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5 months, we can hardly call it a long period, of time yet, it didn't make me feel short at all. 5 months in the United Nations system, 5 months in a mature working environment, 5 months in a least developed country and 5 months being treated as a capable grown-up. I could go on and go for my reflection and stories, To commence with, I am, just, super thankful for this priceless opportunity provided.



Me and my churchmates

## **United Nation System**

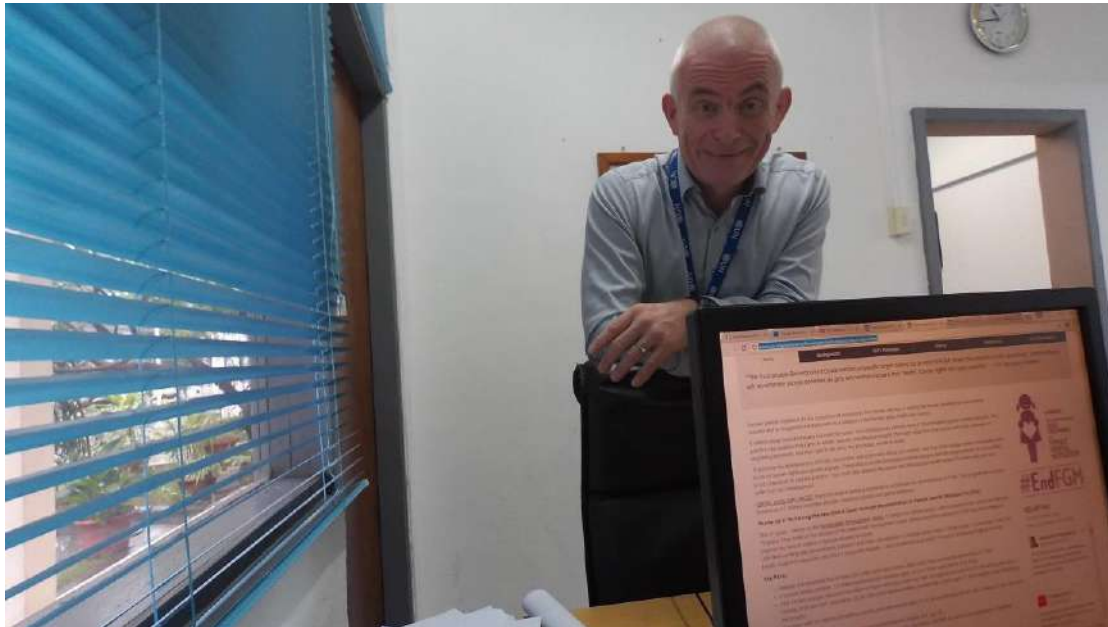
United Nations is the biggest global humanitarian organization, by such description it implied that it also contains a very complicated system. There are so many initials and abbreviations insiders use in daily basis. Phrases that we are familiar with might be agency with high visibility in both developed and developing countries such as UNICEF and WHO. My home agency is UNRCO. I was actually very confused with my assigned agency before and few weeks after working in it. UNRCO, the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office, its title are not as clear as World Health Organization or United Nations Development Program, yet, it is surely an important agency within the system.



RCO act as a coordinator between agency within the country, held frequent Country Team meeting that provide a platform for agencies to know and better

mobilize resources. Our office also initiated different management team aim to improve the UN work in Timor-Leste, for instance, Operation Management Team, Crisis Management Team , United Nations Country Team, UN Cares and a lot more. Resident Coordinator also serve as the a coordinator between agency and government officials or different stakeholders. Thus, our office also take care of a lot of guests, as RC serve as UN ambassador in the country office. Being in such an important position, I also learnt a lot from our RC leadership. Our office do not just meet guests like high officials or international diplomats, we do also meet students and volunteer. Regardless whoever is approaching our RC, he would always welcome them with a warm embrace.

Therefore, our office is more administrative base, and it is comparatively uneasy to see the impact we are making to the country. As a very passionate and impulsive youth, I could not fall in love with such managerial work, yet I am very grateful that I was put into such position to know the bigger picture of an entity. I also learnt that it is very important to have a capable back office to provide support for frontline agency to further sharpen the efficiency of the organization.



Resident Coordinator of Timor-Leste, Mr. Knut Ostby

## **The Working Environment**

Being in my position I also came across with a lot of administrative work. The word administrative doesn't sound extremely interesting at the first place, yet it is merely because I have never have the chance to touch upon it. The administrative area I was exposed to relate to finance, direct payment, and office supplies procurement, guest visit logistic arrangement, meeting materials, writing letters and so much more. Out of all the learning, being in the UN Cares Team was one of the most provocative experiences.

UN Cares Team is an internal team that aims to promote zero discrimination to everyone and it was founded base on HIV+ colleagues. Different agencies would

have to assign a colleague into the UN Cares team that represent their agency presence. The team provides support that relates to AIDS and it also promotes educational materials within the compound. I co-coordinated the “UN for all” workshop during my assignment and it was an inspiring task. How would we address LGBTI people? How would we address HIV+? How would we address disabled people? The true is we all have some answers to these questions, and the best way to address them should be by their names. The aforementioned was only one of a small sparkling point throughout my learning. Yet, it showed me why would the United Nations be one of the most ideal working environment, as not just colleagues trained to work in different environment, cultural background, and also respect to all kinds of people. The idea of UN Cares might not be extremely useful at our first sight, yet, the meaning of the team is highlighted when this world renowned entity set a good example for other entities. Besides advocacy, the team actually support in a medical way, where it provides free HIV testing to all colleagues and their family members, 13 PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis) kits are always available in country office serving for emergent needs. (PEP kit could kill HIV bacteria within 72 hours after exposure) The support and knowledge the UN contains truly tend to turn UN a role model that other organizations look up to.



