

# STORY

Hello, my name is Tú. I live in a small town in Vietnam. In my family, we are just my father, my mother, and me.

I never feel lonely, because many families live around us. The place where we live is called “The Dump” because this is where big lorries come to dump all the town’s rubbish. My friends and I call it “home”, because this is where we live and play.

Some of my friends help their parents collect and sort rubbish that can be recycled. I like helping my mother. She runs a small stall where she sells coffee, tea, cigarettes, candies, and many other small things that families need.

When I turned six, my father enrolled me in school. This was a big change for me, but I loved it from day one. The teacher was very kind to me. She even put my name on the list of students who could receive free gifts for the Tết festival for the Vietnamese New Year.

When I come home from school, I sit in front of the house and do my homework. My friends watch me. They wish they could go to school too. Only three of us in my community can go to school.

My friends can’t go to school because they don’t have identity cards. Their parents are from a different community. But my friends really want to learn to read and write, just like me. What can we do to help them?

One day, I took some pages from an old notebook and traced some of the letters so my friends could copy them. They were so happy that from that evening on, they came to learn every day when I did my homework. Teaching my friends became my favourite pastime. Their parents are very busy with all the lorries coming and going, so they don’t notice us. They think we are just playing!

Little by little, the side of my house is turning into a small school. I hang a wooden board on the wall to make a blackboard. Later, my friends even found a real one in the rubbish. Now, every night, from six to ten students learn with me. All this makes me think about my future. Will I be a school teacher one day?

A boy in our community who used to go to school like me suddenly dropped out. Some students made fun of him because of the smell of the rubbish near our home. It ended in a big fight in the schoolyard. After that, he never wanted to go back. But I kept my little evening school going.

The background of the page features a stylized illustration of a village. In the upper portion, there are several simple line drawings of houses with gabled roofs, set against a light green, textured background. Below this, a white rectangular box contains the text. The lower portion of the page shows a more detailed illustration of a village scene, with houses and trees rendered in shades of green and yellow, with dark blue outlines. The overall style is that of a hand-drawn or digital illustration with a soft, painterly texture.

When I was in year 6, things changed for us. An association built proper houses for every family, and even a school. All the children were able to register and get identity papers. Would this be the end of my little school? Later on, my father became the school caretaker. My mother moved her small shop to the school entrance so students and teachers could buy drinks and snacks during breaks.

As for me, I set up my little school in front of my father's workplace. Every evening, I continue helping my friends with their homework.

Many of my friends leave school when they are 13 or 14. For big families, keeping the children at school costs too much. So some go to work in big cities or on construction sites, and some girls get married.

I carry on studying, but it's difficult for my parents. My father works at the school, and in the evening, he works in the slaughterhouse because one wage is not enough to keep me in school and pay off our debts.

More than anything, I love learning. Now I am studying to become a teacher. I must learn how to teach in a professional way. I want every child in my class to become a good person.

Then we will all be friends in this world. Maybe one day we can travel and meet each other!