

LSE International Organisations Day 2023

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Welcome Address - led by recruitment leads from UNV and IMF

Panellists: Sandra Le Gray (UNV) and Muhammed Metwally (IMF)

Summary

Panellists provided key insights into what it is like working with an international humanitarian organisation and how to build your profile while applying for a position with them.

The panellists mentioned that it was better to have work experience elsewhere before joining an international organisation. The key is to be resilient and engage with the organisation either through volunteering or collaborative project, which increases your chances of being recruited.

There were some great tips given for preparing for interview sessions. Some of the useful one's from my perspective were taking your time to answer the posed question and understanding the culture of the organisation that you intend to work with. When preparing for interviews, remember that interviewers aim to create an environment for your success, not to corner you. Take your time to gather thoughts, structure your responses, and don't hesitate to request a moment to think.

Speakers also provided a detailed description of core skills and competencies required by a particular organisation with an example of applying at International Monetary Fund (IMO).

What international organisations look for in potential hires:

- Experience - emphasised the value of getting experience in national government and NGO settings. International organisations are incredibly competitive to get into but experience across other sectors can strengthen your application. Do not get discouraged and keep trying!
- Skills – solid core competencies and basic skills. When applying for a role, they advised going back to basics and making sure you have a firm understanding of technical skills required for the role. e.g. revising topics in health econ before an interview in that field.
- Knowledge – good knowledge of current affairs will help, particularly if you can consider the policy implications of things you've read about in relevant publications. International organisations are often looking for candidates who can think of the policy angle that the role entails.
- Education – a synergy between your education qualification and the job requirements, and its relevance to current global events. Theory to praxis – they're looking for thinkers who can translate ideas into real-world applications.
- Values – an alignment between your personal and professional values and the culture of the organisation.

Thanks to Ife Nwibe, Varsha Jaisimha, Ishant Arora for their notes on this session.

AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank)

About them

A very young multilateral development bank, founded 8 years ago in Beijing, now with a regional office in Abu Dhabi. Invests in the infrastructure for tomorrow (I4T), healthcare being one of them, for all Asian countries - so you can still apply without a finance background. There are opportunities to work on projects other private banks can't and benefits can include a diplomatic visa.

Roles they recruit to

Young Talent Programme / Graduate programme: application window is December 2023–February 2024 – a 2-year rotational programme.

They also have an internship programme and individual roles.

<https://www.aiib.org/en/opportunities/career/index.html>

Requirements

For the graduate programme – either a master's degree with one to two years of relevant working experience OR bachelor's degree with two to three years of relevant working experience.

Thanks to Wan-Jen Lee for notes on this session.

IMF (International Monetary Fund)

About them

Representative: Mohammed Zaher from IMF. IMF is headquartered in Washington D.C. (IMF can help coordinate a G4 visa to work in the USA)

Roles they recruit to

- Various economic and research roles, including the 'Economist Program' (PhD and under age 34) and research assistant program (bachelors), special appointee programme (postgraduate degree plus 3 years' experience, nominated by authorities in home country)
- Fund Internship Programme (current students studying for master's or PhD in related field)
- <https://www.imf.org/en/About/Recruitment/find-the-right-imf-job>

Requirements

- A solid foundation in macroeconomics is essential for many IMF roles.
- Keep in mind that the IMF typically requires a PhD, and entry with only an MSc may not be feasible. This underscores the importance of aligning your educational pursuits with the specific requirements of your desired career path.
- Skills: Ability to apply skills and knowledge: 'it's not just about possessing technical skills; it's about understanding how to apply them. Thinkers need to go beyond the theoretical and consider the practical implications of their skills.'
- Current affairs: Being well-versed in current events is crucial, as it allows you to draw linkages between your studies, career goals, and the needs of the role you aspire to. Consider the policy angle of your desired position, moving beyond academia and envisioning how your skills can contribute to real-world policy challenges.

Thanks to Lakshminarayanan Preethi for notes on this session.

