



UN Volunteer Bobae Lee working with community in Yangon, Myanmar on disaster risk reduction.

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Strengthening gender equality through climate change action

Asia and the Pacific region is particularly vulnerable to physical impacts of climate change. Associated with pre-existing gender inequality, climate-related risks are multiplied for women, girls, and people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in the region.

Bobae Lee is a Regional Gender and Climate Change Expert serving with UN Women Asia and the Pacific Regional Office. Her assignment is fully funded by the Government of Korea.

"I have been volunteering ever since I could walk. My father used to bring me when he was going to take care of people with disabilities and orphans. He learned how to serve others from his parents. During the Korean War, my grandparents remained in their village to take care of elderly, while others were evacuating. My parents volunteered in the Philippines after they retired. Their lifelong devotion and spirit of volunteerism got deeply embedded in my blood, a zeitgeist over generations which many Koreans

share. This eventually led me to volunteer from early age to present," says Bobae.

After getting a Korean government funding for an internship for UN-Habitat, Bobae was checking Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs funded UNV specialist posts if there is any post which aligns with her career path: working on gender-responsive urban design using participatory approaches. "When I found the post working for the project on gender and climate change, I declined the other job offer and joined the team as a UN Volunteer," shares Bobae.

Bobae is currently working for a regional project called [EmPower](#) which aims to strengthen human rights and gender equality through climate change action and disaster risk reduction. "We work with youth, indigenous groups, LGBTIQ+ communities, women entrepreneurs, women-led civil society organisations, national policymakers, government and key stakeholders in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Vietnam and other countries in the Asia and Pacific Region to implement gender-responsive climate change and disaster risk reduction actions to address key-drivers of gender-based vulnerabilities," she explains. "We also work on regional normative and policy frameworks on climate change and disaster risk reduction incorporating gender equality and human rights perspective," adds Bobae.

Although women are at the most vulnerable positions in terms of climate related risks, they also have very knowledge in their household and community levels for the most effective collective climate actions. That being said, having women at the frontline of local/regional/global climate actions will make tremendous impacts. Bobae adds that "the only way we could address climate change in a wholesome approach is enabling the half of the world population to be active agents of changes to tackle climate change and lead the green recovery of COVID 19."

“ Bobae is a dynamic colleague highly regarded by others in our office. She demonstrated feminist leadership in her day-to-day work, with always a high standard of integrity, professionalism and respect for diversity. I am very lucky to have her as my colleague. -- Jianfan Zhu, HR Business Partner, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Bobae has been engaging in collaborative work with other UN entities and organisations, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), youth activists and embassies.

For instance, she led the work on CSOs' engagements on gender-responsive climate actions by publishing training manuals in four languages and providing Trainings of Trainers (ToT) in six countries -Bangladesh, Cambodia, Viet Nam, Thailand, Nepal, and the Philippines. From this, 110 CSOs got trained.

In addition to that, she has been co-leading the development of an e-learning course on gender, human rights and climate change with UNEP and UNITAR, which has informed more than 12,000 learners. The moderated webinar trained more than 100 policymakers and climate-related financial institutions in six countries. She also has been leading gender-responsive M&E work for the project, publishing several knowledge products, and fundraising on gender-responsive urban resilience.

“ Bobae remains an integral part of the climate change team as well as key member of the overall regional office. Within the climate change programme, Bobae has driven essential actions related to reporting and evaluation which requires coordination with country offices and regional stakeholders and advancing technical input in the field of climate change. Bobae has provided exemplary support to the team. This also included building and advancing partnership and developing new proposals and programme strategies to advance gender equality and climate change. In addition to the thematically focused core work, Bobae also contributes substantively to the regional office including by showcasing empathetic leadership, mentoring and supporting junior colleagues. We are very grateful to have Bobae in our team. -- Maria Holtsberg, Regional Humanitarian/DRR specialist, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

"The beauty of volunteering is that it reminds us of important values in our lives and happiness. It is not about how much we earn or how high our positions in society are. It would be critical that you investigate where your hearts and love are laid in and choose UNV posts which are in line with," concludes Bobae.



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