
CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN HUMANITARIAN AID AND RELIEF

Description of the Field

The less developed parts of our world are plagued by famine, malnutrition, poor water quality, and poor sanitation, as well as AIDS, TB, malaria, and other deadly diseases. These problems frequently overlap, particularly in the poorest regions of Africa, India, and South America, and when combined with weak education systems, corruption, or civil war, these problems become even more difficult to solve. In addition to health and social dilemmas, extreme weather conditions also greatly harm the global poor. A region with drought or flood conditions will be unable to effectively grow crops and oftentimes the starving citizens will even resort to eating their seed stocks – hurting the next year’s planting season, and reinforcing the cycle of poverty and suffering. While the Western world only reads about or sees these horrific humanitarian situations on TV, they are everyday reality for many millions of our fellow humans.

Humanitarian relief is an extraordinarily complex subject involving many actors, including governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as United Nations agencies, which seek to respond simultaneously to natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes and hurricanes), and/or complex emergencies (e.g. war and other violent conflicts). These actors bring life saving skills and technologies to re-establish basic services such as water and sanitation, set up schools, and to provide food and medical supplies.

Career Paths and Entry Salaries

There are close to a million nonprofits, state and federal government agencies, and organizations locally and internationally that provide humanitarian assistance. Salaries are traditionally lower for positions in the humanitarian field than for positions in the international development field. As humanitarian relief is such a large field, it is difficult to provide a baseline salary, which varies based on the size and focus of the organization, the type of job within the organization, and the geographic location. Salaries can range from \$25,000 up to over \$100,000 a year for a senior level position.

Demand

The environment where humanitarian action takes place is evolving rapidly and continually poses new challenges to the humanitarian community. There is increasing human vulnerability in crisis situations, both in natural disasters and in complex emergencies.

The last decade has seen a marked increase in the occurrence of natural disasters along with exposure to greater levels of loss of life, property, and material damage. The lives of millions of civilians are at risk each time an earthquake, hurricane or other natural disaster occurs, particularly in poor countries with less developed infrastructures, high population densities and inadequate emergency preparedness. (www.ochaonline.un.org) There is clearly a high demand for professionals to respond to such crises, and there are growing numbers of opportunities for administrators, fund raisers, grant writers, program organizers, teachers, researchers, policy analysts and others.

Qualifications Necessary to Enter the Field

A Masters degree in Public Administration or in Economic and Political Development, a dedication to making the world a better place to live, and a desire to serve others by doing good works are all desirable qualifications to enter this field. An expertise in one of the key technical areas including food security, public health, nutrition,

logistics, or conflict resolution is strongly recommended to effectively and permanently solve issues which arise when disaster occurs. Candidates must also demonstrate business acumen, personal diplomacy and basic toughness. Other necessary qualifications for some positions include two or three years of experience in the developing world and the requisite foreign language requirement.

Sample Group of Employers

- Adventist Development and Relief Agency International [ADRA] - www.adra.org
- Africare - www.africare.org
- Alpha Charitable Foundation - www.alphainc.org
- American Red Cross - www.redcross.org
- AmeriCares - www.americares.org
- Amy Biehl Foundation - www.amybiehl.org
- Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland e.V. - www.asb.de
- Asociación de Solidaridad y Ayuda al Pueblo Saharaui - *no website*
- Association François-Xavier Bagnoud - www.fxb.org
- Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard - www.bbg.org.za
- CARE - www.care.org
- Catholic Relief Services - www.crs.org
- Christian Friends of Korea - www.cfk.org
- Church World Service - www.churchworldservice.org
- Direct Relief International - www.directrelief.org
- Doctors without Borders - www.doctorswithoutborders.org
- Global Aids Alliance - www.globalaidsalliance.org
- Global Development Center - www.cgdev.org
- Goodwill Industries of America - www.goodwill.org
- Healing Hands International, Inc. - www.hhi.org
- Himalayan HealthCare, Inc. - www.himalayan-healthcare.org
- International Medical Corps (IMC) - www.imcworldwide.org
- International Rescue Committee - www.theirc.org
- Nishkam Sikh Welfare Council - www.nishkam.org
- Project HOPE – www.projecthope.org
- Satellife - www.healthnet.org
- Save the Children - www.savethechildren.org
- Stop Global Aids - <http://takeaction.stopglobalaids.org>
- The Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) - www.path.org
- UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) - www.unhcr.org
- UN OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) - www.ochaonline.un.org
- United States Agency of International Development (USAID) - www.usaid.gov
- Vida - www.vida.org
- World Vision - www.worldvision.org

