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UNV pilot virtual workshop nurtures the skills of UN Youth Volunteers in Asia and the Pacific

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme brought together 38 UN Youth Volunteers from countries in the Asia-Pacific region to UNV’s first UN Youth Volunteer Virtual Workshop, which took place on 14 May 2020.
The workshop explored the role of volunteering in contributing to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and enhanced the knowledge and leadership of participating UN Youth Volunteers, especially in the COVID-19 context.

Welcoming the participants via a video message Kyoko Yokosuka, Chief of UNV's External Relations and Communications Section, highlighted the importance of UN Volunteers serving with pride, awareness and ethics.

Manon Bernier, UNV Regional Manager for Asia and the Pacific a.i., welcomed participants to this first virtual workshop, organized with UN Volunteers in Asia and the Pacific. As technology enables volunteers to be connected, she encouraged them to share their experiences, learn from and network with each other.

At the first module of the pilot virtual workshop, former UN Volunteers also joined in to share experiences of their UN Volunteer journey and lessons learnt to motivate and encourage the new youth volunteers in their path to personal and professional growth.

I'm thankful for the opportunity to participate in the virtual workshop, which was an interactive and inspiring experience for me as a UN Youth Volunteer. I especially loved the mini-breakout sessions with former UN Volunteers; It was really inspiring to hear some of their experiences. -- UN Volunteer Azra Caffoor, Programme Support Assistant, Sri Lanka

Participating UN Volunteers shared their most memorable takeaways from the virtual workshop.
The UN Youth Volunteers learned about the role of UNV in the UN system and how to promote volunteerism during their assignments. They also got the opportunity to share their experiences and challenges, as well as share best practices in their specific country contexts.

Rasa Pattikasemkul, serving with the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Thailand, shared how she is working with community volunteers during COVID-19. Scarlett Hawkins (Australia), serving with the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) in Vanuatu, shared her experience in supporting gender-based violence prevention and victim support during COVID-19, as well as natural disasters. Huong Dao Thu with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam shared how she is supporting people with disabilities during COVID-19 and the importance of fighting stigma.

The UN Youth Volunteer Workshop is usually delivered onsite over four days to effectively prepare volunteers for their assignments. It was organized virtually by UNV until travel restrictions due to COVID-19 are lifted.

Offering an opportunity for UN Youth Volunteers to connect, exchange and learn from each other is critical, and has gained a new level of importance during the pandemic. Given the limitations to exchange resulting from COVID-19, it was clear we needed to create a virtual space to uphold the support. While UNV trained well over 600 UN Volunteers onsite in 2019, the virtual concept was a pilot. It is great to see participants from across Asia and the Pacific, from Vanuatu to China, Sri Lanka and Nepal. The workshop was a great success overall, and we will now hold the same for volunteers in other regions as well. --Niels Lohmann, Team Lead, Capacity Development, UNV

The Workshop will be repeated for UN Youth Volunteers in other regions. A second virtual module, focusing on leadership, is in the making and will be
• UN Youth Volunteers • capacity building • Virtual Workshop

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals