

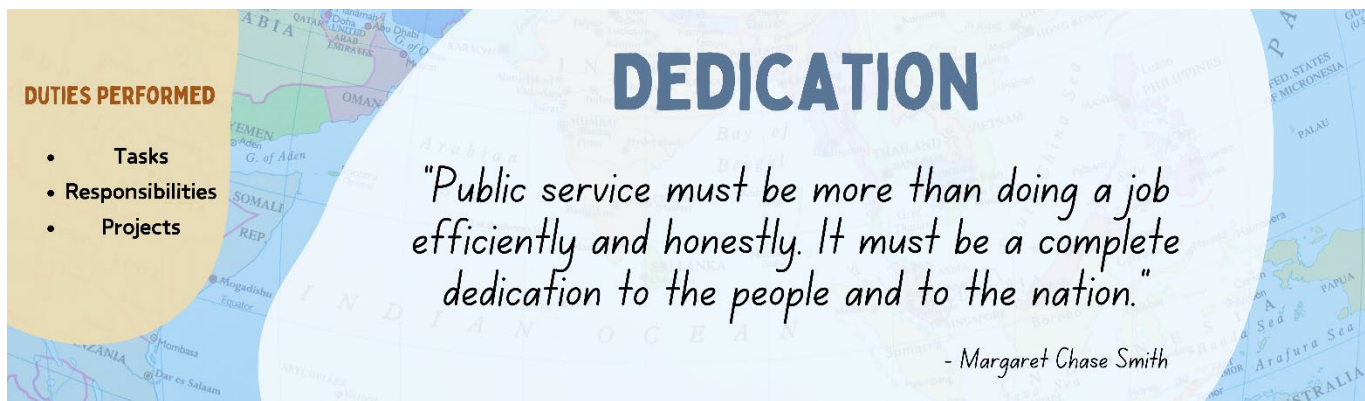


## UNV-Hong Kong Universities Volunteer Internship Programme Reflective Journal

The 6th batch of youth volunteers in the UNV-Hong Kong Universities Volunteer Internship Programme completed their internship in September 2023. What changes did this program bring?

Volunteering is a journey of giving and receiving. These passionate youth volunteers chose to step out of Hong Kong and dedicate their time to learning and working, even if it meant delaying their graduation. Their reward was the invaluable opportunity for personal growth and expanding their horizons. Through their reflections, several recurring words emerge: transformative, diversity, empathy, problem-solving skills, and insight. These words paint a picture of growth. This reflective journal aims to take everyone on the way to their transformative volunteer journey.

Let's begin!



*Trevor Lee in*

*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Nepal*

Drafted research reports for International Decade of Indigenous Languages, SNV Netherlands, Water Aid, Solar Mama etc. Designed social media posters to promote indigenous People -

*Gurung Sweta in United Nations - Development Programme (UNDP) Bangkok, Thailand*

Booth Support for University Scholars Leadership Symposium.

*Snow Tian in The Food and Agriculture Organization's Emergency Centre for*

*Transboundary Animal Diseases (FAO ECTAD), Thailand*

Drafted press releases and edited video. Joined regional conferences and assisted with other ad hoc tasks.



*Ray Wong in UN Women Indonesia*

Reached out to people to advocate the concept of gender equality by using social media platform. Conducted interviews with participants among different conferences and symposiums.



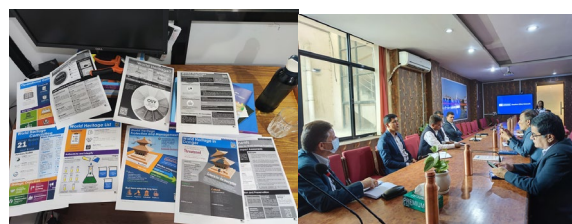
*Rachel Yue in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Malaysia*

Worked on a significant project focused on a foresight project on climate migration and demographic change in Malaysia by 2040. This project aimed to analyse potential migration patterns and caregiving needs in the face of climate-induced challenges.

*Michelle Wong in United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*

*(UNESCO) Kathmandu, Nepal*

Created visually appealing and informative infographics for "The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention." Conducted comprehensive research on UNESCO sites focused on understanding the cultural significance in Nepal.



