

Post-assignment Report



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Cooperation

Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal
Diseases (ECTAD)

Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (RAP)
Food and Agriculture Organization

Bangkok, Thailand

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1 July 2019 - 30 June 2020

MY TEAM: The Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD)

As the name suggests, our team provides veterinary support to member countries in the region in response to the threat of transboundary animal diseases. It is relatively a big team with about 30 colleagues, compared with other teams in the regional office. Although I work closely only with several colleagues, each of them shows incredible support and patience. The team has clear sense of purpose and everyone contributes their fair share. I am very grateful to have joined and learnt from such an amazing team. In the past six months, I had valuable lessons on coordination, leadership, teamwork, comprehensive planning, and a lot more.



A team picture taken after a team lunch.



Our team work really hard.



And play even harder.



A tradition to celebrate everyone's birthday.

MY WORK

I assist in the South-South Cooperation Project on Transboundary Animal Disease Control in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region which aims at reducing impacts of transboundary animal diseases, improving livelihoods, food and nutrition security and promoting trade in the region. To start, I spent some time reading the project documents and relevant reports.

My first task was to draw up lists of two specific committee groups established to monitor the project, and provided support to my supervisor in communicating with the groups. Very soon later came a big task that I had to draft the very first six-month progress report of my project, which would be reviewed and evaluated by the donor and headquarters. Starting the report from scratch and summarizing the key points from over thirty documents do not sound too difficult to those with veterinary background, but surely not for me who was a newcomer, a graduate in Translations, and only knew very little about animal diseases and FAO.

And lucky was I to also have an opportunity to participate in event organization. The first annual coordination meeting of my project, organised back to back with a regional multilateral collaboration meeting, was held in Kunming, China. It was definitely one of the most unforgettable memories I had. Under the guidance of my then-supervisor, I took over quite a few important tasks for the meetings. Thanks to the trust and support by my colleagues, prior to the meetings, I drafted the concept notes and agenda, and after the meetings, I wrote meeting reports and kept in touch with meeting participants including other ECTAD teams based in different countries, governments, private sectors in China and some other international organizations. Organizing events is never an easy task, but the mission was undoubtedly a booster to my event coordination skills. Furthermore, the meetings itself offered me a glimpse of how my team leader usually negotiates with the donor, as well as how countries work together in strengthening collaboration.



My colleagues in RAP, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia, and I.



I had a dinner with my colleagues in RAP in a local restaurant.

I have regular weekly tasks, which are still ongoing, with one being monitoring market disruptions associated with African swine fever (ASF), mainly in China, and the other being updating disease situation of the Novel Coronavirus that perhaps caused by animals. A great advantage is my language proficiency in Chinese since a lot of information related to ASF and the virus is in Chinese.

Attending many other meetings and workshops, although not organized under the project I have been helping, my horizon was broadened and my knowledge was enriched extensively. I got to know more about other existing projects and various areas in animal health.



A photo in the World Antibiotic Awareness Week 2019 taken with Katy (left), also an UNV from HK, who sits next to me in the office and becomes the closest friend of mine in Bangkok.



A group photo taken in the Inception Workshop for the Regional Technical Cooperation Programme on ASF Emergency Preparedness and Response in E&SE Asia, where the Regional Collaborative Framework was developed. My colleagues also celebrated my birthday on that day.



A photo with Katy and the Regional Manager (middle) who demonstrated excellent leadership, taken in her farewell party after the EPT2 Regional Consultation, both were great success.

WORD HARD, PLAY EVEN HARDER

A core spirit passed to me from our team is 'work hard, play harder,' so I never forget to join team gatherings, explore Thailand and meet new friends during my assignment.



Laser tag with colleagues



A fun zipline experience



Dinner with other UNVs in Thailand



Girls night with colleagues

THE OTHER SIDE OF THAILAND - BEAUTY OF NATURE

I never visited Thailand before, and therefore, my only understanding to it was its popularity among tourists. As a nature lover, the country, however, surprised me with its breathtakingly stunning nature. I love to get close to mountains and sometimes escape Bangkok. In Thailand, there is a wide range of natural sights to visit.



