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Volunteering as a coordination officer in the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator in the Philippines is a fruitful, thought-provoking and remarkable experience that enhances self-awareness, gain a deeper understanding towards volunteerism and explore one's potentials. Views are diverse so do the United Nations.



United or not?

Views are diverse so do the United Nations. The UN System is a huge bureaucracy that always deals with conflicts between different actors, hierarchy and individuals' needs in global, regional and country-level. I was assigned to assist in the UNDAF that is an agreement between the Philippines government and UN System in the Philippines. Though my role in the office is to provide secretarial support, I was given chances to explore different working styles of UN agencies and how inter-agency cooperate and compete with each other in different levels. Ideally, every action shall widely consult different stakeholders in order to come up with a satisfactory result in a cohesive way. However, due to many practical constrains including limited time, blurred responsibilities and entities, mobility of staff, structural problems and fierce competition within the organization, the decisions are very hard to be fully-implemented and have a consensus. In viewing to this managerial problem, UNDAF was then developed with a wish "Deliver as One", aiming to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency and cohesion at the global, regional and country level. Yet, it still has a long way to go.

UN in the Philippines

The Philippines Government and the UN system have long been maintaining an ambiguous relationship. Struggles between national priorities and international standard are observed. Being the middle-income country, the Philippines might need global assistance for its economic development, but the request of the UN would be the enhancement of human rights. There is always trade-off between multiple parties.

Learning time

Being a UNV in the Philippines is a learning journey especially work with a group of experienced colleagues that enables me to have a deeper understanding towards Filipino culture, Filipino ties with Hong Kong.

Assigned in consolidating the inputs of data including ODA, I realized that coordination is a tough work for UN agencies as members have their own agenda and way of work. Sometimes their data or documents would be written in different formats based on their working institution, nationalities, age and position that causes ineffective communication and have to do a lot of follow-up works. This assignment enables me to a better communicator and concerns all parties' interests.

In my assignment, I was given chances to engage in the preparation of UNDAF including the workshops and some coordination work, that enabled me to learn how UN agencies operate and balance stakeholders' opinions.