

Mingde Project Vietnam

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Introduction

The project began in early June 2018 and it was made up of three parts including (1) the sanitation construction, (2) capacity building on water and sanitation knowledge (e.g. conducting hygiene lessons and contests) and (3) need analysis of the commune regarding the environmental aspect.

As the adage goes, 'The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure that you seek.' Stepping out of my comfort zone to a foreign place on one hand gave me anxiety and negative emotion, on the other hand, it gave me an invaluable experience which became a milestone in my lifelong learning journey.

Cross-disciplinary learning

The project provided me an array of opportunities to learn. Being a double degree student of social sciences and law, the construction work is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Through participating the entire construction progress, I learnt various engineering related technical knowledge ranging from blueprint reading to site safety. Seemingly irrelevant to my studies it was, the experience actually is a previous chance for me to understand the people from different discipline which might be useful in my future career in legal aspect.

Working as a multidisciplinary team, we could also utilize our academic knowledge to carry out the need analysis in the local community. Adopting the social-sciences-related interviewing skills and the engineering technical knowledge, the students directly interviewed the local stakeholders and sought to understand the needs and difficulties of the local community, both tangible and intangible.

Learning through teamwork

Collaborating in a multidisciplinary team along with the interpreters allowed me to equip with soft skills of team work and cooperation. Communication is not easy especially in a cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary context. With different cultural backgrounds and working ability, I grasped that respect and eagerness to learn are of importance in team building. By respecting other's thoughts and ability, the team players are able to become complementary to each other according to their strengths and weaknesses and on the other hand, the more eager to interact and learn from others, the broader my horizon would be.

Solving global issues into local settings

Witnessing the rural development process of an international NGO (iNGO) is the most precious chance for me to understand the iNGO operation and intervention by first-person perspective. The targets of development projects of the NGO might be fixed by multitudinous development goals fixed by the internal rationale of the NGO (e.g. World Vision aimed to eliminate poverty) or external goals widely agreed across the globe (i.e. UN Sustainable Development Goals). To implement effective development projects, I grasped that flexibility is most crucial. Different regions have their own constraints and challenges. Only through contextualizing the mutual global aims into locally attainable goals can we ease the problem step by step sustainably.