave me to speak to certain children and see in their eyes that they understood my Bangla, even if they had no other way of



responding besides gleefully laughing and flailing their arms and legs. I loved stimulating the children just by touching their fingertips and allowing them to grip my own fingers, helping them learn to say new words they used to have trouble with. If I had not been affected by their contagious exuberance, it might have broken my heart to see them trying so hard, so indefatigably to control their spasms just so they could pick up a puzzle piece, sit up straight, or form intelligible sounds with their mouths.

It was at CRP where I was first introduced to a true "culture of service," where volunteers and staff alike made it there duty to do as much as possible for the disabled patients. However, it is true that besides the large number of foreign volunteers, including myself, there was a notable lack of unpaid volunteers from Bangladesh in CRP.