Little bird, conveying big messages

The community radio project helps improve access to information and public services for marginalized rural communities. The radio stations are entirely run by volunteers from the communities, a diverse bunch of inspired, mostly young people, eager to learn and contribute their time and energy. They know the communities, people and various ethnic languages.

One of these is Nokna Douangpanya. ‘Ricefield bird’, that is the meaning of Nokna’s name. The UN Volunteer Community Mobilization and Coordination Officer has been serving with UNDP in the remote Thatheng district, Sekong province of southern Laos, for more than two years.

Thatheng station is one of the eight community radio stations, reaching more than 300,000 people and broadcasting in 11 different languages/dialects. The station covers a range of issues like agriculture, disaster preparedness, health, gender, migration and others.
Volunteerism made me understand how important it is to develop your own community, doing everything possible to help yourself and others to create a future worth living. --Nokna Douangpanya

"My work includes helping Community Radio Volunteers from many villages and ethnic groups from remote areas to learn new skills and to produce quality broadcasts," Nokna says. "This assignment allowed me to visit many remote places, meet people from different vulnerable groups, and give them a voice. I have learned so much about equality, real equality where ethnic people get the same access to services as people living in the city, for example."

Nokna proudly says that the project has remarkable results. Not only does the project serve as a source of information and education for unprivileged Lao communities, but it also contributed to increased vaccination rates, more women using health facilities, and improved natural disaster preparedness and recovery.

The assignment has also been a great step forward in Nokna’s personal and
professional development. She has been invited to various events to represent the project and share its results with donors, partners, and the public. She has also had a privilege to attend a three-day long radio broadcasting workshop, organized by the Lao National Radio.

"I am very happy that I am following my dream – to work at the radio, and I am learning a lot from my colleagues and the volunteers," Nokna shares.