

From a child to an advocate - 7 things I learned working in UNICEF



Image Credit: Henry Liu

Six months, half a year or one hundred eighty-two days – this may seem like a short period of time but for me it is a mini-life journey, filled with challenges and new insights.

I have been with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Kazakhstan as an international UN volunteer working on communications. As such, I have contributed to improving the visibility of the organization and the important work it is doing for every child. My contribution has varied: from writing and editing to pitching a partnership proposal and contributing to the launch of a new programme on volunteering.

As I wrap up my assignment, I feel inspired and motivated by all the experiences I have had on this journey. I also see more clearly what I should be doing in the future.



Image Credit: Henry Liu

Here, I would like to share the lessons that I have learned from my time with UNICEF in Kazakhstan:

1. Be proactive

As a newcomer, one often tends to wait for opportunities to come and sit back quietly. You may worry that your contribution may be insignificant, or your voice will not be appreciated. Do not limit yourself, fulfill your potential. You never know how strong you are until you bring that hidden strength forward. We usually have some crazy ideas and thoughts deep in our hearts. What we are lacking is the courage to express ourselves. Unless you speak up, one may never realize that they may have missed something! If you would like to participate in an event or get involved in a project, do not be afraid to express your willingness, in most cases, you will be welcomed. Opportunities will never wait for you!



Image Credit: Henry Liu

2. Stay focused and do your best

Whatever you do, you represent the brand of your organization. Every single word and every single design choice matters. Make sure that your work is of high quality, do your best. Watch the tone and watch out for those terminologies. Do have the end in mind when you embark on an initiative. It will boost your effectiveness. Keep asking yourself:

'Why should you do it in this way and not the other way? Is it feasible? Is it practical? Is this going to fly high?'

