

“The further away the peak, the longer the climb; but the view will be the loveliest”

Maria Fernanda Torres



María Fernanda Torres Valarezo, Ecuador

E-mail: mapla@map.org

My name is María Fernanda Torres Valarezo. I was born on 3 December 1983 in the city of Quito. I'm currently study Engineering and Business Administration at the Central University of Ecuador

I am interested in social activities that help others. I work with children and currently participate in projects that promote children's rights; for example, the HIV/AIDS Education and Prevention Project sponsored by the NGO MAP International, developed with young people in several marginalized neighborhoods in Quito.

I began working with HIV/AIDS prevention when I was 15 years old, thanks to a campaign carried out by MAP International that taught me a lot about HIV/AIDS and cleared up doubts I had about the infection. After the workshops, our commitment as youth was to replicate our new-found knowledge among our schoolmates.

After the campaign was over, several of us decided we did not want to leave our work behind and, with the support of MAP International, we organized a group that we call "Life Hope." We chose that name because we hope to be able to eradicate HIV at some point, to avoid more young people becoming infected and to not stand still in light of the rapid growth of HIV/AIDS, and to ensure that people with HIV can maintain a dignified and normal life.

"Life Hope" lasted 4 years, until all the young people involved began their university studies and were unable to continue the work due to lack of time. However, we all maintain OUR COMMITMENT and LIFE PROJECT internally. With "Life Hope," we visited several schools in Quito, we worked Young Person to Young Person and were accepted by other youth who identified with and support us. We visited radio stations and did interviews in which we shared our thoughts on HIV/AIDS.

We also organized two youth panels: AIDS - YOUNG PEOPLE AND SOCIETY and AIDS - YOUNG PEOPLE AND VALUES. Additionally, we organized a concert in hopes of reaching many young people through music.

My dream is to help build a just and equitable world, where the uniqueness of each person are respected and the only means of exchange is not money, but the satisfaction of helping others and receiving a smile and a thank you from the heart. This may seem a UTOPIA for some people, but I'm encouraged by the knowledge that other young people have the same dream.