Volunteer Organizations

- Center for Humanitarian Outreach and Intercultural Exchange - www.choicehumanitarian.org
- Cross-Cultural Solutions - www.crossculturalsolutions.org
- Dakshinayan - www.dakshinayan.org
- Global Volunteer Network - www.globalvolunteers.org
- Peace Corps - www.peacecorps.gov
- United Way - www.uwint.org

Future Challenges of the Profession

There are always new issues in public health that must be dealt with, such as the SARS epidemic or the recent bird flu outbreaks, and the extreme weather conditions, like those that caused the tsunami in South East Asia continue to bring new social and public health issues to affected countries. In addition, the challenges to overcoming poverty and disease are also viewed as dynamic and ongoing.

Resources For Additional Information

Internet Resources

The **Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)** supports sustainable development in developing countries, and this site includes information on employment at CIDA and its related organizations.

www.acdi-cida.gc.ca

DevNetJobs.org is a gateway to job listings in international development, environment, information technology for development, relief and reconstruction, and consultancy assignments.

www.devnetjobs.org

DevelopmentAid.org is a membership organization that brings together information for developmental professionals, NGOs, consultancy firms and donors. Organizations can post jobs, view profiles of jobseekers and freelance consultants as well as organizational profiles.

www.DevelopmentAid.org

GlobalCorps matches development, humanitarian and disaster relief professionals with organizations looking for these individuals. The organization helps recruit for The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), the office within USAID that is responsible for providing non-food humanitarian assistance in response to international crises and disasters.

www.globalcorps.com

Idealist.org is a project of Action Without Borders and contains job listings in economic development, social services, human rights, environment and more. Users can search for jobs and internships by country, state and city.

www.idealist.org

Interaction is the largest alliance of U.S.-based international development and humanitarian nongovernmental organizations, with more than 160 members operating in every developing country.

www.interaction.org

International Career Employment Weekly identifies international development jobs and internships in all sectors of the market around the world.

www.internationaljobs.org

Int Jobs.org

A tool to assist job-seekers in their search for international employment at organizations such as the UN, International Criminal Court, International Labour Organization, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, World Bank and World Health Organization.

www.intjobs.org

UN Development Programme (UNDP) employment website

www.jobs.undp.org

Public Health Jobs Worldwide lists most of its jobs and internships in the organization's newspaper, although some jobs are listed on their website.

www.jobspublichealth.com

OneWorld International Foundation offers job and internship listings at non-profit and international organizations dedicated to harnessing the democratic potential of the Internet to promote human rights and sustainable development.

www.oneworld.net

Relief.org provides information on and links to humanitarian aid websites; it allows users to access the Idealist.org site to search for humanitarian jobs worldwide.

www.relief.org

ReliefWeb run by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, provides international job listings at nonprofits dedicated to humanitarian relief, conflict resolution, health and more

www.reliefweb.int

US Department of State lists the categories of State department employees and how to apply for these positions.

www.state.gov

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) features a list of vacancies and internships

www.usaid.gov/careers

Publications

Alternatives to the Peace Corps: A Guide of Global Volunteer Opportunities, 11th Ed. Paul Backhurst, Food First, 2005.

Careers for Good Samaritans and Other Humanitarian Types. Marjorie Eberts & Margaret Gisler, VGM Careers for You Series, 1998.

Global Work: Interaction's Guide to Volunteer, Internship and Fellowship Opportunities – 3rd Ed. Bryant, Shanta M. and Tienne McKenzie with Jane-Laure Charles, 2004

InterAction Member Profiles 2004-2005, S. Bryant & T. McKenzie, Eds., 2004

Monday Developments, InterAction, weekly publication.

World Volunteers: The World Guide to Humanitarian and Development Volunteering. Fabio Ausenda. Universe, 2003.