Nakhon Nayok



Nakhon Nayok



Nakhon Nayok



Chiang Mai



Chiang Mai



Khao Yai



Pattaya – Wonderfruit camping site



Koh Samet



Ayutthaya

LIFE-CHANGING TAKEAWAYS AND REFLECTIONS

Looking back, the past six months still seemed so unreal. I feel truly fortunate, working in a great team, acquiring new skills, receiving advice for work and life, as well as talking to awesome beings and great minds. It is unreal also because of what was happening in the second half of 2019, that people around the world are fighting in the dark for justice, for their voice being heard, for a better future. All these, as a result, constantly bring introspection. I rethink and reflect a lot on my position in community and in the world.

Big things start small.

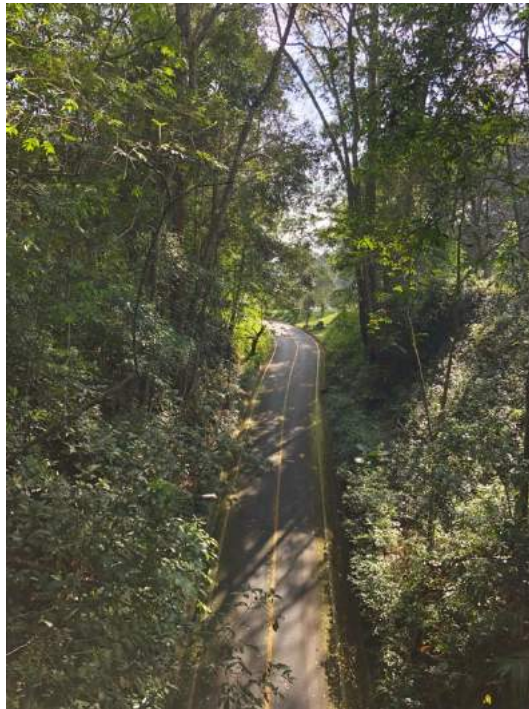
I always questioned myself, what could this task bring to me? What was the meaning doing that? Now I realized the answer is never asking these questions. One should never overlook the power of each small trivial step, as what once looks insignificant will one day become significant without our notice, no matter in workplace or in the world. A simple translation task is surprisingly useful for colleagues who do analysis based on the text you translated; a proofreading task deepens memory of the proof-reader who in the meanwhile learns new knowledge; a note taker ensures all important points from the meeting being captured when the speakers have already a lot to remember. By the same token, changing the world starts only with changing in oneself. To minimize the impacts of humans on world's temperature, one should eat green and live green, and so to inspire people around; to avoid virus from spreading, one should start taking care of own personal hygiene, and then educate others; to make our world a better place, we have to stand up for what we ought to fight and what we deserve – in the very first place, we all should begin by becoming a better self. Very soon in future there will be a reduction in greenhouse gases, the virus will spread slower than we expected, the opinions will be considered by relevant stakeholders.

The more you give, the more you receive.

What does my role as an UN Volunteer imply? How can I promote volunteerism? What does it mean? I guess the attitude that volunteers should have, is being willing to learn, to fail and to serve. By learning, one acquires practical and professional skills which are what others in need lack. Only by recognizing failure we have made and frustrations we had during volunteering, one can introspect one's inner self and beliefs. And with a helping heart, one gets to understand what others need desperately. But most importantly, keep ourselves passionate and motivated all the time. The only ways to achieve this is to explore and to feel.

I have seen myself with significant growth, both professionally and personally. Whichever path I will take in future, I believe it is going to be another exciting chapter. But hold on, the assignment has not come to an end yet. Switching to a Youth Volunteer with a new title, there will be more challenges ahead.

“The future depends on what you do today.”
— Mahatma Gandhi



Chiang Mai, Thailand