Using civil engineering skills for community development in Myanmar

With a background in Civil Engineering, Prabesh Paudyal serves as a UN Volunteer specialist with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Myanmar. According to his supervisor, Nikola Duvnjak, Livelihood and Economics Recovery Specialist, Prabesh and UN Volunteers like him play a central role in supporting UNDP's mandate to eradicate poverty.

Prabesh's main task revolves around civil engineering and other technical support to disaster risk reduction and community development. He is responsible for the distribution of agricultural assets like water pumps, tractors and threshers in support of community-owned
and led management systems. His assignment involves checking work progress in the field and working with partners on implementation, quality assurance, coordinating with the local users, and educating the community on the proper usage and maintenance of infrastructure.

“I wanted to utilize my skills for the benefit of the poor and disadvantaged. I am very satisfied to be able to serve as a UN Volunteer. And to work in the field directly with the beneficiaries in an overly complex environment. I can see that the projects which I am helping to implement have a significant impact on the livelihood of the local people. --Prabesh Paudyal, UN Volunteer Specialist with UNDP in Myanmar

During his UN Volunteer assignment, Prabesh worked on a project that constructed seven solar dome dryers. This project aims to increase the product quality of the farmers’ agricultural products, mostly fish products. The solar dryer fully running on solar energy will increase the income of the vulnerable farmers by selling quality and efficiently dried products.

He faced challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, as it became hard to access the field. He was not able to interact with the community members to understand their concerns, and plan further due to pandemic restrictions. However, Prabesh found an alternative way to contact beneficiaries and check the progress of work.

For quality assurance, Prabesh and his team set up a Viber group and requested a private sector partner to share pictures and videos of different construction activities. The photos were examined, and virtual sessions were arranged with engineers to advance the work. These sessions were an innovative way to engage the beneficiaries.

“Prabesh, like other UN Volunteers, play a central role in supporting UNDP’s mandate to eradicate poverty. For Prabesh, this unique experience and his technical expertise significantly contributed to our team’s ability to deliver socio-economic support to rural communities in conflict-torn Rakhine in Myanmar. --Nikola Duvnjak, Livelihood and Economics Recovery Specialist with UNDP Myanmar, and Prabesh’s supervisor
The construction activities that Prabesh was involved in as a UN Volunteer benefitted 2,800 local workers. Three years have passed since Prabesh started serving in Rakhine.

“It is rewarding to see the infrastructure implemented in 2019 taking shape and being utilized by the locals. One of the most memorable projects is the renovation of the pond. The locals were so happy, as they were able to get clean water. -- Prabesh Paudyal, UN Volunteer Specialist, UNDP Myanmar

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