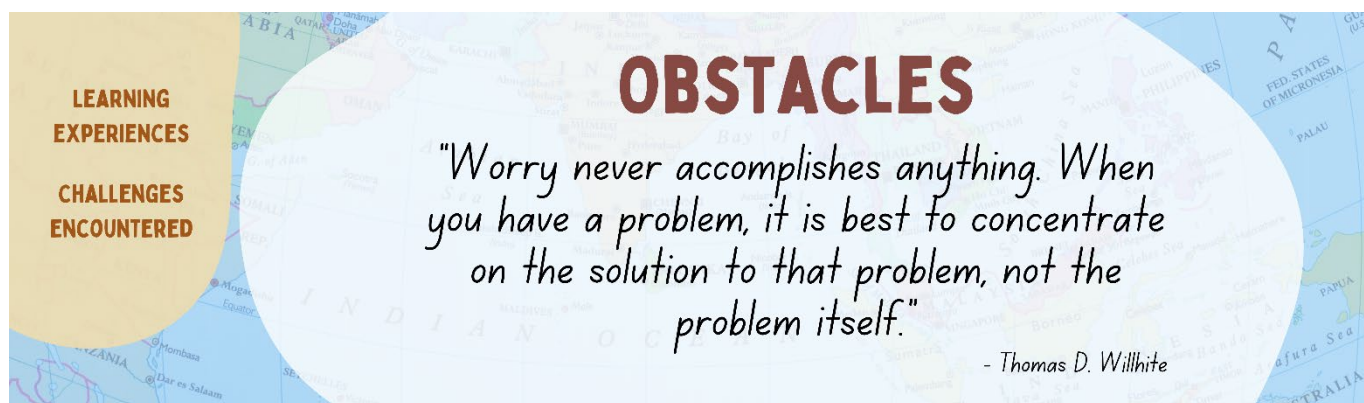
*Kerry Poon in World Food Programme (WFP) Kathmandu, Nepal*

Hold meetings with the focal points from different departments, gather their requirements and feedbacks on the SharePoint test site, and translate them into documentation so that the IT department can



implement them.





*Trevor Lee in*

*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Nepal*

During my internship at UNESCO Nepal, I had numerous valuable learning experiences. I acquired new skills in research, project management, and intercultural communication. Immersing myself in Nepalese culture provided insights into traditions and challenges, fostering empathy and respect for diversity. However, I also faced challenges in addressing complex development issues and adapting to diverse working styles. Overall, this enriching journey has shaped my personal and professional growth, inspiring my commitment to making a positive impact in the world. During my assignment at UNESCO Nepal, I faced various challenges. Navigating cultural differences required open-mindedness and understanding. Language barriers sometimes posed difficulties, but I utilized interpreters and non-verbal communication. Additionally, unexpected situations, like logistical issues and weather conditions, demanded flexibility and quick decision-making. Despite these challenges, I embraced them as learning opportunities and grew both personally and professionally during my internship.



*Gurung Sweta in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangkok, Thailand*

My day-to-day work revolved around supporting the design, development, and implementation of the Leave No One Behind Startup Support Programme. Additionally, I had the responsibility of managing the planning and implementation tracker for the diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives within the youth team. Being a part of the Youth Team at UNDP BRH is a blessing! There were no dull moments and when faced with challenges, we worked collaboratively to overcome them. It was truly heartwarming and interesting to see the dynamics and connection of colleagues. Our connection and camaraderie extended far beyond the confines of the office. Adapting to the environment was seamless as all our colleagues were so welcoming, understanding, and truly genuine souls who are determined to leave a sustainable impact on our planet.



Reflecting on this assignment, I have gained a deeper appreciation for the importance of effective communication and public engagement in the field of public health. The Communication Officer plays a crucial role in disseminating information, raising awareness, and promoting public health campaigns. In this role, it is essential to be adaptable, innovative, and collaborative, leveraging the collective expertise of the team to achieve shared goals.

Furthermore, this assignment has provided me with insights into the skills and experiences required for a career in public health communication. It has highlighted the importance of developing a range of technical and soft skills, as well as the ability to work in a fast-paced and dynamic environment. This learning experience has also given me a greater understanding of the broader issues related to zoonotic diseases, their impact on public health, and the importance of public awareness and engagement in combating these diseases.

