Careers in the International Sector

Engineering in a Global Context

April 23, 2019
A process to ensure quality and sustainability:
- Assessment.
- Implementation.
- Monitoring.
1. Educate Yourself
Unless you have extensive volunteer experience, a master’s degree is a ‘must’ for the NGO world.
2. Volunteer
Even with a master's degree, it is close to impossible to land your first job without some internship experience on your CV. Unpaid internships are the norm for NGOs.
3. Look Local
If you don’t have the resources to volunteer abroad for a few months or work an unpaid internship, try to volunteer with a small, local NGO where you are living.
Becoming an International Aid Worker

4. Bring A Skill
Having skills like nutrition, finance, engineering or nursing can also be an easy way to fast-track your career with a humanitarian organization.
5. Plan Ahead
What areas of the world interest you? Research conflicts in the region and see how your abilities align.
6. Own The Head Office
Instead of lamenting the work of a head office, own it. A year’s stint at the head office of an international humanitarian organization could be your ticket to the world, connecting you to the right people.
7. Scour the Web
Once you've got the skills and experience, it's time to hit the web looking for job opportunities. Search international sites like: Reliefweb.int Trust.org DevNetJobs.org
Or go local, looking for job boards specific to your country of interest. For example, Lebanon has a site called Daleel-Madani.org where only humanitarian jobs in Lebanon are posted.
Helpful Web Sites

Idealist Job Site

How to get a Job in an NGO

Top 500 NGO's (requires account)

Careers in International Development

International Development Web Sites

How to Break into International Development
1. Knowing What You Want
The most important thing when applying to an NGO is knowing what you are looking for. This can be very, very hard.
2. Being Different
You have to stand out from the crowd. You don’t have to be a superstar, but you need a skill that could be beneficial for the organization. Language skills are particularly important.
3. Cultural Understanding
Most NGOs focus on an area that has a completely different lifestyle than you might be used to. You need to be able to take into account their way of living and accept it. This can be emotionally challenging - make sure you’re prepared, and willing.
4. Work Experience
It’s not that much about work experience in the exact sector, but about having worked as an intern or a volunteer and having seen a part of an NGO, having an idea of what it actually means to work for an NGO and therefore knowing that this is really what you want.
5. Networking
More than in any other sector, creating your network in the NGO sector is super important.
6. Embracing Challenges
When working for a good cause, you should definitely not take the job with the expectation of easily changing the world. If it were easy, it would already be done.
Nelson’s Three Principles of Effective Humanitarian Engagement

- Make new friends
- Empower your new friends
- Stay in touch
Make Friends
Empower Your Friends
Stay in Touch