



UN

Volunteers

inspiration in action

Supunya Yonpiam, Thailand, Water and Sanitation Engineer, UNMIL

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Monrovia, Liberia. When I was thinking about my story, I asked myself: "What will I write about my one month story as a UNV volunteer at UNMIL? How did I make a difference in a month?" I realized immediately that every day in life is different whether I notice it or not. About a month ago I was in my country, today I am in Monrovia. This is a big difference, isn't it?

In early August 2008, I officially began working as a UNV volunteer Water and Sanitation Engineer in the Water, Sanitation and Environmental Control Unit. My responsibilities involve doing water analysis and testing for the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

Firstly, I needed to set up the laboratory. There were a lot of equipment and laboratory chemicals in the existing lab which were kept in boxes. Some equipment looked new, but its model is considered out-of-date; some were totally damaged and some chemicals had expired. The most time-consuming and delicate work was to investigate the new devices in order to utilize them and ensure their performance was acceptable (in both accuracy and precision) based on relevant standard procedures.

I have been asked when water testing could be done by UNMIL's laboratory. My simple answer could be: "I'm coming". In my experience, setting up a new lab with all new facilities takes up to six months, including delivery time of equipment and with support from local equipment distributors. Here at UNMIL, conditions are different. For the first time, I had to act as a technical saleswoman with support from the WatSan Team and other sections (Medical Centre, Warehouse, Power, Disposal Unit etc.). I never walk alone.

If you notice the white gown I wear for my own safety, it is also sponsored by Medical Centre (Star Base) in addition with a lot of lab consumables. Now, I'm the only 'Water Doctor' at UNMIL, and I hope I'll have an opportunity to share and transfer my skills, knowledge and experiences to enlist more. This is one of my expectations from volunteerism.

From Wikipedia, free encyclopedia: "A volunteer is someone who works for a community or for the benefit of environment primarily because they choose to do so." Yes, at this moment, I choose to be a volunteer. I found it's very



UNV Supunya Yonpiam from Thailand is a Water and Sanitation Engineer for UNMIL in Liberia. Due to her white lab coat, her team nicknamed her 'Water Doctor'. (UNV)



"I found it's very challenging to work and to compete with myself to achieve something not only for a community such as UNMIL but also for my own peaceful spirit," says UNV volunteer Water and Sanitation Engineer Supunya Yonpiam. (UNV)



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challenging to work and to compete with myself to achieve something not only for a community such as UNMIL but also for my own peaceful spirit. How about you?