

15 May 2021

Khatera Danesh (Afghanistan) and Oluwatosin Jegede (Nigeria)



Khatera Danesh, national UN Volunteer Associate Political Affairs Officer with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in Badakhshan Province, with her son, Ali Arween.

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"We learnt the most valuable lesson over the past year: how life can change in the blink of an eye"

Due to COVID-19, this past year has placed a tremendous burden on families and parents. We have had to deal with lockdowns, separation from loved ones, school closures and online learning, and shouldering additional responsibilities. As we mark the International Day of Families on 15 May and the Global Day of Parents on 1 June, we feature the very personal stories and coping strategies of our UN Volunteers – as partners, parents, children and more. In this first article, meet Khatera and Oluwatosin.

Khatera Danesh, national UN Volunteer Associate Political Affairs Officer with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in Badakhshan Province

I got married in September 2019 and was blessed by God's mercy with a lovely baby boy whose name is Ali Arween. I am delighted to share my personal life experience with you and how I have balanced my private and professional life during COVID-19.

The most positive experience I have had during the pandemic was learning how to adapt to new circumstances, accept unexpected challenges, build resilience, show compassion, remain patient and support friends and families who were affected by COVID-19.

During the past year, I performed my tasks remotely from my home. This was coupled with certain challenges, such as how to handle business and take care of my beloved child, who required my constant attention. Great planning has been a major reason which allowed me to prudently take care of my child and carry out my official duties successfully. My child has enjoyed my company and my supervisors have shared their gratitude for my achievements. So COVID-19 has had a positive side.

A negative challenge imposed by the pandemic is that it has kept me away from friends and close family, as we had to observe quarantine. The non-availability of durable electricity and internet has also been an extra challenge adversely affecting my daily life and performance of my planned assignments in a timely manner.

“ We learnt the most valuable lesson over the past year: how life can change in the blink of an eye. We have learned that there is no

“guarantee in life, and we should value life, family, health and every little thing we took for granted before, because, God forbid, we may not get a second chance.

I invite you to be generous and merciful with your respected colleagues, friends, relatives and family around you and to do your best to be an effective person in your organization and your society.

Oluwatosin Jegede, national UN Volunteer Programme Associate with the HIV and Health Section of the UN Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Nigeria

The biggest challenge COVID-19 has posed to me personally, was having to combine work with family matters. My children were doing online schooling during the lockdown and I had to support their learning process. I helped them with homework, while still working actively on programmes relating to the health of people in prisons.

I completed a three-day training on COVID-19 risk prevention for staff of the Nigerian Correctional Service on a day I had forgotten was my birthday, and was featured on UNV Nigeria's #MyExperience Twitter programme.

In 2020, the COVID-19 lockdown and restriction of movement gave me the opportunity of staying home with my family for at least six consecutive months. This was the first homestay of its kind in six years and definitely a positive!

Learning from the past year, my words of advice for other parents are:

“Irrespective of the stress you might experience while trying to meet the needs of your family, it is imperative to keep in mind that they may need your presence more than the money. Striking a balance between work and life is essential and cannot be over emphasized.



Global

• COVID-19 • Coronavirus • Afghanistan • Nigeria • International Day of Families • Global Day of Parents

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 3: Good health and well-being](#) [SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)