
AMA is raising funds during this holiday season to support 80 poor university students across Saigon, Hue, and Danang in Vietnam. They all come from highly underprivileged backgrounds and need help to stay in school and graduate to become teachers in 4 years time from now.

Below are some background stories from our university student interviews in 2019:

1. Mo:

Growing up in a poor family with 7 siblings, Mo and two older sisters had to leave school early after grade 9 and work on paddy field to help her parents raise the younger siblings. Her younger brother also left school in grade 9 to help the family because they needed strength of a male for heavy work. Mo has 3 younger sisters - one of them is a college student, while the other two are younger in school.

One of the reasons Mo had to leave secondary school was the tuition fee, which the family could not afford to pay despite the fact that it was quite small. Every time tuition fee was due, Mo felt the pressure and that led her to make the bitter decision of quitting school and moving to Saigon for work in the next 4 years. One time when Mo was sick and taken to the hospital by her Dad, they ran into a stranger who was very proud of sharing stories about his child being a great student in school. Mo quickly noticed her Dad's sadness when listening to this stranger's story because he could not afford to give Mo the same education this man's child was getting. It was because of that look of her Dad's face that gave her the ultimate motivation to go back to pursue her studies. When Mo later expressed her idea of going back to school, everyone laughed at her thinking that she was joking because Mo has been away from school for such a long time. Putting that behind her, Mo submitted an application to join a monastery to support her studies. She tried her best to achieve the goal of graduating from university. Normally, a woman at her age in her neighborhood would settle down for marriage, but Mo chose to become a freshman at university instead. To Mo, this was the fresh start for new success, though the money problem was still a big obstacle for her to handle. Mo's part-time job was to sew paintings, but it was not enough to earn her a living while studying. Mo shared with us that she would not have a single penny in her pockets often times, let alone the fund needed for the years of studying presently. However, she still dreams of graduating and becoming a good teacher regardless of her difficulties.

Here are some background stories from our university student interviews in 2019, cont.:

2. Quy:

For Quy, her family has been going through a tough period in life since her mother and brother got seriously disabled. Quy's mother was diagnosed with heart and lung problems in 2011. Her father also went through 3 medical operations, which made his health even worse. She has 3 older brothers who all settled down with families, so they cannot help out much. The main income of Quy's family came from social support for her mother and brother's disabilities, plus a small monthly salary from her older sister working as a secondary school teacher. More than one time, Quy had wanted to quit school to help her family get through these difficult situations, but her family has always opposed her decision based on their hope that Quy can graduate and secure a stable job in the future.

3. Hang:

A tragedy fell upon Hang's family and turned her life upside down when her father suddenly passed away due to a heart attack. After the incident, Hang was sent to a Buddhist pagoda to be taken care of while her mother moved to a bigger city to earn a living for the family. Appreciating her mother's sacrifices, Hang has always studied as much hard as she could. Hang was also participating in various "National Best Student Competitions," where she finished Runner-Up in the most recent competition for Geography. Hang also scored the highest in the entrance exam to the Hue University of Pedagogy. Unfortunately, the health of her mother is currently deteriorating because of diabetes, so she cannot work full-time to support Hang as much as she used to. Even though life is tough, Hang is tougher, feeling confident and positive to be able to reach her dream of being a great teacher one day. She hopes that AMA can help her realize her goal of completing her university education and becoming a teacher.

Here are some background stories from our university student interviews in 2019, cont.:

4. Huong:

When the good news broke out that Huong had landed a placement in university, she was simultaneously informed that her father had to go through a heart operation. The worst difficulties fell on her mother's shoulders, since Huong's younger brother was also hospitalized for a seizure disorder. Huong's mother has to work all day to earn money to raise 3 children in school, while supporting the father and brother in the hospital. Well aware of family's difficulties, Huong immediately found a part-time job as a dishwasher after she got to university. Without letting these difficulties get in her way, Huong is positive and determined that she is making the right choice. She has good skills and also the strong will to develop further in the future if AMA supports her.

5. Hien:

Our first impression of Hien is her confidence and strong belief in her ability to become a great teacher. When Hien enrolled in University of Education, many people tried to talk her out of it, including her own teachers at the time who warned her that being a teacher is really difficult with low pay. Her teachers were trying to convince her to take another career path to ensure a stable financial income in the future. But to Hien, she considers a teacher to be someone who inspires her students to achieve incredible things. That's the motivation Hien always has in mind when thinking about what drives her to the career of an educator. Choosing mathematics major, Hien wants to try her best to show her future students not only how beautiful math is as a subject, but also how important it is as a learning tool for human development. There are countless obstacles to overcome in order to be a great math teacher, especially when her parents are not able to financially support her, but Hien really hopes that the AMA scholarship would equip her with more opportunities and pave the road for her success.

Here are some background stories from our university student interviews in 2019, cont.:

6. Nhi:

Nhi is very impressive. Her family is in a very tough situation. The father is in vegetable state from brain hemorrhage and her mother has to take care of the family, the sick father and help put 3 kids through school. Her mother is a kindergarten teacher and Nhi therefore also wants to become a teacher like her mother. She comes across very mature, articulate, poised and thoughtful. She is very close to her brother and admires the strength of her mom. Before falling sick, her dad used to drink a lot and abused the mother. Nhi was very angry with her dad for a long time, but now she is happy that he is still alive. She feels scared just thinking about his death. She already knows becoming teacher is a tough choice and recently got a tutoring job through a centre (she had to pay them a broker fee of VND 520k or \$22 upfront), but it seems that the client is very demanding and unreasonable. She tutors the 7-Grader in many subjects. No matter what may happen next, she said that she needs to finish this first month of tutoring work in order to get paid the tuition. She still feels optimistic that if she works hard, she will be able to find a job and have a better future. The money from the AMA scholarship will support her studies and help alleviate her difficult situation as a result of poverty.

7. Nhat Anh:

Nhat Anh comes from a very poor family and was inspired by her teacher at school. This teacher kept on teaching her class despite being very pregnant and later suffered a miscarriage. She was completely dedicated to her students. Unfortunately, the teacher and the baby both died from the miscarriage. Nhat Anh really felt the love of her teacher from this incident, and appreciated her sacrifice for the students. She wants to return her teacher's love through teaching her students in the future. It is also her way of showing gratitude to her parents, who have sacrificed so much for her despite being poor. Nhat Anh hopes to receive AMA's support in order to complete her studies and become a teacher.

Here are some background stories from our university student interviews in 2019, cont.:

8. Minh Thu:

Minh Thu is a smart student majoring in physics. She is the top student of her year in physics right now. Being extremely poor, she has to work 5 days a week as a physics tutor, teaching for 2-3 hours per day at a tutoring center. She only makes a net salary of VND 300k (\$13) per month, while the tutoring center keeps VND 200k. She needs the money to pay partially for her expenses, since her parents cannot afford to help her, and she doesn't want to burden them either. She loves teaching and wants to pursue this career after graduating. Minh Thu is seeking AMA's help so that she can pursue and complete her studies.

9. Linh:

Linh is very passionate about chemistry and wants to become a chemistry teacher. Her mother is a chemistry teacher and so she admires her mother and wants also to follow her footsteps. However, one thing she wants to do better than the mother is to be happier. She mentioned she always sees her mother coming home from teaching and being very grumpy and tired. She understands that teaching can be stressful, but she still wants to pursue the profession. This is also first time in life that she is staying away from home, so she appears a bit stressed and nervous during our interview. When asked if she is a worrisome person, she said "Yes." She told me also that she got cheated by a tutoring centre for VND 400k (\$17) when trying to find a tutoring job recently. When that happened a few months ago, she was shocked and stressed out, while her mother helped by calming her down. She is now trying a new tutoring job again and hopefully will make some money back by the end of this month. She is as passionate about chemistry and teaching as about drawing. Her ability to draw is self-taught, and she does it whenever possible as a form of relaxation. A few pieces of her art were shared with us and they were beautiful. Linh is deserving of AMA's support and will make a great teacher one day for her students.

Photos of Interviews by AMA in 2019:



AMA activities and events in 2018 via selective video links:

1. Dec 2018 Award Ceremony in Saigon:

<https://www.facebook.com/amafoundation.co/videos/196834051271295/>

2. Song of “On Me” by Le Phuong at 2018 award ceremony in Saigon:

<https://www.facebook.com/amafoundation.co/videos/2093135917373444/>

3. July 2018 Outing in Ho Tram for Saigon recipients of AMA:

<https://www.facebook.com/amafoundation.co/videos/2122807874643853/>

4. May 2018 Outing in Lang Co for Hue and Danang recipients of AMA:

<https://www.facebook.com/amafoundation.co/videos/2122804141310893/>

5. Introduction Video to AMA (made in December 2017):

<https://youtu.be/UrHZh8ohgO8>