The Resident Coordinator Office colleagues.

As we are named, United Nations, we contain talented colleagues that from all over the world and with very different background. It was not easy to adapt to the working style in Timor-Leste, a nation with a majority of the citizens still suffer from Post Trauma Stress Disorder, the pace is way slower than East Asia. However, the presence of United Nations didn't just feed the station country with the western or the so call “efficient” working style. In the contrast, we always highlight we are here to assist, for instance, our office work according United Nations Development Assistance Framework. I learnt to accept whatever comes up under this environment, instead of feeling upset about the inefficiency I used to define in Hong Kong, I realized that there are many things work out in their

own way and it is surely more suitable for the context. I truly appreciate how colleagues respect one another and provided a really ideal working environment. Besides shaping the UN as a role model and ideal working environment, I also felt that UN is training the trainer as a springboard for national staff. Majority of UN staff do not have long term bidding contract and this allow many of them enroll in their government system after working for the UN. These former national staff could then carry the great values, such as zero discrimination and mutual respect to the governmental workplace. When others are judging UN as a paper tiger, criticizing that there are so much that UN could have done better, working inside this system gave me another perspective of the word “contribution”.



Christmas Party hosted by RCO.

### **My Position**

Everyone wondered the question: how can a small person like me provide assistance to such massive work. A college student like me with a mismatch profession, what can we give to the UN ? I would say the answer of the question could be: our passion. Being in a institution for long, especially in a office that mainly deal with administrative work, we tend to forget why are we here, what keep us motivated. Yet, youngsters like me bring in energy, a very motivated heart pushes me to learn and pick up different tasks, my passion caused me to devote 200% of effort towards my given work. Under such mature working-environment, regardless of my background, I am being valued as a capable and responsible adult. I am proud of such identity and colleagues recognitions.

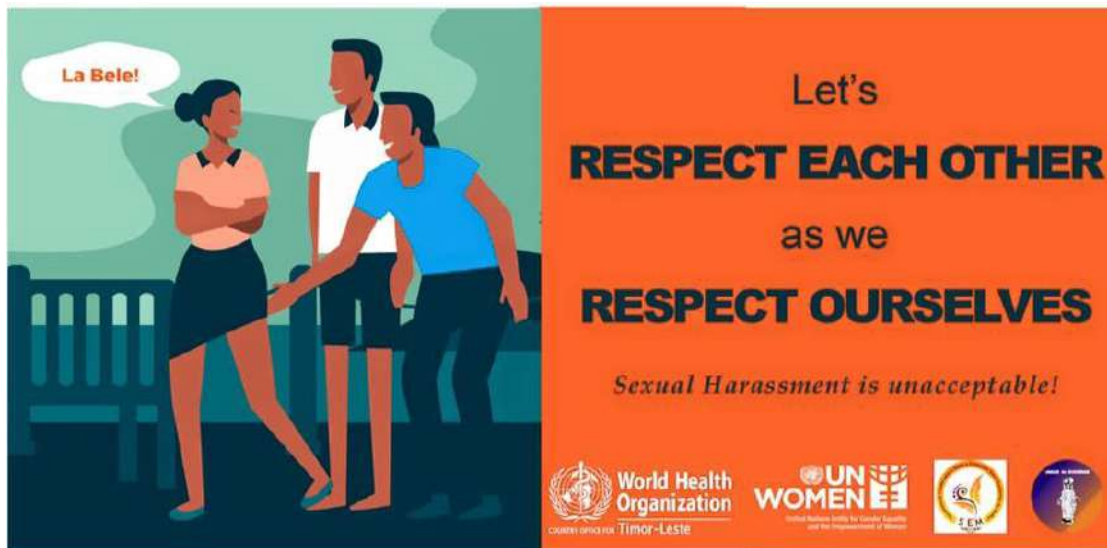
### **Timor the Least Developed Country (LDC)**

Timor-Leste, the youngest Asian island, its landlocked location and strong dependence on imports increased the difficulty in the nation's development. I was always making fun with other colleagues relating to Timor's location, we name it the "lonely island", unlike other Southeast Asian countries that we can easily get to another country. Not only that Timor-Leste is isolated from other countries, the provinces within the country are also hard to reach. The country's mountainous landscape further given burden towards development work. Under such circumstances, the government was smart enough to first develop the small capital city, Dili, as a starting point.



Island beauty.

The city is developing gradually, but I still took me sometime to get used to the inconvenience at the first place. However, after 5 months of staying in the country, I realized the preciousness of such location and lifestyle. The isolation provided an environment that Timor could preserve their culture well. The calmness in Dili, takes away my pressure. The thing that bothers me in a developing country is not just the environment, but the people. Materialism can be developed quickly, but quality of citizens should be a priority in developmental work too. Gender inequality issues tend to be agreed tacitly in Timor-Leste. A man can randomly touch a girl without her permission as men have always been stronger than women in the country! It was my first time to feel inferior because I am a woman. I was furious and felt helpless towards the situation. I tried to look for the root problem of such phenomenon. Then, I learnt that the fact that in a developing country, a man's strength still puts him the sole breadwinner, physical strength created the hierarchy between men and women. Understanding and blindly empowering, educating women are all useful acts, yet, advocating family structure changes would also bring in men in this gender inequality situation.



All these exposure do inspired me in different directions for my future careers. I became even more conscious on how blessed we are, from a place with good education and resources ,we are indeed previliaged to give to the underpriviliaged.



Lovely Timor young girl.

All in all, these 5 months might be very short in my, approximately, 80 years of life but the experience is surely life-changing.