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Position: Support to Monitoring and Evaluation
Agency: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Duty Station: Cambodia

A new journey embarked

It dated back to the chilling spring of 2015 when I was about to end my sophomore year, together with some extracurricular roles I had taken up. What should I do with the rest of my undergraduate life, I wondered. I was looking for something that was value-driven, something beyond this city where I have been living in for almost 20 years, something that will contribute to both my personal and professional development. That was the moment I discovered the United Nations University Volunteer Programme (UNV), which I applied in a heartbeat. As an international politics student, working at the field of international affairs has always been one of my lifelong aspirations, for how I can appreciate the world with a far-reaching lens, and how I can impact the world in an effective manner. UNV has been an opportunity to explore this field and indeed the renowned United Nations.

The five-month assignment granted me hands-on experience in an acclaimed international organisation, and strengthened my motivation of working in the field. I was assigned to be a Monitoring and Evaluation officer at the Food and Agriculture Organisation Representation in Cambodia. One would have imagined that I must be working on the ground as a “Volunteer”, yet most of my work evolved around desktop research and project management. Taking a gap semester to develop the FAO’s Resource Mobilisation Strategy by analysing government-level cooperation and conflicts was definitely fascinating and rewarding, and I aspire to be one of the diplomats and consultants I was working with. Through all the assignments I was entrusted with, as well as numerous events and forums hosted by distinct UN agencies, I acquired an in-depth understanding of organisational operations on multiple levels and diplomatic efforts within and outside the UN system, which in turn prompted me to acquire more professional knowledge before embarking my career in this field.

One may underestimate the extent of which a young and inexperienced United Nations Volunteer can contribute. It is true that as university volunteers, we might not be equipped with the necessary knowledge to formulate a development programme, but we can bring innovations to the work of the United Nations – specifically on public communication and youth development – as we grew up in the age of information. Consider the assignment as an experience that prepares you for something bigger, especially for those who dream to work at organisations like the United Nations. There would be countless opportunities for you to engage with experts with broad exposures beyond your assignment.

“I want to leave my footprints on the sands of time, know there was something that, meant something that I left behind,” as Beyoncé chanted at the United Nations World Humanitarian Day 2012. If you are looking for something extraordinary during your university studies, the United Nations University Volunteer Programme is one of the best options, if not the best. You will not regret it.