

International peacekeeping and development have long been goals for humanity, and the United Nations (UN) stands as one of the most important international organizations. Since its establishment at the end of World War II, the UN has made relentless efforts to promote global harmony. Thanks to the HKSAR government and the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB), I had the opportunity to volunteer with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), an organization dedicated to eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities in over 170 countries. Below, I would like to share this invaluable experience.

During my six-month internship, I served as a UN University Volunteer in Youth Engagement and Inclusive Governance at UNDP Hanoi, Vietnam. One of my primary responsibilities was organizing the “Movers Programme”, an initiative designed to enhance employability and foster the growth of young people across Southeast Asia. I coordinated numerous workshops on topics such as disability inclusion and inequalities related to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reaching over 100 students from countries like Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia. Additionally, I contributed to the #SkillUpRiseUp Digital Campaign in the Asia-Pacific region as a monitoring support volunteer for the Microsoft Office group, where I shared insights on software tools and digital skills.

This internship was a once-in-a-lifetime and unforgettable experience. Not only did I make friends from Vietnam, Japan, and Canada, but I also learned a great deal through cultural exchange. For instance, a Canadian colleague taught me a traditional dance from her hometown during the company’s Gala dinner—an amazing experience, especially since I had no prior dancing skills! The staff were incredibly welcoming, organizing local tours to help us adapt to the new environment, which allowed me to immerse myself in Vietnamese culture. My coworkers were supportive, and I gained invaluable knowledge from collaborating with them.

Despite the rewarding nature of the internship, the journey was not without challenges. One major obstacle was local transportation, a common issue in the region. As a developing country, Vietnam lacks efficient urban planning, and motorcycles dominate the roads. Hanoi’s chaotic traffic made commuting difficult, especially during rush hour, and walking required extreme caution to avoid accidents. Fortunately, I eventually learned to navigate the streets like a local. Another

challenge was cultural differences in the workplace. Unlike Hong Kong's fast-paced environment, Vietnam emphasized harmony and teamwork, making it feel like a family. Initially, I struggled to adapt and kept a social distance, but once I realized this approach was ineffective, I adjusted my work style and integrated smoothly into the team.

In conclusion, my six-month internship with UNDP was a transformative experience. It broadened my horizons, strengthened my global perspective, and contributed to my personal growth. I also formed lasting friendships and professional connections, all thanks to the support of the HKSAR government, HYAB, and UNDP. Moving forward, I will carry the knowledge, memories, and insights gained from this program into my future endeavors. I wholeheartedly encourage my peers to participate in such programs, as this was undoubtedly one of the most enriching experiences of my life.