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1. Duties Performed

During my UN University Volunteer in Knowledge Management assignment at UNDP Malaysia, I had the privilege of working on a significant project focused on a foresight project on climate migration and demographic change in Malaysia by 2040. This project aimed to analyse potential migration patterns and caregiving needs in the face of climate-induced challenges.

2. Learning Experiences

Working in a culturally diverse team with colleagues from different educational and cultural backgrounds, including Malay, Chinese, and Turkish, was an enlightening experience. It taught me the importance of respecting differences and being open-minded, especially during discussions and decision-making. When disagreements arose, I learned to seek insights from my team members, valuing their perspectives and leveraging their local context knowledge and research skills to enrich the project's outcomes. The absence of a strict hierarchical structure encouraged everyone to express their opinions freely, fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment. This experience has had a lasting impact on my approach to teamwork and appreciation for diversity.

3. Challenges Encountered

I encountered several challenges during my assignment that tested my adaptability and determination. One of the primary hurdles was understanding meeting details, particularly when collaborating with partners outside of UNDP. It became confusing for non-native speakers like myself when meetings suddenly switched to using the local language. To address this language barrier, I proactively sought clarifications from colleagues to enhance communication and avoid misunderstandings.

Furthermore, the assignment initially presented some difficulties due to my lack of experience in horizon scanning and limited knowledge of caregiving needs and climate migration. Staying motivated in such circumstances was challenging, but I understood the significance of finding meaning in the project to overcome this obstacle. To ignite my interest and commitment to the task, I engaged in discussions with my supervisor. I invested time in learning more about Malaysia's context, which ultimately helped me tackle the assignment with renewed enthusiasm.

4. Reflections

My experience as a UN University Volunteer in Knowledge Management was transformative and rewarding. Working on the foresight project regarding climate change and demographic change in Malaysia allowed me to contribute to critical research with potential long-term impact. It broadened my understanding of the United Nations' work and its commitment to addressing global challenges.

The assignment emphasised the importance of cross-cultural collaboration and open-mindedness when working in diverse teams. I learned to appreciate the unique perspectives and insights that individuals from different backgrounds bring to the table, fostering a more innovative and inclusive work environment.

The challenges I encountered, such as language barriers and understanding meeting details, taught me the value of effective communication and the significance of seeking support and clarification when needed. These experiences enhanced my adaptability and problem-solving skills, making me a more resilient and resourceful team member.

My time as a UN University Volunteer in Knowledge Management was a period of profound personal growth and learning. I am immensely grateful for the support, training, and collaborative opportunities during the assignment. The experience solidified my commitment to promoting global peace and development through volunteerism, and I am eager to continue contributing my skills and knowledge to meaningful initiatives in the future.

5. Recommendations for Future Volunteers

I highly recommend approaching your assignments with an open mind and a genuine willingness to learn. Embrace the diversity of perspectives within your team and make the most of open discussions to tap into the collective potential of your group. When challenges arise, seeking support and guidance from supervisors and colleagues is crucial to overcoming obstacles. Take the time to understand the local context and the potential impact of your work, as this can greatly motivate you to overcome any hurdles and contribute more effectively to the project's overall success. By finding that deeper sense of purpose, you can make a meaningful and lasting difference during your time as a volunteer.