

No Language Border Exists

I once thought it would be impossible to be a teacher because of my hearing loss. Then after this experience, I realized human could communicate without much efforts of speaking and listening.

At the age of sixteen, I was diagnosed with tinnitus and hearing loss. Although I had early treatment, this disease could not cure completely. Hence, my dream to become an inspiring teacher might be over. At that time, I was preparing for the darkest scenario that I would major in a job communicating only with computers. Having overcome difficulties, I still pursued to learn three languages: Spanish, Chinese, and English. In my first summer in university, the decision of fluency in Spanish sent me to Colombia where I did volunteer work as an English teacher.

The first day I arrived in Medellín, I felt attracted by the festive atmosphere and coffee scent every corner. Being the only Vietnamese, I planned and hosted several cultural exchanges with other incoming volunteers, showing them the beauty of my home country. I organized various extracurricular activities and inspired the children to have higher education. Along with other team members, we built an eco-playground and created a girl's empowerment syllabus. ICYE in Colombia resembled my second home. We lived, worked and danced all together. Even the Salsa could not make difficult for me because we had practiced every day. In a time of great dismay, I felt thoroughly encouraged by my peers and students.

One month was never a long journey. Beyond my first expectation, this experience turned me into an active, responsible, supportive and enthusiastic person. Sometimes, we did not complete our sayings then others could guess the rest. Though I found it difficult to listen 1 or 2 words because of my hearing loss, I could still manage to understand everyone. Through my observation process, I have learned substantially from the surrounding people. I learned the positive attitude of children despite violence and poverty. I learned from passionate Colombian youth who try their best to make a change to their country. I learned from other volunteers who embrace diversity and devote their effort to decrease difficulties here. Never in my life did I realize the world was so small. Borders did not exist on Earth, including language. Even when people lost their eyesight or hearing capability, we would somehow understand each other. Therefore, I would continue my lifelong passion for education everywhere my foot tread.

Thanks to ICYE Federation, I and other young people have an opportunity to make a truly valuable impact in society and develop intercultural understanding. After a life-changing experience in Colombia, I realize my mission when coming home. Similar to Colombia, my country still faces gender inequality and commercial sexual exploitation. I would constantly improve education for ethnic minority children to help keep them away from those issues. Had it not been for the challenge faith gave me, I would not be able to grow and learn. I wish for the strength to carry on to help others keep going to school and fulfill their dreams.