

**"Volunteering is...**

**...learning,  
taking action &  
inspiring others."**

*Bounchanh Oudom, national  
UN Volunteer Disability Inclusion  
Support Officer with UNDP, Lao PDR*



## Taking a step towards a more diverse and inclusive society

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme has been operating in Lao PDR since 1983, and over 1,000 UN Volunteers have served in the country to date. In 2021, over 70 UN Volunteers served in UN agencies, project offices and government ministries through the UN Development Programme (UNDP), including 23 UN Community Volunteers deployed to remote areas of the country. One of these is Bounchanh Oudom, a national UN Volunteer Disability Inclusion Specialist with UNDP, who shares her story.

UNV works with partners to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Lao PDR Development Strategy. To do so, the organization recruits diverse talents and offers a variety of volunteer opportunities.

Bounchanh Oudom, a national UN Volunteer Disability Inclusion Support Officer, serves with the UNDP Governance Team. Her role is to empower national organizations of persons

with disabilities to participate in decision-making that affects the lives of persons with disabilities.

Bounchanh joined UNDP under the UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities to gain new knowledge and skills in mainstreaming disability into development, learn about UN, and work more closely with the Government. She brings 12 years of experience in the area of disability-inclusive development to her assignment.

“ As a person with disabilities, I became a UN Volunteer to share my life experiences and to collaborate with UNDP to design better projects and activities on disability inclusion and equality to leave no one behind. --Bounchanh Oudom, national UN Volunteer Disability Inclusion Support Officer

Bounchanh enjoys her work, and is happy to see that her efforts have contributed to help improve relevant organizations for persons with disabilities. She was excited to work with other UNDP units in putting the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) principle of 'nothing about us without us' into practice across various UNDP programme on poverty reduction, climate and environmental protection.

Bounchanh's assignment with UNDP allows her to promote disability inclusion and participation at all levels, across all the sectors and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"Volunteering is about learning, acting, and inspiring others," Bounchanh says. She is committing all her time for new knowledge and skills as a UN Volunteer to contribute to a more inclusive and equitable Lao PDR.

Ricarda Rieger, Resident Representative of UNDP Lao PDR, shared how Bounchanh's position helps to highlight both UNDP's commitment to supporting persons with disabilities, and building a supportive learning environment for staff:

"We see Bounchanh has having two important objectives in her role as Disability Inclusion Support Officer. Firstly, to contribute to the work of the disability team, which she has been able to do drawing on her own lived experiences, and through working with many organizations of persons with disabilities in Lao PDR. And secondly, to benefit from working with UNDP by gaining new skills and experiences."

“ We acknowledge that no matter who you are, young or old, disability or no disability, life-long learning is for everyone. At UNDP, we want

“ to create an environment where our team members have the opportunity to both contribute and learn, and the UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities helps us to achieve this goal. --Ricarda Rieger, Resident Representative of UNDP Lao PDR

Bounchanh also left a message of encouragement to young persons with disabilities in Lao PDR:

“ Having a disability does not make you disabled. People around me used to tell me that I could never achieve anything, I kept working hard to prove that I could do something useful for my community. I believe that volunteering connects people, and it provides opportunities for people from various backgrounds and conditions to make use of their talents. When people from all social classes can volunteer for a common future, a diverse but peaceful society is not hard to reach. I call other persons with disabilities to act and join forces to make a difference! --Bounchanh Oudom

## Asia and the Pacific

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

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 10: Reduced inequalities](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)