IOM (International Organisation for Migration)

About them

Representative: Michel Emery, Director of Human Resource Management

IOM is the youngest and fastest growing UN organisation 'IOM supports migrants across the world, developing effective responses to the shifting dynamics of migration and is a key source of advice on migration policy and practice. The Organization works in emergency situations, developing the resilience of all people on the move, and particularly those in situations of vulnerability, as well as building capacity within governments to manage all forms and impacts of mobility.' The Displacement Tracking Matrix tracked the movements of over 97.7 million migrants in 2022 alone.¹

Roles they recruit to

There are opportunities in migration health:

- UN volunteers opportunities

¹ IOM: 2023 Snapshot - <https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/documents/2023-08/iom-snapshot-digital.pdf>

- Paid internships (within a year of graduating from bachelor's or postgraduate degree, age 19-36. Average age is 26. Typically, 2 to 9 months duration)
- Job categories in P3 and above rotate every 5 years.
- Junior Professional Officer (JPO) programme
- <https://www.iom.int/careers>

Requirements

- See individual role requirements and <https://www.iom.int/who-can-apply>
- He recommended at check out his [YouTube video on how to prepare for a competency-based interview](#).

Thanks to Sahani Dias for notes on this session.

OECD (The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development)

About them

'The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organisation that works to build better policies for **better lives**. Our goal is to shape policies that foster prosperity, equality, opportunity and well-being for all.'. Health and safety a key area for them, including helping countries better measure health outcomes- <https://www.oecd.org/health/> .

Roles they recruit to

- Internships- only available to enrolled students. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Internship duration is 1 months- max 6 months but 4 months+ is preferred. Can be extended. Monthly living expenses granted. Majority of internships based in Paris. <https://www.oecd.org/careers/internship-programme/>
- Young associate professionals programme is available between undergraduate and masters. <https://www.oecd.org/careers/young-associate-programme/>
- Official and temporary staff – either through a roster (pre-accepted suitable candidates for organisation-wide functions) or individual roles.

Requirements

- Must speak French or English.
- Need 2-4 years of work experience to apply for staff roles (unpaid experience is considered).

Thanks to Elizabeth Reddan, for notes on this session.

UNDP (UN Development Programme)

About them

'Didn't see much opportunity for health-related jobs here'.

'Most roles not technically specific, technical experts only in 6 signature solution areas: poverty, governance, resilience, environment, energy and gender.'

'This agency was the technical lead of the UN's socio-economic response to Covid and works in collaboration with WHO and UNICEF in support of covid 19 response strategies'.

Roles they recruit to

- Graduate programme - UNDP run a 2-year graduate programme in which your projects will be focused around the sustainable development goals. The assignment can be in any of the UNDP offices around the world - must have a masters or a bachelor's with 2 years' work experience. <https://www.undp.org/careers/types-opportunities/undp-graduate-programme>
- Internships - currently enrolled postgrad or final year students or within 1 year of graduation - <https://www.undp.org/careers/types-of-opportunities/internships>
- Staff roles - <https://www.undp.org/careers/types-opportunities/staff>

Requirements

- Languages a big asset here – working knowledge of a second language is strongly encouraged. English, French and Spanish are the working languages of the UNDP.
- Recruitment is typically lengthy process consisting of application, interviews and 2 assessment centres.

Thanks to Sahani Dias, Han Han, Nyasha Sigauke, Elisha Powell, for notes on this session.

UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund)

About them

UNFPA is the UN's sexual, reproductive, and maternal health specialist agency. UNFPA is now the United Nations Population Fund but the acronym is a holdover from when the organisation was the United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

This session was by UNFPA conducted by Monica Ferro, Director of UNFPA's London Representation Office. She explained how it is not the people that are vulnerable it's the situation they are in. Career Fair: UNFPA representatives were Monica Ferro and Yael Taka.

One important function is to monitor trends and study the drivers of fertility in countries/regions. The work also involves a lot of negotiating with local country representatives to agree on what to work on - every project/country is tailor made. UNFPA trains you by sending you to different countries and different job posts; each rotation is about 2-4 years, depending on the work.

New - UNFPA's Body Right campaign - protecting people from various forms of online sexual/gender-based harassment.

Roles they recruit to

- Entry point: apply for fixed term jobs (search on UN careers website) which has 2 levels: P = Professional and G = General (e.g. finance, procurement, HR, logistics etc.)
- Career progression in UN is up and lateral - you'll need to reapply for roles.
- They offer a junior professional officer programme aimed at young/early career professionals.
- A representative at the session suggested to apply for fixed term positions and that consultancy contracts may not be the best opportunity.
- Monica emphasised UNFPA's approach to capacity building in program countries - to train a few professional members of the local community and then have them each

train several more professionals. UNFPA focuses on this staffing approach and so has fewer international professional positions available.

