Career Opportunities in INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Description of the field
The goal of international development is to alleviate poverty in 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 and medium enterprise, to the introduction or expansion of microfinance. It also involves identifying and creating the necessary infrastructure, energy, transportation, and sanitation for economic growth through the provision of technical assistance and access to capital. Political development focuses on the creation and fostering of democratic governance, including transparent financial systems, modern electoral/political processes, the rule of law, and the active participation of civil society and independent media. Social development focuses on the improvement of health, education, and the social safety net. Each of these areas is interrelated and interdependent. International development is inherently a global issue and necessarily a highly multidisciplinary field.

Readers will note that while international development includes many sectors as described above, a number of sectors are broken out separately in this guide under their own headings – to provide more detail on desired qualifications and potential employers. These are Environmental Sustainability, Global Health, Humanitarian and Relief, International Education, Microfinance, and Peace and Conflict Resolution.

Career Paths and Qualifications
There are two essential credentials preparatory to a career in international development. One is a master’s degree: it can be in international relations/international development, area studies (e.g. Latin America, Arab studies), public health, public administration, economics, business administration, or even law. The other is prior work experience in a developing country, ideally for at least two years. The Peace Corps would be an excellent choice, but any overseas employer, such as an NGO or for-profit firm, would do just as well. The importance of previous overseas work experience in a developing country cannot be overemphasized for graduate students seeking to break into the development field.

Future Challenges
The flow of funds to development is governed principally by the policy priorities of governments in industrialized societies and the willingness to fund those priorities. 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.

Other Qualifications to Enter the Field
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.
Graduate students have another option for acquiring work experience in a developing country. Students can arrange for an overseas internship during the summer between their first and second year of graduate school. Enterprising graduates sometimes can work in a second overseas internship before graduation. In most cases, the graduate school will pay for a significant chunk of the student’s expenses while abroad. Such internships can go a long way towards establishing students’ work credentials in developing countries. Internships can also be a springboard to long-term employment following graduation. Unfortunately, study abroad carries much less weight with employers, compared to overseas work experience.

Language skills are highly prized by international development recruiters. For the moment, Arabic and Farsi are perhaps the two most highly sought languages. However, French, Spanish, and Russian will always be valuable, as well as lesser known languages such as Swahili and Indonesian.

Candidates with a master's degree may consider employment in government agencies of their home country, international organizations (IO), or with implementing partners in the nonprofit 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 nonprofit) over the course of their careers. The field is characterized by fluidity and high travel demands. Many professionals travel as much as 40% 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 IO, 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 to 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.

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 (e.g. political development, agricultural policy, education, community development). Many of the international NGOs (e.g. Mercy Corps, International Rescue Committee, Catholic Relief Services) are oriented towards both community/civil society development and
humanitarian relief and therefore offer more opportunities for grassroots work experience. NGOs such as the National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, and IFES are more focused on democracy and governance, 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 (e.g. Internews), education (e.g. AMIDEAST), and children's health (e.g. Save the Children and UNICEF).

US government agencies such as USAID offer a broad range of work possibilities: e.g., democracy and governance, education, agriculture, environment, health, private sector development, small and medium enterprise development, microenterprise/microfinance, conflict resolution, and humanitarian assistance. USAID hires entry-level Foreign Service Officers through the USAID website (not through the State Department’s Foreign Service Test) and junior-level Civil Service employees through the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) program.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is the newest US government foreign aid agency, created by Congress in 2004. It forms partnerships with some of the world’s poorest countries, but only those committed to good governance, economic freedom, and investments in their citizens. So far the MCC has hired an impressive number of graduate students, both as interns and as follow-on full-time employees.

Employees of USAID-supported contractors and NGOs such as DAI, Chemonics, International Relief and Development (IRD), and World Learning are expected to have similarly diverse fields of expertise, depending on the focus of the project.

**Public International Organizations (PIOs)**
- African Development Bank Group – [afdb.org](http://afdb.org)
- Asian Development Bank – [adb.org](http://adb.org)
- Inter-American Development Bank – [iadb.org](http://iadb.org)
- International Finance Corporation – [ifc.org](http://ifc.org)
- International Monetary Fund – [imf.org](http://imf.org)
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – [oecd.org](http://oecd.org)
- The United Nations – [un.org](http://un.org)
- The United Nations Development Programme – [undp.org](http://undp.org)
- UNICEF – [unicef.org](http://unicef.org)
- World Food Programme – [wfp.org](http://wfp.org)

**United States Government**
- Department of State – [state.gov](http://state.gov)
- Millenium Challenge Corporation – [mcc.gov](http://mcc.gov)
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID) – [usaid.gov](http://usaid.gov)
For-Profit Development Firms
- Abt Associates Inc – abtassociates.com
- AECOM – aecom.com
- Cardno – cardno.com
- Chemonics – chemonics.com
- Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI) – dai.com
- Engility – engilitycorp.com
- Environmental Resources Management – erm.com
- John Snow, Inc. – jsi.com
- Nathan Associates Inc. – nathaninc.com
- The Pragma Corporation – pragmacorp.com
- Tetra Tech ARD – tetratech.com/en/international-development
- University Research Co. – urc-chs.com

