



Zoe Rimba, national UN Volunteer Specialist with UNICEF Indonesia.

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Volunteering for child-responsive urban policies in Indonesia

Meet Zoe Rimba, a national UN Volunteer Subnational Planning Officer with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Indonesia. Zoe brings the values of volunteerism to child-responsive urban policies, and shares how her assignment is a dream come true.

On a summer day in 2019, Zoe Rimba was standing in front of the UNICEF Headquarters in New York as a graduate. She had just completed her studies in international and community development, and was about to return to Indonesia. At that very moment, a thought crossed her mind. What a great honour and privilege it would be to work for the cause of children across the globe!

Fresh out of school, ambitious, idealistic and driven to apply what she had learned for the good of others, Zoe

was also confused about the future and had many questions.

Could she really be a part of the solution to the issues she cared the most about? How is she going to put into action the big dreams she has? Where should she even start?

One thing was clear, she knew in her heart that whatever the future brought, she wanted to do something meaningful for women and children living in remote and underserved areas of Indonesia. The Indonesian government considers 11 of 34 provinces disadvantaged areas.

Two years later, in the summer of 2021, Zoe started her assignment as UN Volunteer for UNICEF in Indonesia. It was one of those full circle moments when her hopes and dreams, combined with her previous professional and academic experiences, made her fit for this role.

“ Volunteerism to me means living a life of service to others. It also means putting yourself in the other person’s shoes. Only then is it manifested in our daily work: that what we do does not come from a place of power, but from a place of deep understanding of other people’s unique backgrounds. We are guided by our personal, professional and spiritual convictions, and strong passion and desire to learn, share and walk alongside those we serve. I am excited to serve as a UN Volunteer with UNICEF, helping to address complex development challenges and find innovative solutions. --Zoe Rimba, UN Volunteer Subnational Planning Officer with UNICEF, Indonesia

Zoe supports UNICEF Indonesia’s urban and subnational planning and budgeting programmes for children.

"In 2022, we should dedicate our attention to child responsive urban planning which addresses urban inequities and disparities among children in cities," Zoe asserts. "We also need to develop structures and systems for sustained participation of children and young people in policy making and decision-making processes. The key objective is to influence national government policies on planning and budgeting to reflect the voices, needs, and rights of children."

She points out that UNICEF’s approach towards urban programming for children in Indonesia is two-pronged. On the one hand, they are working to strengthen governmental systems around planning and budgeting through evidence-generation, capacity building activities, and advocacy.

On the other hand, they are also working directly with children, adolescents, and young people to ensure their valuable participation in policy making and decision-making process through participation platforms like the *Musrenbang* (public participation in planning and budgeting) and *Forum Anak* (child forum). This commitment is reflected in one of the urban programmes related to child-friendly city initiatives.

This is why this year, Zoe is supporting the work of the Social Policy team in advocating for the integration of UNICEF’s global framework on Child Friendly City Initiatives with the Government of Indonesia’s own initiative, *Kabupaten Kota Layak Anak* (KLA).

"We see an opportunity to strengthen the government’s KLA initiative by conducting an assessment of its implementation across Indonesia, including the 24 indicators in the current KLA guidelines. I have contributed

to the planning of our CFCI work under our annual work plan this year, and engaged with our implementing partners who are rolling out adolescent participation programmes in key provinces across Indonesia," Zoe shares.

"I also participated in technical discussion meetings with the Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning (Bappenas), the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (Kemempmpa), and the Ministry of Home Affairs (Kemendagri). Most memorably, I supported UNICEF Indonesia's Urban 20 engagements, as a part of the Indonesian G20 Presidency," she adds.

2022 is a historical year for UNICEF Indonesia. UNICEF is supporting several global events, one of them being the Indonesian G20 Presidency. As a part of this, Zoe believes G20 is a great opportunity for UNICEF to encourage all stakeholders involved in this important endeavour to carry the voices of children, adolescents, and young people in Indonesia to the global stage. It is also an exciting year for her as she has the unique opportunity to be a part of UNICEF Indonesia's coordinated G20 efforts in the Urban 20.

For the Urban 20, she Zoe helped the Social Policy team with event planning for the Urban 20 Webinar, "A Common Framework: Towards Child-Friendly Cities amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, Climate Crisis and Rising Structural Inequalities."

She was engaged in drafting the concept note and terms of reference, preparing the event rundown, to liaising with the event organizer. Zoe was also asked to represent UNICEF Indonesia as one of the speakers in a session where she presented on "Children in Urban Settings in Indonesia" to an audience of over 300 hundred people.

“ Working in a team with Zoe has been a fantastic opportunity for me. She has been instrumental in supporting the UNICEF Jakarta Office in the programme area Urban/Subnational planning and budgeting by connecting UNICEF with governments, civil society organizations, and youth and adolescents. Also, we asked her to be a speaker in the Urban 20 Webinar, representing UNICEF Indonesia, to give her more opportunities for capacity development. --Ali Moechtar, Social Policy Specialist and Zoe's supervisor, UNICEF

Indeed, Zoe is hopeful for the future of cities. She is glad that UNICEF Indonesia emphasizes the importance of working with and for children, especially during a global pandemic, climate crisis and rising structural inequalities.

“ There is an African proverb that says it takes a whole village to raise a child. The same thing is true for creating inclusive and sustainable cities for children regardless of their socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds. It requires a whole-of-society approach to tirelessly work and produce concrete and measurable results for children. --Zoe Rimba

That is why Zoe says that the spirit of volunteerism must always be ignited, because each one of us has a special role to play.

Adrian Kusuma Pratama, Urban and Subnational Planning Specialist, and another supervisor of Zoe says, "I thoroughly enjoy working with Zoe. Her understanding of urban/subnational planning and budgeting activity is excellent. Her commitment to work is beyond question. She has been actively involved in designing the programme for urban/subnational planning and budgeting while completing the administrative tasks."

Looking back at that moment in New York and the big questions she had, Zoe now realizes that she is not the solution per se, but in fact a part of the bigger picture. It's heartening for her to see that the United Nations instills this culture in the people who serve this great intergovernmental organization. Every day, Zoe carries the honor, joy, and gratitude that she is able to serve the United Nations Children's Fund in Indonesia.

"I commend UNV for its concerted efforts in bringing volunteers from all over the world to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals and hope that more volunteers across Indonesia and around the world will join us as we serve our country and the global community as changemakers and produce results that last for generations to come," Zoe says.



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