Overall, this assignment has been valuable in providing me with a deeper understanding of the role of a Communication Officer in a public health organization. It has allowed me to develop a range of technical and soft skills and I believe that all these skills could also apply to my future careers.

*Ray Wong in UN Women Indonesia*

Familiarizing a new environment was not easy. Stepping out of the comfort zone was a challenge that impacts your life. To cope with unfamiliar faces, culture, habits, and cuisines, I had to pay perseverance, tolerance, and respect.

Basic needs for life support are not a guarantee, the phenomenon of hard water and nasty street foods were one of the stereotypes against Jakarta, sadly, a phenomenon too, Panadol, Vaseline and Oronine H were my good friends.

Bahasa Indonesia – a local language among thousands of Indonesian languages is widely used across Jakarta as an official language. Being an expat, not knowing the language brought not only inconvenience, but also misunderstandings of words and contents.

Wear masks! The air qualities were third to the last among the worlds.



*Rachel Yue in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Malaysia*

Working in a culturally diverse team with colleagues from different educational and cultural backgrounds, including Malay, Chinese, and Turkish, was an enlightening experience. It taught me the importance of respecting differences and being open-minded, especially during discussions and decision-making. When disagreements arose, I learned to seek insights from my team members, valuing their perspectives and leveraging their local context knowledge and research skills to enrich the project's outcomes. The absence of a strict hierarchical structure encouraged everyone to express their opinions freely, fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment. This experience has had a lasting impact on my approach to teamwork and appreciation for diversity.

I encountered several challenges during my assignment that tested my adaptability and determination. One of the primary hurdles was understanding meeting details, particularly when collaborating with partners outside of UNDP. It became confusing for non-native speakers like myself when meetings suddenly switched to using the local language. To address this language barrier, I proactively sought clarifications from colleagues to enhance communication and avoid misunderstandings.

*Michelle Wong in United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*

*(UNESCO) Kathmandu, Nepal*

During my time at UNESCO Kathmandu, I had the opportunity to gain valuable learning experiences that have enhanced my personal and professional growth. One of the valuable learning experiences was the enhancement of my problem-solving skills. As part of my role, I was tasked with creating infographics for the Operational Guidelines. This required me to simplify complex information and present it in a visually appealing manner. For instance, when working on an infographic about a UNESCO World Heritage site in Nepal, I encountered the challenge of condensing extensive historical and architectural details into a concise and understandable format. By utilizing my problem-solving skills, I carefully selected key information, organized it effectively, and created an infographic that effectively conveyed the site's cultural significance.

In addition, being proactive and seizing opportunities was another important learning experience. Recognizing my limited knowledge of heritage conservation as a student studying Chinese language studies, I took the initiative to seek guidance from my colleagues and conduct extensive research. For example, when assigned to research Kathmandu Durbar Square, a UNESCO site in Nepal, I proactively approached my colleagues to gain insights into the site's background and significance. I also conducted

thorough research, delving into the historical, social, and cultural aspects of the site. By being proactive, I not only expanded my knowledge but also demonstrated my commitment to learning and growth.