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
- Accion International – accion.org
- Ashoka – ashoka.org
- The Asia Foundation – asiasfoundation.org
- CARE USA – care.org
- Catholic Relief Services – crs.org
- Global Communities – globalcommunities.org
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems – ifes.org
- International Relief & Development – ird.org
- International Republican Institute – iri.org
- Management Sciences for Health – msh.org
- Mercy Corps – mercycorps.org
- National Democratic Institute – ndi.org
- Oxfam America – oxfamamerica.org
- Oxfam International – oxfam.org
- Pact – pactworld.org
- Partners of the Americas – partners.net
- Population Services International – psi.org
- Save the Children – savethechildren.org
- World Learning – worldlearning.org
- World Wildlife Fund – worldwildlife.org

Foundations, Policy Institutes
- Bank Information Center – bankinformationcenter.org
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – gatesfoundation.org
- Brookings – brookings.edu
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – carnegieendowment.org
- Center for Strategic and International Studies – csis.org
- Earthwatch Institute – earthwatch.org
- Environmental Defense Fund – edf.org
- Ford Foundation – fordfoundation.org
- Heritage Foundation - www.heritage.org
- The Rockefeller Foundation – rockefellerfoundation.org
- Worldwatch Institute – worldwatch.org
Resources for Additional Information

**Associations**
- Association for Women’s Rights in Development – [awid.org](http://awid.org)
- InterAction – [interaction.org](http://interaction.org)
- Society for International Development – [sidint.net](http://sidint.net)
- Women’s Environment and Development Organization – [wedo.org](http://wedo.org)

**Blogs**
- Africa is a Country – [africasacountry.com](http://africasacountry.com)
- Aid on the Edge of Chaos – [aidontheedge.info](http://aidontheedge.info)
- Chris Blattman – [chrisblattman.com](http://chrisblattman.com)
- Evan Lieberman – [evanlieberman.org](http://evanlieberman.org)
- From Poverty to Power – [oxfamblogs.org/fp2p](http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p)
- Poverty Matters – [guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters](http://guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters)
- Praxis – [algoso.org](http://algoso.org)
- Project Syndicate – [project-syndicate.org](http://project-syndicate.org)

**LinkedIn Groups**
- Devex - International Development – [linkedin.com/groups/72869/profile](http://linkedin.com/groups/72869/profile)
- International Development – [linkedin.com/groups/65094/profile](http://linkedin.com/groups/65094/profile)
- International Humanitarian and Development Professionals – [linkedin.com/groups/1887804/profile](http://linkedin.com/groups/1887804/profile)
- Sustainable International Development & Sustainability – [linkedin.com/groups/146958/profile](http://linkedin.com/groups/146958/profile)

**Internet Resources**
- American Society for Public Administration – [aspanet.org](http://aspanet.org) – Members are privy to networking events, volunteer opportunities, professional development resources, and job alerts.
- The Association for Women's Rights in Development – [awid.org/get-involved/jobs](http://awid.org/get-involved/jobs) - An international organization committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development, and women's rights. The website features job listings around the world in these fields.
- Directory of Development Organizations – [devdir.org](http://devdir.org) – Online directory of development organizations which contains over 65,000 listings by country and is a reference for development practitioners, researchers, donor employees, and policymakers.
- Foreign Policy Association – fpa.org – 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 – idealist.org – A project of Action without Borders, 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 – interaction.org – An alliance of international development and humanitarian nongovernmental organizations.

- International Development Jobs and Consulting Opportunities – http://devnetjobs.tripod.com – A gateway to job listings in international development, environment, information technology for development, relief and reconstruction, and consultancy assignments.

- International Jobs Center – internationaljobs.org – Lists international development jobs and internships in all sectors of the market around the world.

- Microfinance Gateway – microfinancegateway.org/p/site/m/jobs - Source of information and global jobs and internships in microfinance.

- NonProfitJobs.org – nonprofitjobs.org – Run by the Community Career Center, an on-line gathering place for nonprofit employers and management personnel; the site allows users to search for nonprofit jobs and internships regionally in the US and internationally.

- OneWorld – oneworld.org/jobs – Offers job and internship listings at nonprofit and international organizations dedicated to harnessing the democratic potential of the Internet to promote human rights and sustainable development.

- Public Service Careers – publicservicecareers.org – Lists public service administrative jobs, internships and international academic exchanges.

- USAID – usaid.gov/careers – Lists vacancies and internships at the organization.

- US Department of State – state.gov/careers – Lists the categories of State Department employees and how to apply for these positions.