Driving transformation with young people through dynamic partnerships

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the people of Nepal, with children and young people being among the most vulnerable. According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), two-thirds of children lack access to at least one of seven basic needs. Machiko Kitagawa (Japan) served as a UN Volunteer with UNICEF, playing a pivotal role in engaging adolescents and youth in the wake of COVID-19.

UN Volunteer Machiko Kitagawa played a pivotal role in engaging adolescents and youth with UNICEF in Nepal. Her primary focus was to oversee the implementation of Generation Unlimited (GenU) in Nepal, devising strategies, bolstering country frameworks and forging crucial partnerships to empower Nepalese youth. Machiko’s assignment was fully funded by the Government of Japan, under the Human Resource Development Programme for Peacebuilding and Development.

GenU is a global, multi-sector partnership designed to enable young people to become productive and engaged members of society. By uniting partners from business, governments and the United Nations, it aims to transform education, employment and entrepreneurial outcomes for youth across the globe, including Nepal, where it has already made significant strides.

“Given that 40 per cent of our population is under 18 years old, investing in our young generation is pivotal to shaping our national development. -- UNICEF Nepal

When Machiko initially took up her role, Nepal was grappling with stringent COVID-19 restrictions, necessitating remote work from Japan. Though challenging, she managed to forge strong connections with her colleagues.
in Nepal upon relocating to Kathmandu.

"I had to adapt to the continually changing needs brought on by the pandemic. So, I focused my efforts on guiding young people through lockdowns and engaging them in virtual events during the first year."
--Machiko Kitagawa, UN Volunteer Generation Unlimited Coordinator with UNICEF, Nepal

Social media proved to be a powerful tool in connecting with the youth amid the difficulties of COVID-19, and Machiko worked in close collaboration with other UN agencies to reach as many young people as possible through digital platforms.

"Machiko's incredible talents, strong networking abilities and unyielding drive for results were invaluable to our team. Her dedication and innovative ideas were instrumental in our endeavors."
--Tania Dhakhwa, former Chief of Communication with UNICEF, Nepal

In addition to her GenU role, building inter-agency partnerships was an integral part of Machiko's assignment in Nepal. She actively promoted connections through her involvement as co-chair of the UN Youth Task Force, engaging Youth Advocates and leading the GenU Youth Challenge.

The evolving pandemic situation made Machiko's role demanding, yet her resilience and contributions were duly recognized. Her supervisor extended her contract, and she continued her journey with UNICEF as a UN Volunteer. Machiko then became a UN Volunteer Expert in the role of Youth Engagement and Partnerships Specialist, also with UNICEF.
In recognition of her outstanding performance, Machiko was honoured with the UNV award on International Volunteer Day in 2021, wholeheartedly supported by her team.

"Machiko's strategic mindset and ability to foster collaborations between teams and organizations have been of immeasurable value," praises Tania Dhakhwa, former Chief of Communication at UNICEF Nepal.

Machiko’s tenure in Nepal proved instrumental, also thanks to the cross-sectoral nature of youth engagement. Her strong interpersonal skills enabled her to closely collaborate with focal points from various UN agencies and young people across Nepal.

Through dynamic partnerships and the dedication of individuals like Machiko, Nepal's young generation is being empowered to drive transformation, steering the nation towards a brighter, more prosperous future.

https://www.unv.org/Partners/unv-partnering-unicef

Asia and the Pacific

- International Youth Day • Full Funding Programme • Japan • Human Resource Development Programme for Peacebuilding and Development • COVID-19 • Coronavirus

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 3: Good health and well-being SDG 10: Reduced inequalities SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals