

With World Vision Vietnam, I participated in conducting a reading habit survey, building a new library, and teaching children about the living values (cooperation, love, respect, responsibility, and honesty) in Trung Dũng Primary School; conducting library evaluation in Cương Chính Secondary School; and taking part in needs assessment for achieving safer housings for children in Lê Xá and Trung Dũng communes. Although all these projects in Tiên Lữ District of Hưng Yên Province, eighty-five kilometers east of Hanoi, lasted for only about two months, not only was I able to experientially learn about the rural development process in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) but also was I able to contribute the little help I could provide to the community. It is too early to say whether the library or our analyses of the interviews and surveys will prove to be useful in promoting better well-being of the communities' children; but I wonder if this uncertainty is partly the crux of the development project. Divorced from the antiquated mode of development based on quantity, material achievement, or the subtle mindset of imperialism, in Vietnam we practiced the Participatory Rural Approach (PRA) that is based on capacity building and empowerment of the local communities. Understanding cultural differences and listening to the local voices were important in achieving a proper PRA. And these attitudes expanded into the work environment too: working with people of different backgrounds, be it cultural or academic, I learned to listen and accept others' opinions, understand my assumptions and biases, and later counter the unwarranted ones. The learning experience in Vietnam helped me not only get a hands-on experience in working with an NGO but also provided me a glimpse into how I should lead my life in a world that is becoming at once globalized but also compartmentalized.

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