Creating an inclusive and diverse workplace for persons with disabilities

Meet Madina Karsakpayeva, a national UN Volunteer Programme Officer with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Kazakhstan. Madina was the first volunteer to serve through the UNDP/UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities in Central Asia. On the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, she shares how volunteering has changed her.

I joined the UNDP Kazakhstan team in 2020. For me, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities has always been a day closer to sadness, arousing memories of being excluded from society due to my disability. Therefore, when my interview for this UN Volunteer assignment was scheduled close to the day, I felt this was ironic.
However, I was successful, and since the start of the assignment, my perspective on how the world sees people with disabilities has changed.

Firstly, I feel grateful that I can get support from UNDP and UNV teams, all the time. For instance, my colleagues help me join "Abled with English", an online English course for persons with disabilities in Kazakhstan, or inclusive employment conferences and other initiatives.

“The spirit that UN Volunteers bring is a combination of diversity and teamwork. From my UN Volunteer assignment, I could see how people followed the principle of leaving no one behind in every project that I joined. Indeed, we are inspiration in action! --Madina Karsakpayeva, national UN Volunteer Programme Officer, UNDP Kazakhstan

As a UN Volunteer, I have been able to share ideas on disability inclusion, which is a topic close to my identity, passion and professional interest.”
It’s been more than ten years since I started this unique and inspiring journey as a volunteer.

In my early years, I was an insecure and shy home-schooled person, a beneficiary of rehabilitation centres. As time passed, I developed into a volunteer, willing to share knowledge with others and teach the English language to persons with disabilities. Back then, volunteering was one of the only means of communication and self-realization. Since then, I have been taking part as a volunteer in different inclusion and education-related projects.

Now, as a UN Volunteer, I always get the precious feeling that I can be of help to others, particularly by sharing knowledge and my experiences. It is also meaningful to see the visible changes that I am making through my assignment.
As the first participant in the UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities from Central Asia, I see myself as a professional creating an inclusive and diverse workplace for persons with disabilities who are seeking more opportunities and more tolerance.

- International Day of Persons with Disabilities • UNDP/UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities • Persons with disabilities

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 10: Reduced inequalities SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals