UN Volunteer Yuqing Xiong from China’s Wuhan, Hubei Province, recounts her firsthand experience during the outbreak of COVID-19. She initially put her thoughts together to share with her fellow citizens from Wuhan, and now she is sharing her experience with the world.

I am glad that at this critical period, I am in Wuhan, together with my parents. I am not a selfless superheroine fighting against the disease for others, just no more than an ordinary resident in Wuhan. No matter how increasingly serious the situation is or how highly concerned the outsiders are, our lives continue in this homeland.
Since it was confirmed there is a possibility of human-to-human transmission of the coronavirus, I have been at home - for more than 2 months. Our compound has been strictly blocked for entry.

As a UN Volunteer serving with UNICEF China’s Child Protection Team, I have had the opportunity to work for children during the public health emergency. I am glad to have been able to contribute in some way to help thousands of children who have been in home quarantine and are forced to face this unfamiliar and unsettling situation. I also witnessed firsthand how this situation was affecting my five-year-old cousin and concerns of his mother. I know this is a common situation for many.

Along with a holistic response plan initiated by the UNICEF China Office, our child protection team prioritized to prepare physio-social support messages to parents, caregivers, community workers, volunteers, and children. I participated in translating and sorting those messages from professional English guidelines published by WHO, IFRC, UNICEF and to provide references for other colleagues and partners. With the joint efforts from colleagues of the Communications Team, our final work has been disseminated through UNICEF China’s official We-Chat account. I hope this has provided in-time support to our targeted groups.

As the only colleague in the epicenter, my active participation in telecommuting encouraged others. While going through ups and downs, luckily, my parents and I are still coping positively, with the distinctive and unpredictable circumstances.
Street checkpoint in Wuhan, China

Thanks to support and concerns of my dear relatives, friends and colleagues, life truly becomes more comfortable, to know that someone is thinking of you. But I must mention that you, yourself solely can cheer yourself up during this difficult time. I would like to share my feelings and what I did for the past few weeks. It will make me really happy if it helps you in some way.

Filter the Information

Within seconds, many friends may share the same messages and opinions about what’s happening. At a time like this, it is unavoidable to be exposed to excessive information, including fake news and rumours. At the beginning of the outbreak, I was desperate to know the most updated news and tried to seize any report and chat about it with my friends and family. However, when increasing attention gathered on Wuhan, messages and news were roaring at an uncontrolled speed together with rumours, conspiracy theories, and unveiled dark sides of human society. I started to realize that I have no energy nor need to understand these. As a front-liner, I am
comparatively more vulnerable and decided that I shall avoid any unnecessary burden that I need to take in. Now, I only focus on authentic news about event updates, share useful and practical information with friends and persuade my family as well, not to share or believe in any fake or unverified news. We must be sensible and enhance our knowledge of epidemic prevention. This way works for me, and I would like to clarify that to filter the information does not mean to block yourself, but rather to avoid anything that can affect you mentally in an unnecessary manner – and further unsettle your mind.

Find something you like to do

Sleeping, watching TV series and digging into snacks are my normal during holidays, and this was how life went on the first week. But then, people get bored in this routine, and my parents and I are no exception. We then came up with different ideas to spend our time. Indeed, we need to find some fun for distraction. For example, my parents learnt to play online mahjong with their colleagues, chatting and laughing, and I found some interesting online courses and documentaries. My life became more occupied when I started to work from home. I also managed to do some simple exercises with them, like yoga and aerobics, which also contributes to enhancing our immune systems. Speaking of this, I kindly remind everybody to eat nutritiously and get adequate rest. After all, health is the capital of the fight!

Online Volunteering

I had known about the UNV Online Volunteering platform long before and always kept an eye on suitable opportunities. As a result of flexible working hours when teleworking during home quarantine, I had some spare time do get involved in something interesting and meaningful through the platform. This was a good opportunity for me to spend my free time to make a valuable contribution to support others in need, with the resources available to me. A translation titled 'Share your Experiences and Innovations on Volunteering for the SDGs' from English into Chinese, by the UNV Volunteer Advisory Services Section caught my attention, and I successfully got the chance to volunteer for this task. I believe that online volunteering is not only about your efforts, it is also rewarding.

Being a national UN volunteer, I was excited to have the interaction with the UNV headquarters, and I got a clearer understanding of the organization’s other activities while using my translation skills. There are also other available opportunities, and I will continue to participate. I also encourage others who are interested in volunteerism and international development to join this network, it’s a feasible way to contribute to the common good,
whether in an emergency like now or in the future.

**Maintain communication with others**

I am so glad to be part of the UN family in China and I want to extend my special thanks to my organization for offering frequent care and practical support. I believe many of you have also received various support from your HR departments, and have been offered psychological support like me. The concerns and understanding of my colleagues’ and organization were of great relief to me. I certainly believe sharing a post or some pictures through available social media channels, whether a delicious home-cooked dinner or a pleasant moment you are having with your pet, is a great and light way to express your feelings like I always do. This is a welcome change from my friends and colleagues, and you will also find those who share similar interests.

We are all in this together, and we will not surrender. Spring has come, and I firmly believe we will soon overcome these problems. I send my best wishes to everyone, our fight continues, cheer up, let’s do it!

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Asia and the Pacific

• #COVID-19 #CoronaPandemic #UNICEF #OnlineVolunteering

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