

Ezat Ullah, national UN Volunteer Social Inclusion and Youth Empowerment Officer with UNDP Pakistan, holds a placard at an International Volunteer Day celebration in the refugee community on 5 December 2021.

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## Born a refugee, serving refugees: meet Ezat Ullah in Pakistan

Ezat Ullah was born a refugee and raised in Pakistan, where his parents had sought refuge from Afghanistan. Since 2020, he has been supporting the refugee community as a national UN Volunteer Social Inclusion and Youth Empowerment Officer with the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

Ezat Ullah's family hails from Koz Kunar in Nangarhar Province, in the eastern part of Afghanistan. The family fled to Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) in the 1980s, during the Soviet-Afghan War. His seven siblings, three sisters and four brothers, were also born and raised in Pakistan. In the refugee camp, Ezat and his siblings pursued an education and later, Ezat went on to obtain a Master's degree in International Relations from Bahria University in Pakistan's capital city, Islamabad.

In October 2020, he chanced upon a social media post of UNDP Pakistan calling people to volunteer with UNV. "When I saw the call to join UNDP as a UN Volunteer, I was all smiles, imagining that I could be that lucky one, especially since I had prior volunteer experience," Ezat says. After successfully completed UNV's recruitment process, he became the first Afghan refugee to serve as UN Volunteer Social Inclusion and Youth Empowerment Officer with UNDP in Pakistan.

At first, Ezat started working on the Youth Innovative Challenge project, aimed at improving the lives of marginalized communities living along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. He shares, "through this initiative, we educated young and marginalized refugees aged 13-29 on child sexual abuse, women

empowerment, advancing social inclusion and helping create spaces for them in the public sphere."

“ Being a UN Volunteer has been a great opportunity for me to work with and impact the lives of fellow refugees, I am always humbled that my small contribution brings hope to Afghan refugees who fled their country seeking safety in Pakistan. --Ezat Ullah, national UN Volunteer Specialist Social Inclusion and Youth Empowerment Officer with UNDP Pakistan

Ezat also contributed to other youth-related projects like *Kamyab Jawan* (Successful Youth) and *Jawan Marakiz* (Youth Mobilization Centres). These projects brought together thousands of young refugees to network, share unique experiences and interact with government officials and partners.

As part of his UN Volunteer assignment, Ezat ensures that marginalized groups – mainly young refugees, as well as youth in prison, universities and *madrassas* (religious schools) – are included in activities offered by UNDP Pakistan. He engages project partners to promote the inclusion of young refugees in their programmes.

Ezat explains, "We also provided a one-week training for youth ambassadors on climate adaptation, empirical research and data collection, advocacy for tolerance and harmony, sports, arts and culture. After the training, participants were provided with a small grant made possible through a partnership with UNICEF Pakistan."

“ As a young Afghan refugee living and working in Pakistan, Ezat Ullah has been consistently working to promote protection and development of Afghan refugees residing in the country. All his efforts revolve around his passionate commitment to improve the lives of refugee communities through engagement on their issues. --Ammara Durrani,

“ Assistant Resident Representative, Chief,  
Development Policy Unit, UNDP Pakistan



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