

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Description of the Field

The goal of international development is to alleviate poverty among the citizens of developing countries. Strategies for improvement include investment in the economic, political, and social arenas. Economic development ranges from the creation of sound macro economic and fiscal policy to the fostering of small-medium enterprise to the introduction or expansion of microfinance. It also involves identifying and creating the necessary infrastructure, energy, transportation, sanitation for economic growth through the provision of technical assistance and access to capital. Political development focuses on the creation and fostering of good governance, including transparent financial systems, an independent judiciary and the active participation of civil society. Social development focuses on the improvement of health, education and social safety nets. The areas are interrelated and interdependent. International development is literally a global topic and professionally a highly multidisciplinary field.

Career Paths and Entry Salaries

Recent college graduates who are interested in exploring the field often seek entry-level positions in a NGO with a development mission or in a development consulting firm. Such positions will likely involve administrative support (backstopping) in the US headquarters. Opportunities for international travel and experience are likely to be very limited. Graduates with a strong commitment to a career in development are well advised to consider enrolling in the Peace Corps or to seek other extensive overseas experience in a developing country for at least two years before entering graduate school. International experience will provide context for graduate study and for discussion with prospective employers on graduation.

Candidates with a master's degree may consider employment in government agencies of their home country, multilateral donor organizations, or with the implementing partners in the non-profit and private sectors. Foundations and policy institutes that conduct research and advocacy to influence development policy are also potential employers. A significant proportion of development professionals will work in at least two of the three sectors (public, private and not-for-profit) over the course of their careers. The field is characterized by fluidity and high travel demands. Many professionals travel as much as forty percent of the time. As such, it is important to consider family issues prior to entering the field.

For master's degree candidates interested in working for an IGO, there are different paths to employment. Formalized management training programs include the IFC Global Transaction Team Program (GTT), The World Bank Young Professionals Program (YPP), and the UNDP Leadership Development Programme (LEAD). These centralized recruitment programs are extremely competitive, with thousands of applications submitted for each program, which, on average, hire between 20-40 candidates each year. Posted vacancies are also published on the website of each organization, which typically require specialized skill sets and several years of related development experience. Most recent graduates have more success breaking into the field on a short-term contract basis. Hiring for contract positions is decentralized, which gives those who network effectively the advantage in finding these often unpublished opportunities.

Many of the American development organizations are based in the Washington D.C. area. Work opportunities exist both in home offices or field offices overseas. Some employees consider work in the home office to be advantageous from the perspective of consistency of work. Home office employees are typically not limited to short term contracts and may later be able to move to overseas positions. However, many individuals eager to work overseas prefer to be hired directly by the field office, although this usually entails a limited time frame for employment.

Candidates with a master's degree will enter US government service at GS 9, through the PMF or Foreign Service. Agencies may offer a salary of GS 10 or 11 to direct hires with considerable previous experience. Median salaries at intergovernmental organizations fall in the high \$50s, at NGOs in the mid-\$40s and at development consulting firms in the \$50s- \$60s. Candidates working for USAID or for a consulting firm on a USAID contract will be asked to provide a salary history. Typically USAID does not allow new hires to be paid more than 10% above their highest previous salary, although occasionally exceptions are made. An additional factor in considering salary scales is that US government employees must pay full income taxes (around 30%) while working overseas, but non-governmental employees working overseas typically qualify for tax exemption.

Demand

As more than one billion people live on less than \$1 a day, the imperative to address global poverty is ever present. Opportunities for careers in development are extensive in all sectors. However, competition for positions in the leading IGOs is fierce, as these organizations seek and recruit qualified candidates world-wide. Selection may require choosing one among several hundred qualified applicants and commonly takes 6-9 months to complete. Overwhelmingly new graduates seek and find positions in national government, or with private and non-profit employers.

Qualifications Necessary to Enter the Field

A graduate degree is essential to pursue a career in international development. A masters program with a strong applied curriculum is valuable. For individuals with limited work experience, graduate school represents an opportunity to expand skills they may have been exposed to in previous work experience. For individuals with significant work experience, a graduate degree offers the chance to fine-tune skills, gain exposure to other sectors and reflect on policy issues. Sound training in economics and public administration, including policy monitoring and evaluation may be broadly applied. Also given the interdisciplinary nature of the field, joint degrees or consecutive training in related disciplines, such as law and economics, health and economics are strong credentials. An MBA may be applied in development of the private sector, banking and finance.

In addition to graduate training, employers seek fluency in at least two languages and relevant prior work experience in a developing country. Employers typically hire new candidates based on the candidate's strong skill set in a particular sector (ex. political party training, child nutrition, micro-finance) or regional specialization (consisting of language skills, regional work experience, or area studies). For many international agencies, particularly in the NGO world, an overly academic background is viewed as a liability. Graduate students are advised to expand their international experience during the summer between the first and second year of their program through an internship. UN agencies, multi-lateral development banks, government agencies and NGOs all offer such opportunities.

Sample Group of Employers

While there is high fluidity between organizations in the development world, candidates should consider which aspect of development best matches their interests (ex. political development, agricultural policy, education, community development, etc). Many of the international NGOs (Mercy Corps, International Rescue Committee, Catholic Relief Services, etc) are oriented towards community development and relief, and offer more opportunities for grassroots work experience. NGOs such as National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, and The Asia Foundation are more focused on political development, and frequently work in the fields of political party development, electoral reform and voter education. There are even more specialized fields such as media development (ex. Internews) or education and children's health (ex. Save the Children, UNICEF), to name but a few.

US government agencies such as USAID offer a broad range of work possibilities, and program officers are expected to be able to work on diverse sets of issues, from community development to human rights to conflict resolution. Employees of government contractors such as DAI, Chemonics and Ronco are expected to have similarly diverse

fields of expertise, depending on the focus of the project. The relationships between government agencies and contractors vary, but broadly speaking the former sets policy while the latter are the “implementers”. In practice, there is a great deal of overlap in responsibilities between government agency and contractor on any given project.

Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)

- African Development Bank www.afdb.org/
- Asian Development Bank www.adb.org
- EuropeAid www.ec.europa.eu
- Inter-American Development Bank www.iadb.org/
- International Finance Corporation www.ifc.org
- International Monetary Fund www.imf.org
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development www.oecd.org
- The World Bank worldbank.org
- United Nations www.un.org
- United Nations Development Programme www.undp.org
- UNICEF www.unicef.org
- World Food Programme www.wfp.org

United States Government

- Federal Reserve – New York www.ny.frb.org
- Department of Energy www.doe.gov
- Department of State www.state.gov
- Millennium Challenge Corporation www.mca.gov
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID) www.usaid.gov
- US Treasury, Office of International Affairs www.ustreas.gov/offices/international-affairs/index.html

Development Consulting Firms

- Abt Associates Inc www.abtassociates.com/
- Chemonics www.chemonics.com
- Development Alternatives Inc. www.dai.com
- Emerging Markets Group www.emergingmarketsgroup.com
- Environmental Resources Management www.erm.com/
- John Snow International Inc. www.jsi.com/
- Nathan Associates Inc. www.nathaninc.com/index.asp
- PADCO AECOM www.padco.aecom.com
- Research Triangle Institute (RTI) www.rti.org/
- The Pragma Corporation www.pragmacorp.com/

Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

- Accion International www.accion.org
- Ashoka [www.http://ashoka.org](http://http://ashoka.org)
- Asia Foundation www.asiafoundation.org/
- CARE USA www.careusa.org
- Catholic Relief Services www.crs.org
- International Foundation for Election Systems www.ifes.org
- Management Sciences for Health www.msh.org
- Mercy Corps www.mercycorps.org
- National Democratic Institute www.ndi.org
- Oxfam America www.oxfamamerica.org/
- Pact www.pact.org
- Partners of the Americas www.partners.net/

- Population Services International www.psi.org
- Save the Children www.savethechildren.org/
- Winrock International www.winrock.org/
- World Learning www.worldlearning.org
- World Wildlife Fund www.wwf.org

Foundations, Policy Institutes

- Bank Information Center www.bicusa.org/
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation www.gatesfoundation.org
- Brookings www.brookings.org/
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace www.ceip.org
- Center for Strategic and International Studies www.csis.org
- Earthwatch www.earthwatch.org
- Environmental Defense www.environmentaldefense.org
- Ford Foundation www.fordfound.org
- Heritage Foundation www.heritage.org/
- Rockefeller Foundation www.rockfound.org/
- Worldwatch Institute worldwatch.org

Future Challenges of the Profession

The flow of funds to development is governed principally by the policy priorities of governments in industrialized societies and the willingness to fund these priorities. For instance, the current US administration has announced the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), through which it has pledged to increase development assistance. The President requested \$3 billion for FY06 and pledged to increase annual funding for the MCA to \$5 billion in the future. Any actual increased US development spending will be within the parameters of the Millennium Challenge Account, which has strong emphasis on governance and accountability. Implementation of the MCA is likely to put a premium on expertise in technical assistance in these areas. Among NGOs in industrialized countries there continues to be a significant shift in emphasis from direct delivery of services in the field to capacity building and sustainability through collaboration with local implementing partners in developing countries.

Resources for Additional Information

Associations

- Association of Women in Development www.awid.org
- Interaction, the American Council for Voluntary International Action www.interaction.org
- Society for International Development, Washington, DC Chapter www.sidw.org
- Women's Environmental and Development Organization www.wedo.org

Internet Resources

- IADB Listings - www.iadb.org/etica/red/dirvoluntariado.cfm - The Inter-American Development Bank listing of 1500 volunteer organizations in Latin American, containing contact information and description of work.
- ASPA - www.aspanet.org/ - The American Society for Public Administration lists public administration jobs and internships in the public, non-profit and private sectors searchable by state.
- Avue Central - www.avuecentral.com - Avue Central is a federal employment service to find and apply for federal jobs and internships.
- AWID - www.awid.org/jobs - The Association for Women's Rights in Development is an international organization committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women's human rights. The website features job listings around the world in these fields.

- Directory of Development Orgs - www.devdir.org/ - Online directory of development organizations which contains over 47,500 listings by country and is a reference for development practitioners, researchers, donor employees, and policymakers.
- www.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.
- Development Net - www.devnetjobs.org - DevNetJobs.org is a gateway to job listings in international development, environment, information technology for development, relief and reconstruction, and consultancy assignments.
- Devex (The Development Executive Group) – www.devex.com - is a social enterprise bringing efficiency to international development through recruiting and business information services. Members find jobs, projects, news, and professional connections, on devex.com.
- FPA - www.fpa.org/jobs_contact2423/jobs_contact.htm - The Foreign Policy Association provides job and internship listings on its website and in a weekly email newsletter from industries such as development, health, environment, education, humanitarian relief and more.
- Idealist - www.idealists.org - Idealist.org is a project of Action without Borders and contains job and internship listings in economic development, social services, human rights, environment and more. Users can search for jobs by country, state and city.
- InterAction - www.interaction.org - InterAction is an alliance of international development and humanitarian nongovernmental organizations.
- International Career Employment Weekly (ICEW) - www.internationaljobs.org - identifies international development jobs and internships in all sectors of the market around the world.
- The Microfinance Gateway - www.microfinancegateway.org Source of information and global jobs and internships in microfinance
- www.nonprofitjobs.org - Nonprofitjobs.org is run by the Community Career Center, an on-line gathering place for non-profit employers and management personnel; the site allows users to search for non-profit jobs and internships regionally in the US and internationally.
- OneWorld - www.oneworld.net - 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.
- Philanthropy Jobs - www.philanthropy.com/jobs Lists US based non-profit jobs in fields such as economic development, education, healthcare and social services.
- US Department of State - www.state.gov - Website for the US Department of State lists the categories of State department employees and how to apply for these positions.
- USAID - www.usaid.gov - features a list of vacancies and internships at the organization.

Publications

- *Interaction Member Profiles 2004-2005*, edited by Shanta M Bryant and Marie Campos, Interaction.
- *International Jobs, Where They Are and How To Get Them*, by Eric Kocher and Nina Segal Perseus, 1999.
- *Monday Developments*, Interaction's biweekly newsletter on international humanitarian developments, issues and trends. www.interaction.org/monday/
- *State of the World 2002, A Worldwatch Institute report on Progress toward a Sustainable Society*, edited by Lester Brown, Christopher Flavin, Hilary French. WW Norton & CO, 2002.
- *World Development Report 2003, Sustainable Development in a Dynamic World*, a compilation of the World Bank and OUP, 2003.
- *World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development*, World Bank, 2005.