Huong Dao Thu serves as a national UN Volunteer Disability Rights Officer with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam. Here, she takes the floor to contribute her perspective during a training on the Human Rights Based Approach to Programme.

02 December 2019

Huong Dao Thu, UN Volunteer Disability Rights Officer

Leading by example and championing disability rights with UNDP in Viet Nam

As a UN Volunteer Disability Rights Officer with the Governance and Participation Unit of UNDP, I champion the rights of people with disabilities and act as a passionate voice for their support and inclusion.

In my assignment, I have brought together government partners and DPO representatives in workshops that offer a practical toolkit and cohesive outlook for the inclusion of disabled people in the workplace. By being there and leading these workshops myself, I demonstrate that just because a person has a disability, it does not mean that they are any less capable of delivering high quality outcomes in a professional environment.

“ I am committed to building the right support systems around people with disabilities and ensuring they are visible and engaged in society.”
In doing that, we can challenge perceptions and change mindsets about what it means to be disabled. --Huong Dao Thu, UN Volunteer Disability Rights Officer, UNDP Viet Nam

As a person with a disability, I often find people do not know how to approach and interact with me and children can be particularly uncertain. Recently, I ran an employment booth at an event marking International Youth Day. There were a lot of children present and while early on they appeared awkward and hesitant, we quickly became comfortable with each other.

The example with the children showed that how by simply interacting we were able to see we have more in common than we may appear to on the surface. While there is a long way to go, small examples like this help advance the rights of disabled people in a meaningful way.

I have received a lot of support during my assignment with UNDP. Before I joined UNDP, the team at UNV worked hard to ensure I had the necessary accommodations. This support has allowed me to realize my full potential in my assignment and I have not been constrained by practical barriers to my work.

This Talent Programme is a great example of how by facilitating greater participation of disabled people in the workforce, we deliver better outcomes for people with disabilities. I hope the programme will continue for many years and bring many other talented people with disabilities on board.

My favourite quote is: "If you want to go fast, go alone but if you want to go far, go together!" --Huong Dao Thu
Huong Dao Thu serves as a national UN Volunteer Disability Rights Officer with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam. Here, she engages with children during celebrations of International Youth Day. (UNV, 2019)

This article was prepared with the kind assistance of Online Volunteer Helen Maccan


• UNDP • UNDP/UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities • International Day of Persons with Disabilities • #volunteer4inclusion

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 10: Reduced inequalities, SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals