

**AIT Prominent Alumnus Speech by  
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AIT president, board of trustees, excellencies, faculty and staff, alumni, guests and graduands. First of all, I would like to extend my appreciation to His Excellency Jesus Miguel Sanz for his speech. It was inspiring. Definitely, I have to thank AIT for giving me this wonderful opportunity to stand right here before you to share my experiences and my story.

Three years ago, I remember that I came here in this hall for a rehearsal of the graduation ceremony. I was sitting there just like you right now waiting for a special moment. I also remember this beautiful lady right behind me. She did her job so wonderfully guiding us through every step of the ceremony. I still recall that she was the person who told us to stand up, sit down, turn left, turn right, and even when to applaud. It was quite confusing, isn't it?

I was excited and I am sure that all of you are excited to be here today. After all those hard days and lack of sleep that you have to stay up so late at night to finish your papers or to study for your exams or to defend your thesis, you finally made it, you earned it and you deserve it. Those hard days are eventually over. It is time for you to get out there and pursue your dreams.

I was once in your shoes and I had a dream too. After I received my bachelor's degree from Chulalongkorn University, I had a dream to work for a big and prestigious organization, make lots of money and travel the world. To answer my dream, I joined the UN or the United Nations. I didn't think much of what I could contribute. I just simply wanted to be a part of the glam and prominence. I was assigned to work as a researcher and help around with everything. Then one day, I was assigned as a staff at the award ceremony that the UNESCAP presented to Father Joseph Mayor, an American priest who spent almost his entire life working for the poorest slum community in Bangkok. The moment Father Joseph went up the stage to collect the award was still fixated in my mind. He was surrounded on the stage by poor children who didn't wear anything nice. Some of them were wearing shorts and slippers. It was so contrast to the elegant UN conference hall. Father Joseph was hugging and kissing these children as they were cheering with joy and tears of happiness.

When I went home, I couldn't get that moment and image out of my head. I was thinking hard why am I not helping the unfortunates? Why am I not helping others and giving back to the society? Father Maier is an American, but I am Thai. Why am I not helping my Thai fellow citizens? After that my goal in life and my dream have been changed. I took my first step to pursue my new goal by starting a volunteer work for people with disabilities and taking courses in community and rural development when I continued my master's degree in the United States.

I already mentioned that I decided to help the unfortunates who are Thai fellow citizens. When I came to this point, I couldn't think of any person who could work for his people harder than His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej. As I have learned that His Majesty established his own NGO or the Chaipattana Foundation, I applied for a position and since then, my life and my views towards the world have been changed forever.

When I first started working at the Foundation, I had no idea what it would be like. I knew only that if the owner of the Foundation works hard, I, as one of the staff, had to work hard too. I was not an adventurous type. So this kind of work for others opened up my whole new experience. When I first joined the Foundation, my boss, the Secretary-General took me to Vietnam to participate in the forest evaluation project. I remember that I was my first time working in the forest and spending a night in the forest. It was difficult to travel and to reach our destination. We had to travel by car, then, by boat and then by foot. There were no toilets. I asked my boss where should I go? And he simply pointed to the bush and said, right over there. Next trip was to the south. That time, Tsunami hit the south of Thailand really hard. We had to accompany Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn to travel to Phang Nga to help those who were affected by the Tsunami. I still recall that it was raining all day long. I was soaking wet all day long and again there were no toilets.

Next natural disaster was even worse. Remember the big flood that happened five years ago. AIT was under the water that time too. Her Royal Highness asked us help the victims by setting up shelters in Ayuthaya province. I was to take care of the shelter, food, kitchen, necessary items, donations and a lot of things else. Don't even mention the traveling. He had to carry food to the shelter by truck and then by boat. It took us more than 6 hours to travel to Ayuthaya. Again, there were no bathrooms. We had to take a bath in an open space.

Another work involves mountains. This time we had to climb up the mountain in the northern part of Chiang rai to take care of the plantation of camellia tea oil. I used to accompany the team up the hill. Four wheel cars were used and the drivers need to be very thorough in the area. When we started to climb up there, I began to notice that there were no roads. I said hey, why are you bringing a car when there no roads? Will I fall off the hill? And then one time, a team who I work with went up this mountain and they heard the drive said get off the car now. It was like in a movie when everyone jumped out of the car and they saw the car sliding off down the hill.

Well, working here provides me with excitement, fun and loving experiences. But somehow, it could be exhausted. I started to feel tired. With small salary and benefits, I was thinking about changing my jobs. But, my boss, began to tell his stories when he was working with His Majesty the King. How tough it was. Can you imagine more than 50 years ago, the road conditions were not as good as they are today. How hard would that be for His Majesty to travel on foot and to spend nights in places that were in harsh conditions. When I thought about this, I decided to continue what I was doing.

Later, I was promoted to serve as a director of foreign affairs department and took responsibilities to conduct my own projects. Right now, I receive a great opportunity to help schools and students in the three southern border provinces and some schools in remote islands down the south. At first, no one had a confidence in me that I could change lives, but when I could, things began to change. If you can change one student, just only one that no one had a confidence in, the whole school will change. And when you would be able to change lives, you would feel happy. And when success began to fall into place, helps from all around will pour in. People will believe in what you do and they will join you.

I personally believe in the power of giving. I believe that the power of giving is tremendous, it is contagious, and it works like a boomerang. The more you give, the more you gain. I am sure that everyone here can make significant changes. Everyone has different types of expertise, skills and knowledge. If everyone of you bring them out to help others and to contribute to the society that you are now living in, can you imagine the impacts that will occur?

You can start by doing something simple. You can donate money or your treasure. If you don't have them, you can give your time, your expertise, or even your voice, your opinions, or your suggestions. You might want to start with someone really close to you like your family first. Thanks to my family, especially my father who is on the stage with me right now. All his life as a professor, a teacher and government officer, he has been giving all he could to others. It was quite obvious that his power of giving has been contagious to me.

Now here I come to an end of my speech. I would like to encourage you to create a global culture. A culture where our generation inspires the next that giving should be a part of our lives.

Lastly, I would like to end my speech by saying that I believe that your power of giving today can absolutely motivate people around you to share and to care tomorrow.

Thank you very much. Thank you for an opportunity. Thank you for your attention. And once again, congratulations to you all.