

UNV Hong Kong Universities Volunteer Internship Programme  
2019/2020  
Post Assignment Report



Chao Phraya  
River

**Name** Mok Wing Sum (Katy)

**Assignment Title** UNV UN University Volunteer in Capacity Development on Veterinary Epidemiology

**Host Agency** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

**Duration** 01-07-2019 – 30-06-2020

## *Sawadeeka, Thailand and the world!*

I have always been deeply interested in understanding Southeast Asia culture. In the past, I could explore the countries through self-travelling or short-term volunteering programmes. Even in the most in-depth travels, it is often about my own experiences or having the journey with my friends. This time last year, I received an UNV assignment offer from Sri Lanka and I was very much excited as I had a very good experience ther before. Later, the assignment was cancelled due to the bomb attack during Easter and I was rearranged to Bangkok as my duty station. My mind was filled with prejudgments then, thinking Bangkok is just another Metropolitan City like Hong Kong. Not that I am not excited, but I could say that my assignment began quite calmly.



*"If there were no more transboundary animal diseases, ECTAD would not exist."*

*- the former Regional Manager of ECTAD RAP, Dr. Wantanee*

## Protecting people and animals from disease threat

My host agency- The Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD), Regional office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) is one of FAO's corporate centre for the planning and delivery of veterinary assistance to FAO member countries responding to the threat of transboundary animal health and zoonoses crises in the region. "To observe" is one quality my supervisor has preached to me. Despite the main tasks stated on my TORs, my supervisor has given me many chances to make observations through work shadowing like participating tele-conference or workshops with him. Just by observing, I have already learnt so much in particular coordination, technical knowledge as well as soft skills. Due to the nature of the UN as an intra-governmental organization while my host agency as a regional office, it could be difficult when we have so many partners including donors, other UN agencies, institutes, as well as country offices. I am always so impressed to see how my team are teasing things out in a more manageable manner. At the same time, I feel so blessed to be surrounded by professionals of veterinarians, doctors and operation experts. Not only I can learn from different disciplines, but to understand the how they are merging scientific knowledge into policy making.



*"Be the change you want to see in the world"*

Despite being great mentors, my colleges are also my inspirations. My team has adopted the no straw and bring you own cup culture to make an effort on environmental protection. This spirit is actually one of my inspirations on becoming a pescatarian to fully cut meat out of my diet.

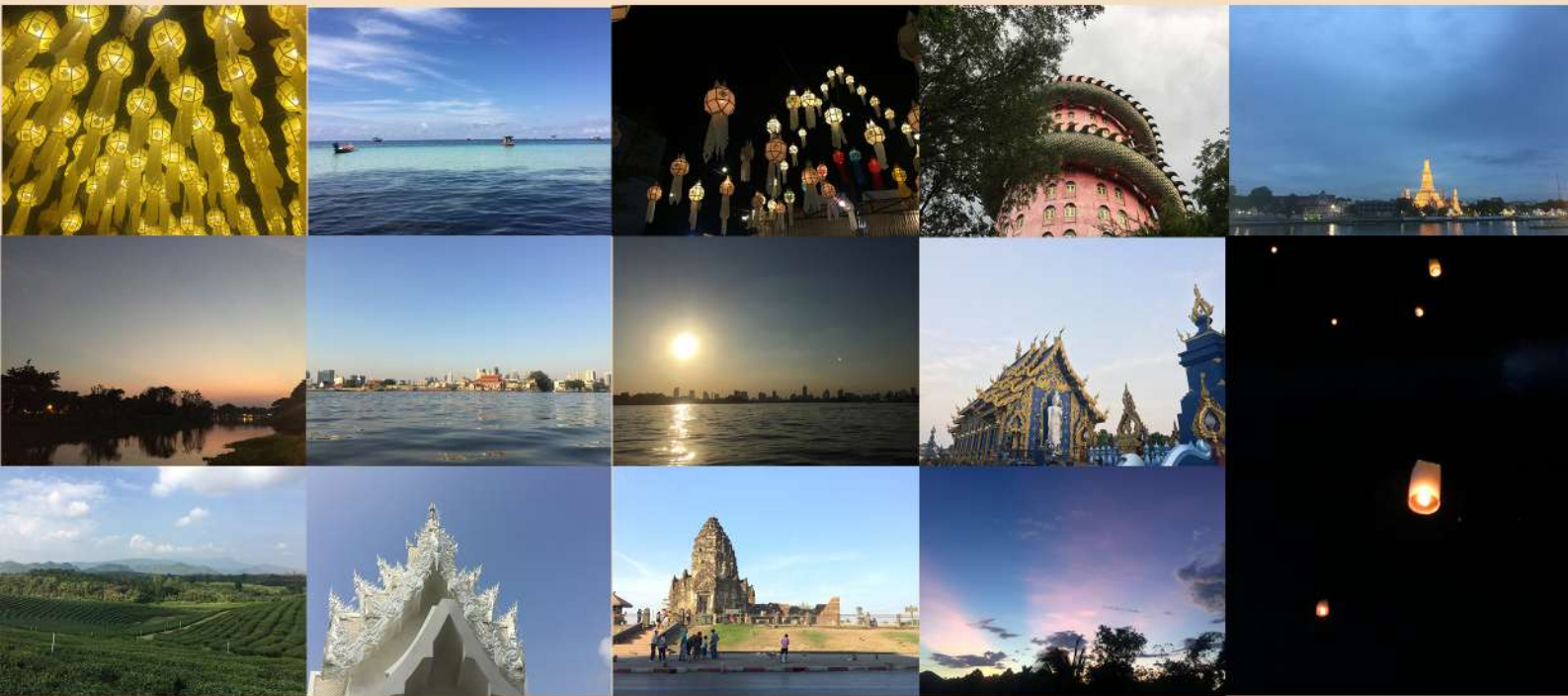
The EMT- Epidemiology Mapping Tool is a veterinary epidemiology capacity assessment my supervisor has developed, it is also the centre of my main duties on this UNV assignment. At the first two months of my assignment, I was supporting the finalization of this tool. The tasks include refining the scoring grid of the core tool and supplementary tools based on the comments from previous pilots and trainings, preparing assessor manual and drafting field surveys. At later stages, I was involved in the preparatory stage of a EMT mission, providing support to the assessor team in tele-conferences and documenting the discussions. During these stages, I gained a basic understanding on how this tool works through self-reviewing and the sharing from my supervisor and other colleagues.

## Epidemiology Mapping Tool and Indonesia Mission



Later, I was so lucky to have the chance in participating in an EMT mission to Indonesia. This mission was definitely an important milestone in my assignment, as I can be part of the evidence gathering stages at the field level. Together, we have interviewed over 150 stakeholders from a variety of disciplines of various sectors across national, subnational and local levels. I also assisted in documentations and worked out the agenda for interviews. After the mission, I helped in tracking and categorizing over 200 supporting documents. From my supervisor, It was one of the most complicated missions that he had been, I would describe it as a marathon. To put forward such programmes with tight schedules and lots of travelling among a huge team was definitely not an easy task. I am really thankful to my team for being very easy-going, enabling me to adapt and find my position in the group. Also, the generosity of sharing their expertise and experiences to me. Beside works, I also had a chance to experience the hospitality of Indonesia and I have completely fallen in love with this country.





## Thailand, the land of smiles

The 6 months stay in Bangkok has definitely changed my view when I first started my assignment. Certainly, this capital city of Thailand has its very modern side, but at the same time it is full of Thai traditions. It is a very versatile place offering so much to do and see, it is a mingle of the old and new. Thai locals call Bangkok as Krung Thep, the City of Angels. Indeed, I have met so many angels during my stay in Bangkok, from helpful juristic staffs addressing my daily hassles, kind passengers providing help in translations to a warm-hearted granny offering coins to me when I had lost my boat ticket. Even strangers on the street make my day, as the locals are always wearing a gentle smile on their faces. Beyond Bangkok, Thailand is also a country full of diversity and surprises, from its natural beauty, historical riches to rich culture. Despite world well-known destinations and tourists' areas, I hope I have more or less explored the authentic Thailand. Behind the land of smiles, there are still deep-rooted social issues that are worth the concern, including poverty, human rights, pollutions and exploitation in tourism. Now I have the chance to extend my assignment for another half year, I hope to further understand this place especially on those social issues.

## *Same Same, but different*

This iconic phrase has appeared in the night markets of many Southeast Asia countries, you can find it printed on t-shirts or other souvenirs. It is commonly encountered when the locals attempt to sell products. Some said the saying is originated from Thailand, generally representing the 'no worries' Thai approach to life. Nonetheless, it acts as a quick reminder to my view on Southeast Asia countries or to people in general, that every culture is different while everyone is unique and I should avoid prejudices or generalization.



*Kobkunmakka Thailand  
look forward to another great half year*



*“ We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. This is the divine mystery supreme. A wonderful thing it is and the source of our happiness. We need not wait to see what others do . “*

*- Mahatma Gandhi*

