

12 August 2013



Jungeun Sohn (left), UN Volunteer Intern fully-funded by the Asan Nanum Foundation, is working on women's economic empowerment with UN Women in Nicaragua. As a volunteer initiative outside her assignment, she participated in an environmental awareness-raising activity at an elementary school. (UNV, 2013)

"Be the change that you wish to see in the world"

Working with and for these women has inspired me in many ways. It has made me question what the reasons are for gender inequality, why it takes so many different forms, what could be effective and realistic solutions, and whether there is anything I can do about it.

As a UN Youth Volunteer and young woman, I am proudly working for women's economic empowerment with UN Women in Nicaragua. My job is to support four counterparts working in the field: rural women in need of their own land, trade unionists who advocate for labour rights of domestic workers, women seeking to reform social security law, and women and men working to develop a model for good entrepreneurial practices on gender equality.

Working with and for these women has inspired me in many ways. It has

made me question what the reasons are for gender inequality, why it takes so many different forms, what could be effective and realistic solutions, and whether there is anything I can do about it.

I also reflect about the problems women face in Korea, where I am from, and what women are doing about it, so that I can join them when I go back home.

While I was thinking if there was anything I could do, UN Volunteers in Managua decided to organize a joint volunteer activity. We went to an elementary school where volunteers had previously brought recycling cans and helped to recycle the trash from the school yard. Since garbage is a major problem in Nicaragua, I was thrilled with the idea.

I wrote a story about climate change with some examples of the changes that have taken place in Nicaragua, and I showed the children how some of the things we throw away can be recycled. The plastic-bottle-flowerpot I brought with me, in which I have planted basil, was a big hit among children. We also planted plants in the school yard, which made kids very interested and excited.

While the kids were waiting for their snack, I started to pick some garbage from the floor. Some of the kids, who were watching me, joined. I was surprised and touched to realize that what you do has an effect on others and might become a source of change. On my way back home that day, I bought a pair of rubber gloves to pick up garbage in the streets of my neighbourhood, which I had always complained about, but had never done anything.

My favourite quote is Gandhi's "Be the change that you wish to see in the world." I am thrilled to be a small part of this great opportunity to generate change.

Bio: *Jungeun Sohn is from South Korea. She studied Spanish and French in college and economic development policy in her masters. She did her earlier internships with the Korea Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) in Peru, and with the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Chile. Fully-funded by the Asan Nanum Foundation, she is working on women's economic empowerment with UN Women in Nicaragua as a UN Youth Volunteer. She is a dreamer, reader, cook, sharer and doer, and hopes to be a global thinker and local activist.*

Sustainable Development Goal: