

## My Inspiration



In spite of his valiant fight, Ashiq left us for his heavenly abode in 1993, when he was only three years, three months and three days old. Even till his last breath, he held on tight to Ammu, as though he never wanted to let go. His courage and his love for life inspire me to be a better person, and to help those who are now in the same fight. I got to witness the incredibly humane side of the medical and support team, both at the premier Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children in London, and at St. Jude's Children's Hospital, Memphis, Tennessee. I hope that, through ASHIC, we can similarly change the face of how childhood cancer is treated in our part of the world. I work to create a place that will allow these terminally ill children to live their short lives with dignity, which I believe is the most basic human right we are born with, regardless of race, religion or creed. --Maheen

## ASHIC Foundation

ASHIC Foundation was born from the tragedy of losing my little brother Ashiq, when he was only three. When my family started ASHIC in 1994, we were the first non-profit organization to focus on the needs of children living with cancer in Bangladesh. At the time:

- There was no formal registry/ database of incidence
- No fully trained oncologist in the country. One doctor who had attended a few seminars on pediatric oncology was the only claimed specialist
- Nationwide, only ~20 beds dedicated to childhood cancer (for a country of more than \$100M people)
- No support was available for the families in way of emotional support, physical support for those who traveled to the city from far-flung villages, any kind of information exchange amongst peers or with trained staff
- Most families dropped out of treatment prematurely because they did not have financial access, or did not understand the importance of continuing with phase 2 of the treatment

Over the years, through tireless advocacy and mindful introduction of different programs, ASHIC has come to be known as a center of excellence for pediatric oncology in South Asia, with our work touching the lives of thousands of children, from the time of their diagnosis to the time they become heroes, either in this life or the next.

## ASHIC Shelter

Having operated out of rental properties since the beginning, the Shelter was on the verge of being shut down due to landlords who suffer from misguided superstitions and refuse to rent out their properties to an organization with the mission to help the dying. As such, ASHIC has finally inked the deal to acquire its own facility, to be completed in December 2015. The compelling features are:

- It can house at least 20 beds for mother & child + 5 spare beds for additional attendants
- It is within 2 miles of the primary/ premier treatment center for childhood cancer (Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital: <http://www.bsmmu.edu.bd/>)
- Provide the basic amenities such as showers/ kitchen for multi-family use/ storage
- It is spacious enough for the families to live comfortably so that the children with compromised immune systems can have isolation if needed; it would also house a meeting/ play area so that siblings and the children have a place where they can come together to socialize
- It has elevator access so that the sick child is not having to climb several flights of stairs

We are confident that with our own facility, we will be able to provide more than 300,000 bed nights to needy families, consolidate many of our supportive programs that provide emotional support and financial access to the needy families. We know that this will continue to improve upon the country's survival rates for childhood cancer, with our goal to reach 40% by 2030.



*Some of the Shelter Families*