

UNV REPORT

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I went on to the UN University Volunteer program after my graduation – a good timing which I spill all my learnings from University to a new job in a foreign country. Among all the positions, I chose the assignment that most interested me and got selected for it luckily. Last summer, I departed for Nepal as UNV in Partnerships in UNOPS.

Duties performed

UNOPS stands for United Nations Office of Project Service. My first duty is to understand the organization and its operation in Nepal. As a part of the partnership team, the mission of the team can be easily understood as making new business opportunities by aligning the organization's work with partners' development goals. It includes doing market research of international funders and analyzing current development projects in Nepal.

My favorite duty is brainstorming for new concept notes for new projects. It involves a lot of exchange with colleagues who are implementing projects and researching for new innovative ideas and knowledge online.

My side duty is supporting an urban project – Cities 4 Women. It is a project about public open space which I have been interested in since I am in Hong Kong. I mostly support for events and communication of the project. I visited 5 different cities in Nepal for an urban design exhibition tour and it inspired me for a concept note I was preparing.

Learning experiences

With the field trip allowance from AVS program, I participated in an Asia Regional training in Bangkok where I met colleagues all over the region. It was an intensive workshop which we were encouraged to talk with different colleagues, including representatives from Head Quarter. There, I heard sharing from different countries and understand their different challenges, including hardship countries like Myanmar and Afghanistan.

The training also included discussions of the challenges and the potential resolutions. It is a good practice to learn effective communication and working with people of different backgrounds. All in all, it was a fruitful experience.

Challenges encountered:

International UNVs are often not part of the agency's planned workforce. It means that there are limited expectations and duties for UNVs and the working experience vary from person to person. In my situation, my team has insufficient members, and my arrival has eased the workload of my teammates. Yet, I found the assignment period (6 months) too short to understand the local context and the UN system, initiate and plan for projects, plus follow up and implement the ideas. As a result, I was always rushing to work with a lot of self-imposed pressure. I do not think that I have overcome this challenge during the UNV experience, but it will be an ongoing lesson for me.

Reflections:

I have always wished to stay in a developing country as a wish to reflect on living. This UNV assignment offered me a glimpse of development work in a Least Developed Country. I would not be able, by any means, to be able to make sense of unequal development during the 6 months of assignment. It becomes an experience that keeps me asking – what is our relationship with developing countries and what differences do we have with people from developing countries. No matter which sector I might be working on in the future, I do wish to keep on exploring these questions.