



FOR A GREATER GOOD:
(Left and far left) Dr Fathiyah Osman, when she was volunteering at a refugee camp in Aceh last month. (Below) The 24-year-old with her parents, dad Osman Mandeng and mum Bedah Jalil.

PHOTOS: ARIFFIN JAMAR, MAJULAH COMMUNITY

Driven to do good since she was eight



With her graduation from university, doctor is closer to joining Doctors Without Borders

Report by **JUDITH TAN**
juditht@sph.com.sg

All she has wanted, since she was eight, was to work with Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF or Doctors Without Borders).

And Dr Fathiyah Diyana Osman, 24, did not let her family's lack of finances get in her way.

Yesterday, she took a step closer to joining MSF, an international, independent, medical humanitarian organisation that delivers emergency aid to people affected by, among others, armed conflict and epidemics.

It was particularly satisfying as well for her parents, despatch rider-turned-cabby Osman Mandeng, 56, and housewife Bedah Jalil, 54.

Glowing with pride, they were at Dr Fathiyah's commencement ceremony at the University Cultural Centre to cheer her on.

But right after getting her degree

and taking photographs with her family, Dr Fathiyah rushed back to the National University Hospital (NUH), where she is training as a houseman.

"I'm on call and had taken time out just for the commencement," Dr Fathiyah told *The New Paper*.

She said she had to pull her weight more these days as she had taken a week off last month to volunteer at a Rohingya refugee camp at Birem Bayeun in eastern Aceh.

She was part of a team from Majulah Community, a non-profit society for Singapore youth.

"We were helping with getting clean water to the camp and teaching them (the refugees) about hygiene, among other things," she said.

There, Dr Fathiyah got a taste of international humanitarian work. She was about eight or nine years old when she watched a documentary about MSF and was inspired by it.

"I was fascinated with how selfless



I was fascinated with how selfless doctors in MSF are and how they help the poor without questions asked.

— Dr Fathiyah Diyana Osman

doctors in MSF are and how they help the poor without questions asked.

"I knew then I wanted to be a doctor," she said, adding that the recent deaths of medical staff in Ebola-infected areas did not put her off from wanting to work with the group.

Having aced her A-level examination with six As, Dr Fathiyah enrolled in the National University of Singapore's Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine in 2010 and received a \$5,000 Mendaki-Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry scholarship for her first year.

FINANCIAL HELP

"In subsequent years, I received financial aid in the form of bursaries from the CDC (Community Development Council), from MOE (Ministry of Education), and NUS itself.

"By the time I got to my final two years, my two older brothers started working and they helped with the tu-

ition," she said.

Dr Fathiyah said she opted for the broad-based hospital training of housemen instead of the residency programme because she has not decided what to specialise in.

"I'm looking at three areas: Family medicine, emergency medicine and anaesthesiology," she said.

All three choices would stand her in good stead should she join MSF.

Dr Fathiyah said it was her parents who kept her grounded.

Her father continues to show his support by working as a cabby so that he could earn more and also to "make sure she has transport to the hospital in the morning, to be in time for her ward rounds".

Said her mother: "I feel very proud of Fathiyah for her achievements, but I still think she works too hard."

Madam Bedah said she has kept a place on the wall at their four-room flat empty for the graduation photo.