

Lee Tin Sum, CUHK Journalism and Communication, Year 2

Department: UNAIDS

Job Title: UNV in Creative Documentation and Innovation

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A. About UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is working with countries to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths, which are enshrined in the 2016 UN Political Declaration on Ending AIDS.

UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals.



B. Summary/Nature of Works

Externally, we need to provide the strategic direction, advocacy, coordination and technical support needed to catalyze and connect leadership from governments, the private sector and communities to deliver life-saving HIV services. Internally, we need to cooperate with other agencies, for instance, more sex educations provided by UNICEF, fight for female sex workers rights with UNWoman.

As a freshman to UNAIDS, I mainly supported the development of creative designs and documentations for reports publications and communication documents. These reports will be used for pursuing policy execution and improving public relations. Besides, I also assisted with advocacy, communication and reporting on HIV/AIDS and national efforts against AIDS including from civil society and communities. Moreover, there were lots of events and campaign, I need to manage the event and its strategic communication plan. Last but not least, I searched and compiled references on thematic issues of importance for the national AIDS response and civil society.

C. Overall Major Observations and Learning Experiences

A Broader Mindset

This is my first time to get involve in governmental **policy making** process. I was very grateful to be granted the opportunity to learn a **broad mindset** from the country director directly. For instance, I experienced how the policy made by Donald Trump affect the financial situation in the United Nations. Due to the reduction of budget, lots of resources were cut and projects were postponed. UNAIDS had the lowest funding globally ever in 2019. Global issues were no longer a story tale, but somethings closely related to my work. By doing the **media monitoring** report every day, I built up the habit of deeply reading news, which I found it was necessary in policy making.

On the other hand, I learnt to consider all **long-term side effects** and hidden social norm before executions. I never thought that the raise of same sex marriage supporters can make a huge consequence in all walks of lives. Globally, anal sex is the highest cause of HIV infection. Thus, it leads to alarming increase in HIV prevalence.

At the same time, the implementation of PREP, a prevention medication for high risk population, may increase the prevalence of others sex transmitted infections, as people may think they are safe after receiving medication, and thus lead to high risk behavior. Increasing HIV testing will also lead to similar problem. But it doesn't mean that we shouldn't promote HIV treatment, it is the problems of execution, and therefore the strategic messages delivered become crucial in the process.

At that moment, I realized the decision I made, and the comment expressed in the discussion can have a huge consequence and ultimately lead to hundreds and thousands of **lives**.

Organizational Politics

On the top of that, I learnt to understand an issue in a real-world environment, and in a way that more down to earth. Lots of ideas seem ideal until it comes to **organizational politics** constraint. UN is a huge organization compose of hundreds of agencies, different agency has their own benefit and financial situation. Thus, when it comes to inter-agencies work, even tiny things such as the size and order of logos in the publications, conflict always pop up. Anyway, I am grateful that I managed to develop my interpersonal and problem-solving skills by interacting with different agency and external sector.

Lesson Learnt from Design Works

I have involved in a variety of design works in the UN, not only related to UNAIDS, but also a multitude of outsource design works to other departments. I realized that they often prefer

simple and clear design instead of visually attractive design. They want neither sharp colour nor dark colour. Besides, they do not want any special effect, just a single-colour icon is already a best-fit to their requirement. I understand that when design comes to commercial purpose, it is much more important to deliver message and company image instead of making a masterpiece artwork.

Challenges Encountered

I faced serious cultural shock in the first month. In the UN Vietnam office, around 40% of staffs are Vietnamese. Although they are the high educated group of people in Vietnam, they might not be able to speak fluent English. Even for international staffs, people from different regions have different strong accent. Externally, most governors are not willing to speak in English. When attending the governmental meeting, I could only have the publications in Vietnamese. Therefore, I highly relied on the translators. Unfortunately, if it is a small group meeting, translators are not provided. I can experience how the language barrier significantly lowered the communication efficiency.

On the other hand, when it comes to communications, it is very important to be familiar with your target audience. For instance, an analysis of audience social media behavior is a key to success. However, being a foreigner, it is very hard for me to have a comprehensive understanding on them. It is impossible to just leave the problem aside. I decided to learn Vietnamese during my stay. Although it is impossible to learn a completely new language within six months, at least I did somethings to change the situation.