



Mahmudul Hasan (centre), National UN Volunteer Research Assistant with UNDP Bangladesh, participating at a training session of Youthopia.Bangla. (UNV, 2016)

Using standardized data to promote peace and tolerance in Bangladesh

Working for a UN agency was a long-cherished dream of mine. I was already serving as a UN Online Volunteer as well as participating in some of the events arranged by UNV Bangladesh when I stumbled on the call for applicants on the UNV Facebook page. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) now seemed to be my way in. With boundless excitement and hope, I applied for the position. That is when everything changed for me.

I was looking at the [UNV Bangladesh Facebook](#) page when I noticed that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in [Bangladesh](#) was looking for a UN Volunteer to serve as Research Assistant to work on daily media briefings, data entry and standardization, and drafting policy briefs for the Democratic Governance Cluster. Their needs tied directly to my interests and areas of expertise. When UNV contacted me, it was indeed a remarkable day.

“ I was bit nervous when I started my assignment, unsure of how I should adapt to this new work environment and assignment. As days passed, things were becoming clearer and easier for me. Thanks to the support of senior colleagues, helping accelerate my understanding of the tasks required, I found my stride and began to feel not only like I fit in, but that I was part of the UNDP country team in my home.

My assignment started with work on data entry and standardization for the Integrated Data Assessment and Mapping System (IDAMS). IDAMS is a special kind of system, built to track data related to peace and tolerance in Bangladesh. The system scans national and international newspapers including renowned online news websites for data collection, standardization and analysis. After a couple of weeks of data entry, I was assigned to prepare the Daily Morning Brief for UNDP. Once ready to be shared, UNDP Bangladesh uses a popular email bulletin software to distribute the briefs tailored primarily for UNDP personnel.

While analyzing user reports, I found that many who were using my briefs were senior staff across the UN system, some beyond our office. Knowing that there was an audience for my work was deeply motivating. It revived my reading habits and helped me to better understand the national and international development agenda promoted by the UN.

Besides my regular activities, I received assignments related to parliamentary, election and governance assessment indicators. These gave me a new outlook and ability to understand democratic governance. Even though my academic studies were focused on governance, it was through my work with UNDP that theory took on clear and practical implications. My UN Volunteer assignment bridged the gap for me between theory and practice. I now look back and see how the IDAMS significantly contributes to creating a national platform of peace and tolerance in Bangladesh by consolidating and facilitating reporting on all of this related data.

Besides professional duties, we were encouraged as UN Volunteers to dedicate some time to voluntary service outside of the office—advocating and sharing the spirit of volunteerism. Being true to that vision, I assisted in the facilitation of group work in a UNV Bangladesh initiative for youth called [Youthopia.Bangla](#). It allowed me to interact with young people from diverse backgrounds and understand the role of youth in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Becoming a UN Volunteer was one of the best things that happened to me. This opportunity helped me improve my skills; I got to meet amazing colleagues; it helped me think outside of the box; it uplifted my passion for volunteerism; and most importantly, I grew as a leader. Actually, there is more, through this UN Volunteer assignment, I contributed to promoting peace in my own country!

I can now happily say that I have served with UNDP Bangladesh as a national UN Volunteer. I recommend UNV to everyone.

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Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions](#)