

Career Paths in International Development.

for



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Who am I? Why Listen to Me?



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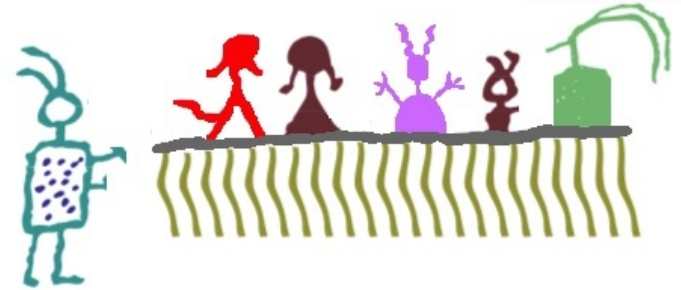
Development Activities: Examples

- Introducing or improving local wine-making.
- Building a school and training teachers for that school.
- Building a new road or series of roads.
- Educating local mothers on maternal health.
- Organizing live theater events to promote healthy water and sanitation practices.
- Advocating for rights and protections for at-risk groups.
- Helping people access permanent housing.
- Reforming the training of local police.
- Strengthening anti-poaching laws and enforcement.
- Helping refugees access employment or education.
- Introducing laws to protect ecosystems.
- Working to make a judicial system more fair and transparent.



Who does development?

- Community groups / local activists.
- Local, regional and national governments.
- Local, regional and national nonprofits (non-governmental agencies - NGOs).
- International NGOs.
- United Nations (UNDP, WFP, World Bank, etc.)
- Communities of faith.
- International religious organizations.
- Business associations.
- Foreign governments (funding activities in countries not their own).



Which of these agencies and entities involve legal professionals?

Hint: all of them.

International development

Development activities that are funded and/or staffed, in whole or in part, by people who are not from the country where development activities will take place, or an agency that is not based in the country where development activities will take place.



Why *International* Development?

There isn't enough funding locally to address a development need.

There isn't enough expertise locally to address a development need.

A neutral “player” is needed.

Countries are affected by what's happening in other countries.



What is a Developing Country?

All countries are developing countries.

Some countries are more “developed” than others.

Development is measured NOT by GDP, but by education rates, maternal health, employment/wages versus cost of living, access to water and sanitation, safety and security, equity and inclusion, etc.



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are common, universal goals for member states of the United Nations to transform the world into a fairer, more prosperous and peaceful society until 2030.

The SDGs were adopted in September 2015 as successors to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Ethical development professionals.

- Have skills and expertise that are needed in an area and are not displacing local experts/local professionals.
- Have done locally what they want to do or are doing internationally.
- Partner and work with local people.
- Are led by what local people want and need, not what they themselves think local people need.
- Teach local people skills so that they can do the work themselves eventually.
- Employ local people whenever possible.
- Believe in and work towards equity in education, employment, social participation, health care access, and all aspects of life.
- Respect local languages, customs, religions, etc.*
- Speak more than one language.

*note that this can come into conflict with the work towards equity.



Financial compensation in development work

- Local and NGOs pay: very low – even no pay at all (volunteer).
- Local government: can be low, can be high, and everywhere in between. Usually offers some job security, vacation pay, etc.
- National government: can be average, can be quite high, can offer excellent job security (or not).
- International NGOs: can be average, can be high, depends on the financial resources of the INGO. You may, or may not, travel a lot.
- United Nations: local contracts in a “developing” country pay at the same rate as regional or national government in that developing country. International contracts pay quite well; you may or may not travel a lot. Most international UN contracts last only up to four years (which is why a lot of UN staff move a lot).
- National government of a “developed” country, working internationally: can be quite high. Lots of travel.



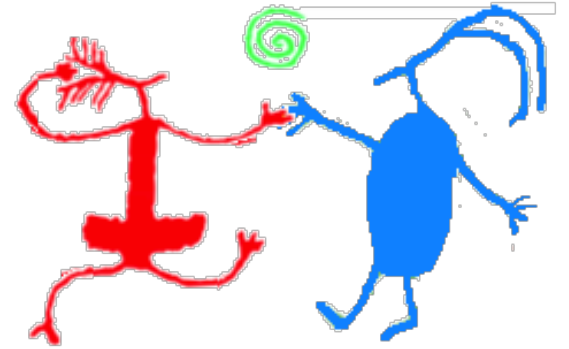
Myths about international development work

- Lots of travel.
- Adventurous and glamorous.
- Lifetime job security.
- There are certain university degrees that guarantee employment.
- There are certain universities that guarantee employment.
- You have to know someone already at an agency where you want to work.
- You always get to work directly with the local communities your program is focused on.
- The only way to get your “foot in the door” is with an internship or the UN’s Junior Program Officer (JPO) initiative.



Benefits for an international development worker

- Work that actually might be a part of something that's transformative for a community, a region – even a nation.
- Interesting work.
- Can make you feel less helpless in the face of wars, instability, inhumanity, etc.
- Might be some travel.
- Might get to work with the communities you are ultimately trying to serve.
- Work can make you feel important (ego boost).



Challenges for international dev workers

- Your good work can be undone in a flash, by war, by the takeover of a dictator, by a natural disaster, etc.
- It often feels like you aren't helping.
- Hostility from local communities.
- It's often NOT interesting – it's just a job, like anything.
- Weird competitiveness with other staff and other agencies.
- Can make you feel helpless in the face of wars, instability, inhumanity, etc.
- To keep working in international development, you have to move a lot.
- Finding employment when you are ready to not work in this field can sometimes be difficult.
- You must be strong emotionally and psychologically.



You need the abilities to...

- read, understand and leverage large amounts of text for your work.
- manage time effectively.
- negotiate.
- speak comfortably in front of audiences, including those that may be hostile to your subject matter.
- shut up, listen & learn from others (I am using “shut up” because too many don’t understand “listen quietly”).
- adapt and improvise when you realize a strategy won’t work or something unexpected happens.
- write to educate, persuade and influence others.
- cultivate trust quickly and on an ongoing basis.
- break a process down to smaller steps and reframe complex ideas into plain language.
- delegate tasks appropriately with an eye to building the skills of others.
- work with and support people you may not like.
- process your own stress, anxiety, and other negative feelings in a healthy way.
- own your mistakes.

More on my blog.



Where to find international job opportunities

Each individual UN agency has its own job web sites, and often, each country office for a UN agency has a job web site as well. Some web sites should check out:

UNDP

UN Volunteers

UNICEF

UNOPS

WFP

World Bank



Some UN agencies also have LinkedIn profiled JUST for posting job opportunities.

Also

- ReliefWeb
- DevEx
- Developmentaid.org
- Your government's international development agency



UNV: for professionals, not “newbies”

United Nations Volunteers is for people who are experienced professionally.

These ARE paid positions (onsite – online volunteers are unpaid).

Onsite positions are six months to two years.

UNVs aren't really “volunteers” since they are paid; it's a type of contract rather than actually being volunteers.

UNV is a part of UNDP.



It takes more than applying

Your LinkedIn profile should be up-to-date and use language that international agencies use.

Regularly read online communities related to the work you want to do (on LinkedIn, on Reddit, etc.)

Follow people on social media that do the kind of work you want to do, or at the agencies you want to follow. Even better is if you can interact with them in a meaningful way with questions and comments.

Join a local UN Association, if you have one, and attend meetings.

Get involved as a board member or a pro bono consultant with a local nonprofit.

Serve on a government board or committee.

My online resources for more info:

coyotebroad.com/development/workabroad.shtml



Remember:

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