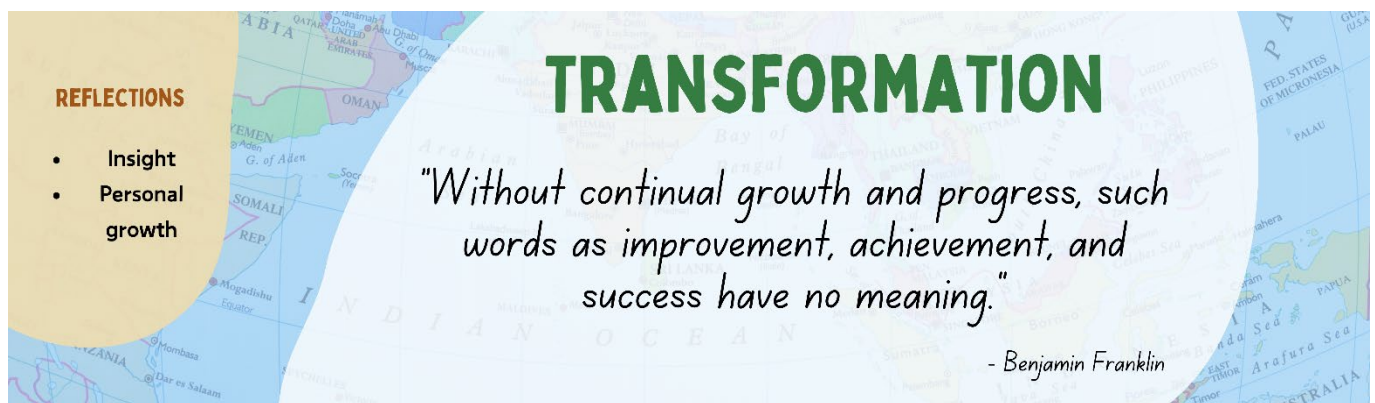
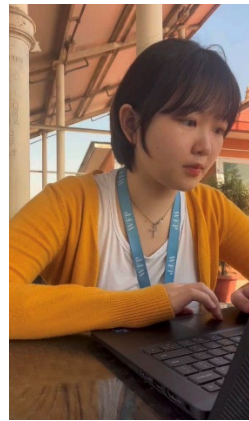
*Kerry Poon in World Food Programme (WFP) Kathmandu, Nepal*

I have equipped myself with loads of skills after this program. Among them all, what benefitted me the most is how to handle cross cultural conflicts. Nepal is a fairly slow country; people are humble and patient. But as a local Hong Konger, I am more used to a fast-paced society which everyone values efficiency. I will be lying if I say there has never been any time when I felt worried and anxious for the procrastinated work schedule. However, my supervisor has encouraged me to take the initiative and be proactive. It helped me realize that I can be the one who pushes the working progress forward if I want to see something get done in short time.

The issue of famine is severe in Nepal and all staff members of WFP are committed to combat hunger and reach the sustainable development goal number 2, Zero hunger. Everyone is devoted into what they are doing and every morning when you are greeted by a casual



“good morning” you will feel empowered by the energy of your co-workers. Despite every individual being occupied all the time, they are still happy to help out whenever you are in need. The collaborative atmosphere has surely stimulated me to be more open and transparent, therefore starting to feel like being a part of the group.



*Trevor Lee in*

*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Nepal*

Being a UN Volunteer has been a transformative and fulfilling experience. I gained valuable insights into the UN's vital role in addressing global challenges and witnessed the dedication of its staff and volunteers. Personally, I grew in adaptability, empathy, and intercultural communication skills. Collaborating with passionate colleagues and witnessing the impact of our work has motivated me to stay committed to social and humanitarian causes. This journey has been life-changing, and I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to positive change through the UN.



*Gurung Sweta in United Nations Development Programmed (UNDP) Bangkok, Thailand*

As I journeyed through life, I came to understand that the world we live in is complex and multifaceted. While institutions like the United Nations play a pivotal role in enhancing lives of millions around the world, it's

passive and unrealistic to rely solely on institutions to solve the countless problems in the world we live in today. Instead, as individuals, we ought to realise the power we possess to inspire change by self-educating, working diligently, and advocating for equal rights and



opportunities.

This extraordinary opportunity has morphed me into someone who strives for self-improvement, exposure to diversity, and new perspectives while unlearning unconscious bias and stereotypes that hinder societal harmony and progress. I have gained valuable insights into disability inclusion, LGBTIQA+ inclusion, and the empowerment of women, indigenous peoples, and underserved communities. In my years ahead, my aim is personal growth, pursuit of my goals, and realization of my aspirations. I recognized that only when I help myself, I can help those around me and our communities to move towards a more peaceful and just world.

I'd like to express my sincerest gratitude to each and every single individual who made this journey achievable and purposeful, for changing lives of so many students and giving us a chance to pursue our dreams, unlock our potential, and for helping us create a brighter future for ourselves and our communities.

*Ray Wong in UN Women Indonesia*

Unity is strength. Human cannot achieve great things until people are motivated and unified. The pyramid

cannot be built without the unity of people; A manifesto cannot play a role without the motivation of people. I attended the Inclusive Lifelong Learning Conference in Bali, following by various workshops and signature ceremony of the Bali Manifesto, it was the time I felt like we marked the history.

