

Yoko Yoshihara reflects on her secondment with UNDP



My two and a half years at UNDP were full of learning and inspiration. I truly appreciated the opportunity to work with my colleagues at UNDP who influenced me in many positive ways. While working in the Japan Unit under the Public Partnership Group in the Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy (BERA), I learned a lot from not only my BERA colleagues, but also from other parts of the organization.

Even though the COVID-19 pandemic started four months after I arrived in New York, forcing everyone to fully telecommute, it was a precious opportunity for me to be part of the organization as it responded and adapted to the crisis environment. I was impressed by how UNDP maintained its operations in New York and in the field to support countries in responding to the crisis. Within a few months of the beginning of the pandemic, UNDP issued corporate offers to assist countries and allowed the Country Offices to take actions with their own projects based on the needs in each country. I believe the in-house experts in various sectors, experienced and passionate about their development work, played an important role in enabling the organization to move so swiftly.



*Yoko Yoshihara (far right), with colleagues
from the United Nations Development Programme*

I had the opportunity to collaborate with the Japan Unit team on its formulation of the Japan Supplementary Budget project for COVID-19 response and recovery in 29 countries across the world. It was a memorable opportunity to engage in the corporate response together with regional and thematic teams and learn from experience how Japan partners with UNDP and other UN agencies who stay and deliver emergency responses in the field. Furthermore, we observed some noteworthy collaboration with JICA on the ground, including [in Sudan](#) and [Bhutan](#) during the implementation phase.

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With more multi-dimensional crises rocking the UN system and the whole world, including those in Myanmar, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Ukraine, the strength and leadership of the UNDP as the UN's development organization continues to be tested.

I also had a chance to be part of the Japan-UNDP crisis response to Ukraine. As the Officer-In-Charge in the Japan Unit at that time, I had the opportunity to steer and coordinate within the UNDP, in close collaboration with the Tokyo Representation Office to quickly initiate [the Emergency Grant project with Japan](#) for clearing explosive ordnance and removing debris in Ukraine within a few weeks. It was also my first experience being involved in Japan's Emergency Grant project and in the UN's support of a country at war.

I have started my new assignment in the Law and Justice Team with the Governance Group in the Governance and Peacebuilding Department in JICA. I look forward to contributing to JICA's efforts in this changing environment by drawing on my experience at UNDP. I also hope to continue being part of the UNDP-Japan/JICA partnership in my new capacities.

Once again, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at UNDP, who kindly welcomed and supported me during my secondment, colleagues at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and at JICA who always extended support to me when needed.