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. 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 often times 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 television, they are an everyday reality for many millions of our fellow human beings.

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

Career Paths
A multitude of organizations – nonprofits, for-profits, government, and international organizations – provide humanitarian assistance internationally. With such a variety and breadth of organizations involved, there is no preset career path in the humanitarian aid and relief field. Starting salaries can be lower for positions in the humanitarian field than for positions in the international development field.

Students should keep in mind the fact that many humanitarian groups are not operating solely under emergency conditions. These days, many humanitarian groups also compete for follow-up development activities once the immediate disaster is under control. Often they will have an advantage over non-humanitarian groups, since the humanitarian aid organizations already know local conditions. A student starting out with a humanitarian NGO may be able to take advantage of development opportunities downstream. International Relief and Development (IRD),

QUALIFICATIONS TO ENTER THE FIELD

+ A master’s degree in public administration or in international development, a dedication to making the world a better place to live, and a desire to serve others by doing good work are all necessary qualifications to enter this field.

+ 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 disasters occur.

+ 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.
CHF International, and Mercy Corps are only three examples of NGOs carrying out both humanitarian and development work in the Third World.

**Sample Employers**

**Private Sector**
- Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) – adra.org
- Africare – africare.org
- American Red Cross – redcross.org
- AmeriCares – americares.org
- Amy Biehl Foundation – amybiehl.org
- Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund – asb.de/en
- Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard – bbg.org.za/index.htm
- CARE – care.org
- Catholic Relief Services – crs.org
- Center for Global Development – cgdev.org
- Center for Health Market Innovations – healthmarketinnovations.org
- Christian Friends of Korea – cfk.org
- Church World Service – cwsglobal.org
- Direct Relief International – directrelief.org
- Doctors without Borders – doctorswithoutborders.org
- Foundation François-Xavier Bagnoud – fxb.org
- Global Aids Alliance – who.int/workforcealliance/members_partners/member_list/gaa/en
- Healing Hands International – hhi.org
- Himalayan HealthCare, Inc. – himalayan-healthcare.org
- International Medical Corps (IMC) – internationalmedicalcorps.org
- Nishkam Sikh Welfare Council – nishkam.in
- The Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) – path.org
- Project HOPE – projecthope.org
- Save the Children – savethechildren.org
- UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) – unhcr.org
- UN OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) – unocha.org
- USAID – usaid.gov
- Vida – vida.org
- World Vision – worldvision.org

**Volunteer Organizations**
- Choice Humanitarian – choicehumanitarian.org
- Cross-Cultural Solutions – crossculturalsolutions.org
- Global Volunteer Network – globalvolunteers.org
- Peace Corps – peacecorps.gov
- United Way – unitedway.org/find-your-united-way
- Volunteering Solutions – volunteeringolutions.com

**DEMAND**

- The environment where humanitarian action takes place is evolving rapidly and continually poses new challenges to the humanitarian community.

- There is clearly a high demand for professionals to respond to such crises; there are growing numbers of opportunities for administrators, fundraisers, grant writers, program organizers, teachers, researchers, policy analysts, and others.

- 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 people 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. (Source: http://www.unocha.org/)

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Resources for Additional Information

Internet Resources

- DevNetJobs.org – devnetjobs.org – a gateway to job listings in international development, environment, information technology for development, relief and reconstruction, and consultancy assignments.
- GlobalCorps – globalcorps.com – 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.
- Idealist.org – idealist.org – 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.
- Interaction – interaction.org – the largest alliance of U.S.-based international development and humanitarian nongovernmental organizations, with more than 180 member organizations operating in every developing country.
- International Career Employment Weekly – internationaljobs.org – identifies international development jobs and internships in all sectors of the market around the world.
- Job Vacancies – intjobs.com – 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.
- Public Health Jobs Worldwide – jobspublichealth.com – lists most of its jobs and internships in the organization’s newspaper, although some jobs are listed on their website.
- OneWorld International Network – oneworld.net – 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.
- ReliefWeb – reliefweb.int – run by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, it provides international job listings at nonprofits dedicated to humanitarian relief, conflict resolution, health, and more.
- US Department of State – state.gov – lists the categories of State Department employees and how to apply for these positions.

FUTURE CHALLENGES OF THE PROFESSION

+ There are always new issues in public health that must be dealt with, such as the ZIKA fever epidemic, the recent Ebola outbreaks, and extreme weather conditions, like those that caused the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, which continue to bring new social and public health issues to affected countries.

+ The challenges to overcoming poverty and disease are also viewed as dynamic and ongoing.
LinkedIn Groups
- Humanitarian Professionals – linkedin.com/groups/1781047/profile
- The Aidmatrix Humanitarian Aid Professional Connection - linkedin.com/groups/93452/profile
- Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief - linkedin.com/groups/3165107/profile
- Aid & International Development Forum (AIDF) – linkedin.com/groups/2850937/profile

Publications

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