Throughout the work, I have realised the mandate of inclusiveness and equality are not just a slogan, but the juncture of utopian society that we aimed to create.

“The sense of comparison is your enemy” they say.

But I have learnt the vitality to appreciate the benefits, nurture the gains, and magnify the advantages through comparison, soon you will discover your outstanding excellencies, and oblivate annoyances. Reminiscing happiness flatters life.

Serving, giving, volunteering are the things that with high nobility and empathy, that never can be achieved without the sense of humanity. It was the boundless kindness from my colleagues in United Nations made our mission so humane. I found the vitality of United Nations and Volunteerism means to the world and within mankind. The ideology of ‘making the world a better place’ cannot be learnt from an ordinary internship, nor from any other sectors, but only from UN.



*Michelle Wong in United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*

*(UNESCO) Kathmandu, Nepal*

Looking back on my decision to suspend my studies and join this internship program, I have no regrets. It has been a truly transformative journey that has provided me with unique and unforgettable experiences in Nepal. Through this program, I have had the opportunity to broaden my knowledge of international

organizations and immerse myself in the vibrant culture of Nepal.

During my time in Nepal, I encountered various challenges, including language and cultural barriers. However, I was determined to overcome these obstacles. I learned to adapt and find creative solutions to communicate effectively, enabling me to navigate unfamiliar situations and make the most of my experiences. These challenges have taught me invaluable life skills such as resilience and problem-solving, contributing significantly to my personal growth.

Now, I aspire to bring the knowledge and insights I gained in Nepal back to Hong Kong. I hope to bridge the cultural gap between South Asia and the local community in Hong Kong, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation. By sharing my experiences and promoting cultural awareness, I aim to create meaningful connections that transcend borders. Overall, I cherish the unique and unforgettable experiences I had in Nepal. Each adventure held its own charm and significance, contributing to the tapestry of memories that defined my time there. These experiences have not only broadened my horizons and deepened my appreciation for different cultures but have also played a vital role in my personal growth and understanding of the world. I am immensely grateful for the opportunities I had and the valuable lessons I learned during this transformative journey.



*Rachel Yue in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Malaysia*

My experience as a UN University Volunteer in Knowledge Management was transformative and rewarding. Working on the foresight project regarding climate change and demographic change in Malaysia allowed me to contribute to critical research with potential long-term impact. It broadened my understanding of the United Nations' work and its commitment to addressing global challenges. The assignment emphasised the importance of cross-cultural collaboration and open-mindedness when working in diverse teams. I learned to appreciate the unique perspectives and insights that individuals from different backgrounds bring to the table, fostering a more innovative and inclusive work environment. The challenges I encountered, such as language barriers and understanding meeting details, taught me the value of effective communication and the significance of seeking support and clarification when needed. These

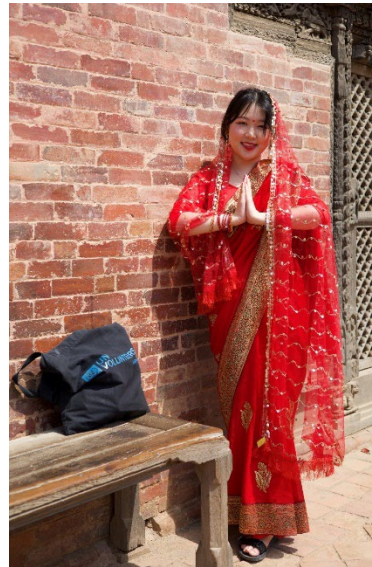


experiences enhanced my adaptability and problem-solving skills, making me a more resilient and resourceful team member.

*Kerry Poon in World Food Programme (WFP) Kathmandu, Nepal*

It was a once-in-a-life-time opportunity for me to immerse myself in an office environment with so much diversity. The memory will be embedded in my mind and soul and keep along with me through other obstacles I will be encountering in the future of my life. All the experience will remind me of how unlimitable a person's potential can be, as much as you wish, as much as your strength. There is no limitation unless you set one for yourself. I hope that many years later, I can

continue to be as optimistic and courageous as I was in that one-way airplane on the 10th March, ready to set off to Nepal.



Where is the next stop? To be continued!