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

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 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.
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.

**Qualifications Necessary 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 works are all necessary 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 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.

**Sample Group of Employers**

- Africare - [www.africare.org](http://www.africare.org)
- American Red Cross - [www.edcross.org](http://www.edcross.org)
- AmeriCares - [www.americares.org](http://www.americares.org)
- Amy Biehl Foundation - [www.amybiehl.org](http://www.amybiehl.org)
- Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland e.V - [https://www.asbd.org/](https://www.asbd.org/)
- Association François-Xavier Bagnoud - [www.fxb.org](http://www.fxb.org)
- CARE - [www.care.org](http://www.care.org)
- Catholic Relief Services - [www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org)
- Christian Friends of Korea - [www.cfk.org](http://www.cfk.org)
- Church World Service - [www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org)
- Direct Relief International - [www.directrelief.org](http://www.directrelief.org)
- Doctors without Borders - [www.doctorswithoutborders.org](http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org)
- Global Aids Alliance - [http://who.int/workforcealliance/members_partners/member_list/gaa/en/](http://who.int/workforcealliance/members_partners/member_list/gaa/en/)
- Global Development Center - [www.cgdev.org](http://www.cgdev.org)
- Healing Hands International, Inc. - [www.hhli.org](http://www.hhli.org)
- Himalayan HealthCare, Inc. - [www.himalayan-healthcare.org](http://www.himalayan-healthcare.org)
- International Medical Corps (IMC) - [www.internationalmedicalcorps.org](http://www.internationalmedicalcorps.org)
- Nishkam Sikh Welfare Council - [www.nishkam.org](http://www.nishkam.org)
- Project HOPE - [www.projecthope.org](http://www.projecthope.org)
- Aed - Satellife - [https://www.healthnet.com/](https://www.healthnet.com/)
- Save the Children - [www.savethechildren.org](http://www.savethechildren.org)
- The Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) - [www.path.org](http://www.path.org)
- UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) - [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)
- UN OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) - [http://www.unocha.org/](http://www.unocha.org/)
- Vida - [www.vida.org](http://www.vida.org)
- World Vision - [www.worldvision.org](http://www.worldvision.org)
Volunteer Organizations

- Center for Humanitarian Outreach and Intercultural Exchange - [www.choicehumanitarian.org](http://www.choicehumanitarian.org)
- Cross-Cultural Solutions - [www.crossculturalsolutions.org](http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org)
- Global Volunteer Network - [www.globalvolunteers.org](http://www.globalvolunteers.org)
- Peace Corps - [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov)
- United Way - [www.unitedway.gov](http://www.unitedway.gov)

Future Challenges of the Profession

There are always new issues in public health that must be dealt with, such as the SARS epidemic, the recent H1N1 outbreaks, and extreme weather conditions, like those that caused the 2005 Tsunami, that 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) - [www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/index-e.htm](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/index-e.htm) - supports sustainable development in developing countries and this site includes information on employment at CIDA and its related organizations.
- DevNetJobs.org - [www.devnetjobs.org](http://www.devnetjobs.org) - is a gateway to job listings in international development, environment, information technology for development, relief and reconstruction, and consultancy assignments.
- GlobalCorps - [www.globalcorps.com](http://www.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 - [www.idealista.org](http://www.idealista.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.
- Interaction - [www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org) - is the largest alliance of U.S.-based international development and humanitarian nongovernmental organizations, with more than 160 members operating in every developing country.
- International Career Employment Weekly - [www.internationaljobs.org](http://www.internationaljobs.org) - identifies international development jobs and internships in all sectors of the market around the world.
- Public Health Jobs Worldwide - [www.jobspublichealth.com](http://www.jobspublichealth.com) - lists most of its jobs and internships in the organization's newspaper, although some jobs are listed on their website.
- OneWorld International Foundation – [http://www.oneworld.net/](http://www.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.
Relief.org - www.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.

ReliefWeb - www.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 - www.state.gov - lists the categories of State Department employees and how to apply for these positions.

USAID - www.usaid.gov/careers - features a list of vacancies and internships.

LinkedIn Groups

- Humanitarian Professionals - www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=1781047
- The Aidmatrix Humanitarian Aid Professional Connection - www.linkedin.com/groups/Aidmatrix-Humanitarian-Aid-Professional-Connection-93452
- Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief - www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=3165107
- Aid & International Development Forum (AIDF) - www.linkedin.com/groups/Aid-International-Development-Forum-AIDF-2850917

Publications


