

## **My story**

Over the years, when I have felt like giving up and no one to encourage me, I have said to myself that I can make it. It may be hard, but I don't dare think that I can't. At one point in my life, I went through a period of suffering from financial problems. After I had graduated from high school in 1997, my mother told me frankly that they cannot afford to send me to college anymore. It made me feel so upset because I believe that education is a man's need and I had no other way but to accept it. Instead, I thought of ways on how to help my parents to gain money. I tried to work in my former school to sell school supplies in their cooperative store and also, I've been a crew for few months in an internet shop in Manila. I enjoyed working at my young age though, but I was determined enough that someday, somehow I can finish a Bachelor's Degree. I believe that if you are determined, nobody, no persons here on earth can stop you from being successful. I remember when I was a child, I always dream of something that seem so impossible to happen like living in a palace, fly with Superman, having a tour around the world and of course, to be a millionaire! As I grew up those dreams were just a part of my childhood memories, I started to get into the reality of life. I have plans and big hopes with me, because that would be the only thing that I have at that time. I started to become determined and committed in everything I do while waiting for a perfect timing until such time when our church pastor offered me to be an assistant teacher in a church school. Through that, I was able to enter college. In 2002, I started to work as a part time teacher in Cashew Tree House Learning Centre in Payatas. I was a second year college then, though it's hard, I was still motivated. Fortunately, our school director at Cashew, Craig Burrows, approached me, telling me this good news that somebody is looking for students who were be given grants as financial assistance in pursuing their studies. He told me that I was qualified in the scholarship. I was very happy to hear that because I knew that the grant will really help me a lot in my studies. Then I knew that my dream to finish my studies is now beyond my reach. That person is Janneke Heinen, founder of Papaya Academy . Finally, I graduated in 2004, finished the course of Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (BECED) at the Philippine Normal University in Manila. After, few months, I passed the licensure exam. With the help of Kalinga, Janneke is one of the people who made me reached my goals in life. In May 2004, I became a teacher in Papaya Academy, a school that caters children who belong from poor families but with big dreams in life like also what I have before. I love teaching these children and influence them that education is vital and poverty is certainly not a hindrance to become successful in life. I've been a teacher in Papaya for eight years now. I am enjoying my life here as a second parent, a mentor and a moulder of dreams of poor children, less fortunate they may say but have strong determination that someday, they will become successful no matter what they may go through in life.

**- Clarissa**