

Tien Phong

Sharing the same Lac Hong bloodline: Women with Vietnamese blood and rewritten lives

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Ms. Isabelle Muller, a French writer of Vietnamese origin living in Germany, founded the Loan Foundation, bringing works and scholarships to the highlands of Vietnam, helping to change the lives of many poor children.

Opportunity and faith rewrite the future

In the heart of Hanoi on an October morning, Ms. Isabelle Muller appeared simply in the arms of poor students from the highlands. These are young people who received scholarships from the Loan Fund she founded, named after her Vietnamese mother, Dau Thi Cuc (nicknamed Loan). In this intimate meeting, the young faces were radiant with smiles mixed with emotion when receiving scholarships from the Loan Fund. For them, this support is not only money, but also the belief to move forward.



Ms. Isabelle has helped hundreds of young people move towards a brighter future, including Dam Thi Huong Giang (front row, 2nd from left)

Dam Thi Huong Giang (24 years old, from Bac Quang commune, old Ha Giang, now Tuyen Quang province) recalls the darkest time of her life. Her mother died when she was in grade 9, a year later her father also passed away. Orphaned, financially exhausted, her dream of going to university seemed to have ended. "That was when I was almost desperate. But then I received a scholarship from the Loan Fund. The amount of 20 million VND per year not only helped me maintain my

studies, but also gave me great spiritual encouragement. I knew that someone believed I could go further," Giang shared emotionally. Thanks to the scholarship, she studied at the National Economics University in Hanoi and graduated with honors, becoming a confident young woman.

Lu Ngoc Diep, a student with difficult circumstances from the mountainous commune of Quan Ba (formerly Ha Giang, now Tuyen Quang province), also considered the scholarship as a "lifebuoy". In the first days of studying at university away from home, Diep had to worry about the expenses and faced mental stress. The scholarship from the Loan Fund helped her remove the economic burden, not having to work extra, so she could focus on studying wholeheartedly. Diep's achievements were quickly confirmed: in 3 out of 4 semesters, she was in the top 10% of excellent students at the University of Foreign Languages (Vietnam National University, Hanoi). "The most precious thing is the trust that the Loan Fund has given me. I feel recognized and am even more determined not to let them down," Diep confided.

The story of Sung Thi My (Thai An commune, Tuyen Quang province) is even more special. Born into a family of 10 siblings, both parents are old, taking care of their children's education is almost impossible. My once thought that her university dream was too far away. However, the Loan Fund scholarship has accompanied her for 5 years, from the end of high school until she graduated from the University of Commerce with a major in public finance. My currently works at a hotel in Hanoi, can take care of herself and support her family. "If it weren't for the scholarship, I would have definitely dropped out of school. I am always grateful to Isabelle Muller for giving me the opportunity to change my fate," My emotionally shared.

Through each story, we can clearly see the special affection that the children have for the founder of the Loan Foundation. To them, Ms. Isabelle is not only a writer but also a "mother" who has given them the opportunity to rewrite the future.

A journey of charity from the memory of a mother

Sharing about her journey of charity, Ms. Isabelle Muller said that she came to Vietnam not only to give scholarships but also as a pilgrimage back to her roots. For her, establishing the Loan Foundation (LOAN Stiftung) is not just a simple volunteer activity, but also a way to "bring her beloved mother back to her homeland".



Lu Ngoc Diep receives a scholarship from the Loan Foundation presented by Isabelle

Isabelle Muller was born in 1964 in France and grew up in poverty in the suburbs of Tours City. She is the youngest of five children of Dau Thi Cuc (alias Loan) and a French father who fought in Vietnam. Isabelle's childhood was not peaceful. She experienced difficult years, faced racial discrimination, and even suffered domestic violence. But Isabelle did not give up. She was determined to study, mastered many foreign languages, and became an interpreter in Germany.

In the 1990s, Isabelle and her mother returned to Southeast Asia many times. Those trips opened up for her a deep understanding of her Vietnamese roots. She longed to learn about her roots, the place where her mother had been attached. When her mother passed away in 2003, Isabelle had a wish: to bring her back to her homeland in the most special way. That desire urged her to turn love into action.

In 2016, she founded the Loan Foundation in Germany, named after her mother, to support ethnic minority children in the poorest and most remote areas of Vietnam to access education and a more peaceful life. For Isabelle, it was a tribute to her mother, and at the same time a responsibility of a child with Vietnamese blood. "Establishing the Loan Foundation is my way of bringing my mother back to her homeland. Because she lived her whole life in hardship but always cherished her love for her homeland, Vietnam," she shared.

Spreading the spirit of community service

After nearly 10 years, the Loan Foundation has implemented 48 projects in 8 disadvantaged provinces: Ha Giang (old), Tuyen Quang, Cao Bang, Son La, Dien Bien, Lao Cai, Yen Bai (old) and

Ha Tinh. 28 boarding houses, libraries, schools, and kitchens were built, benefiting more than 5,000 children directly, and thousands of local households indirectly. 401 students received scholarships, 44 orphans have sponsors in Germany.



Isabelle met disadvantaged young people and awarded scholarships in October this year

Isabelle is especially the author of two books: *Loan - From the Life of a Phoenix*, which tells the story of her mother's extraordinary journey, and *The Daughter of a Phoenix*, which tells the story of Isabelle herself, which became bestsellers in Germany and have been reprinted many times in Vietnam. Publishing books is part of the Loan Fund's activities. Isabelle donates all the money earned from the copyright of her books to the fund to help poor children in Vietnam have a better life. Not stopping at numbers, Loan Fund also inspires the Vietnamese community abroad. Many philanthropists have joined hands with Isabelle, considering helping children in the highlands as a way to show gratitude to their homeland. Loan Fund has therefore become a bridge connecting international sentiment with Vietnam.

In each meeting with students, Isabelle often advises: "Don't put your hope in anyone else. You have to make efforts, spend time and energy on studying." For her, the value of a scholarship is not in the amount of money, but in awakening the spirit of independence and the desire to rise up. Loan Fund's journey has been lighting up countless dreams and helping change the lives of many destinies. In each of those stories, Isabelle Muller's mark is clearly visible - a child of Vietnamese blood, who has overcome adversity to sow hope for poor children. For her, helping the community is also a way to preserve her love for her mother and her homeland.