Heroes of the year

unicef 
for every child

**Alikhan
Kusherbaev,**

17

Change for the city

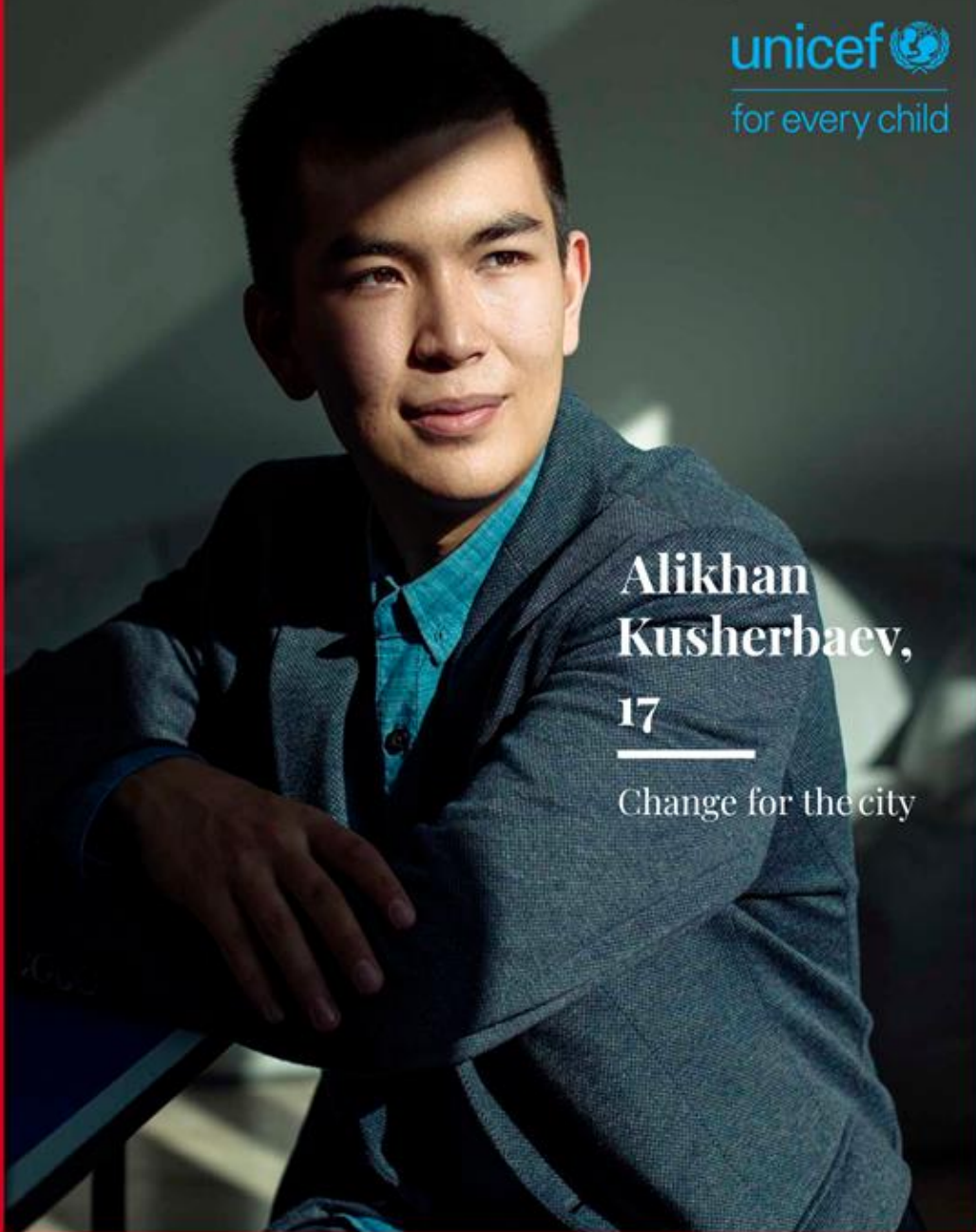


Image Credit: Henry Liu

3. Embrace the diversity

Without a doubt, working in a multi-cultural environment can be challenging. The difference in language, culture, working style may place you in discomfort; however, switching your own perspective is crucial to success. The differences make us special, they do not have to be divisive. Integrate the wisdom and inspiration from different cultures. Only by communication, engaging with respect and empathy can we tackle our ignorance and challenge our worldview. Together, we are one, united by one desire to make our society and world a better place to live.



Image Credit: Henry Liu

4. Consider the context

As a foreign worker, you might be tempted to see everything through the lens of your background. You would relate the situation and its relevant solutions to the one at home. This may create an incomprehensive picture of the situation. The context varies, as well as its solutions. Also important is accounting for the available resources. Plan accordingly, consider local norms and attitudes.



Image Credit: Henry Liu

5. Keep your passion and enthusiasm

After working for some time, you get used to the organization, the new surroundings, the people and the tasks. Everything becomes so familiar you might lose your perspective and forget the bigger picture. Stop and ask yourself, 'What are the reasons that make you stay here? Why are you passionate about working in this organization in the first place?' Acknowledge and own the impact you have had so far, you have come a long way, continue your journey.



Image Credit: Henry Liu

6. Learn, learn and keep learning

The knowledge and skills that you receive at university may not be adequate for working in this ever-changing society. To make yourself as competitive as possible, acquiring a basic foundation of the cross-cutting themes within the organization may benefit you. Get yourself familiar with the local, regional and global issues. Learning can also be multi-faceted: online, face-to-face etc. Failure is also part of your learning. Only if you fail, you know how to do better. Read more, talk more and travel more



Image Credit: Henry Liu

7. Reflection

Reflection plays an unquestionably vital role in a successful career. At the end of each day, reflect on the results and think how you can improve. Writing down your reflections enables you to read back and see the threads, ideas, tangles you have. Day by day, it allows you to move forward, come to decisions and even create a new course of action. Apart from self-reflection, it is always good to reflect with your supervisor regularly. You can then understand your strengths and weaknesses, so as to develop yourself into a better person and co-worker.



Image Credit: Henry Liu

For me, this is time to leave Kazakhstan and go back to Hong Kong to continue my studies, however, this is not a good-bye yet, it is rather a ‘See you soon, UNICEF!’

“For every child” is not just any slogan. It must be a way of life for all of us, no matter what positions we hold, we should all devote ourselves to make this world a better place. I believe this is the most stunning and shining part in life. If everyone is willing to make their own change, the world surrounding you will be changing as well. And you can make a choice.

‘You may say I am a dreamer, but I am not the only one.’



Image Credit: Henry Liu

Media Coverage



THE ASTANA TIMES

BRINGING KAZAKHSTAN TO THE WORLD

‘Beautiful, amazing’: UNICEF volunteer from Hong Kong on six months in Nur-Sultan

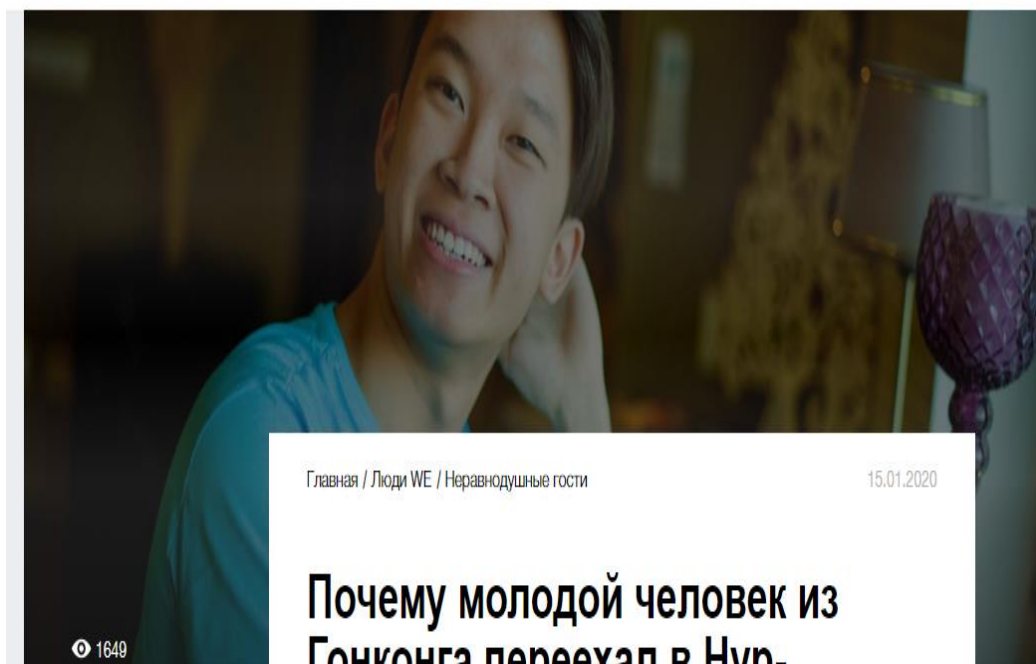
BY NURDANA ADYLKHALOVA in TOURISM on 31 JANUARY 2020

NUR-SULTAN – Henry Liu came to Nur-Sultan in July 2019 for a six-month stint as a United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) volunteer. Prior to coming to Kazakhstan, he had worked as a UNICEF volunteer in Hong Kong.



The Astana Times (31 Jan 2020)

<https://astanatimes.com/2020/01/beautiful-amazing-unicef-volunteer-from-hong-kong-on-six-months-in-nur-sultan/?fbclid=IwAR0TPKFnG7JxiGB4SGd2xnr1IcZXGF1EuIqLpvCdgoRR0naobbjAC8bMmVs>



We Project (15 Jan 2020)

<https://weproject.media/articles/detail/pochemu-molodoy-chelovek-iz-gonkong-pereekhal-v-nur-sultan/?fbclid=IwAR2oyY3XpcTg7KfEFUf9BqaFMdy-sRpPSTGbJvJFbSiuEFJiZMJHiAZbuAs>

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HUMAN RIGHTS

Change for every child in Kazakhstan

NOVEMBER 20, 2019



BY HENRY LIU

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Image Credit UNICEF Kazakhstan

To a lot of people, Kazakhstan is still a mystery. After I published [my first article](#), a lot of readers messaged me to know about the situation of children in Kazakhstan.

On World Children's Day with the release of the [Situation Analysis](#) from

Voices of Youth (20 Nov 2019)

<https://www.voicesofyouth.org/blog/change-every-child-kazakhstan>

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PERSONAL GROWTH

What are you waiting for?

OCTOBER 17, 2019



BY HENRY LIU

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Image Credit Henry Liu

If I hadn't taken a gap year, I would have had the same life as every university student does in Hong Kong now (studying, tutoring and hanging out with friends). Simply, I ditched everything that I had in Hong Kong, and I started a new beginning in Kazakhstan as a United Nations Volunteer for UNICEF.

Before I made this move, all of my friends were criticizing me about my decision. They were saying, 'Why don't you go to the volunteer programme after your graduation?' 'You are going to miss a lot because you are not getting

Voices of Youth (17 Oct 2019)

https://www.voicesofyouth.org/blog/what-are-you-waiting#disqus_thread