Requirements

- Field work or development work would be desirable on an application for this.
- They value systems thinking to form integrated solutions to complex problems they face in development.
- Also asked to show our other extra activities such as sports on the CV and that we are interesting.
- Yael suggested to be persistent in applying for positions with UNFPA and that it can take a year or more of applying for jobs one is well qualified for as they receive thousands of applications for some positions.
- Tip to focus on key words when searching and applying for jobs.
- Some roles require diplomatic conversations with governments or their representatives and make plans on what needs to be done.

Thanks to Wan-Jen Lee, Zara Nelson, Dana Kusnir, Nyasha Sigauke and Sahani Dias for notes on this session.

UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees)

About them

Representative Tahlia Dwyer- Legal Officer and Oana Ungureanu (HR?) UNHCR is the branch of the United Nations focused on aiding refugees and forced migrants. UNHCR employs individuals across over 100 countries. The London office is based at 10 Furnival St.

Tahlia spoke about her journey: embarking on a career journey in the international field, starting as an intern lays the foundation for growth. Mandatory rotations within 2-5 years offered diverse experiences, fostering passion amidst challenging locations and a multicultural milieu, where innovation thrives. Proficiency in languages like Spanish, French, and Arabic opened avenues for impactful roles.

She highlighted the dynamic nature of the field and the need to be adaptable. One of her duty stations was often closed due to war and the UNHCR employees often had to work remotely from the neighbouring country.

The speakers mentioned that most people who flee never go home and the vision of UNHCR is to provide a better future for these refugees. UNHCR provides support to refugees in three stages:

1. Life-saving support
2. Safeguarding fundamental rights
3. Building a better future

Roles they recruit to

- There are many opportunities for public health professionals, and the vaccine programs especially tend to be open to medical doctors.

- An interesting point made by the speakers that is relevant to LSHTM students is the increased focus on WASH. WASH practices and management have huge implications for the refugee population and they are actively recruiting staff for WASH-related positions. Sanitation programs in the refugee camps have a demand for healthcare professionals.
- The speakers pointed out that most staff are field-based and UNHCR has a mandatory rotation policy – you'll move geographically every few years.
- UNHCR puts out advertisements at 2 key points during the year: March/ April and October/November, other roles are added as needed throughout the year, but these are the main times when there will be lots of vacancies.
- There are many ways to get involved with UNHCR at early career stage such as internships and volunteering. They said that internships, volunteering, and temporary appointments are a great way to get your foot in the door and start your career with the UNHCR.
- Job opportunities range from internships and volunteering to Junior Professional Officer (JPO) positions, talent pool inclusions, fixed-term appointments, consultancies, and temporary roles. Climbing the professional ladder from P2 to P5, each level carries significance, with roles becoming more nuanced and demanding.

<https://www.unhcr.org/uk/get-involved/work-us/careers-unhcr/types-contracts-and-appointments>

Requirements

- Prior experience is needed for professional positions.
- Internships are for current students or those who have graduated a university course within the last 2 years.
- Besides professionalism and skillset, employers seek a person with curiosity and a will to contribute.
- It is also important to showcase how adaptable you are to new environments and how you can be creative in the given context.
- Across the UN proficiency in another language is usually required. Language requirements for field projects are commonly Arabic, French, or Spanish.
- Use keywords from the job description on your CV and Cover letter.
- In terms of application tips, they emphasised that there is no point in applying if you do not fulfil the criteria as someone else out of the 500 applicants will...Highlighting spoken languages is also key and many applicants forget it. This needs a specific section in the CV.
- The recruitment officer highlighted the need for a ""genuine"" paragraph about ""who you are"" in the motivation letter in addition to the standard talent and experience. This allows the recruiter to differentiate which candidates have a calling.
- Use the STAR approach for the interview's competency questions and prepare a standout "Why you are the best fit for this job?" response.
- Be aware it may take 6 months for the recruitment process.
- Volunteering outside the organization becomes a stepping stone, showcasing dedication and competence.
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Thanks to Mio Kushibuchi, Neelina Jaggargwal, Emma Rogers, Michelle Del Carretto, Ife Nwibe, Vidushi Bahl, Varsha Jaisimha, Ishant Arora, Elizabeth Reddan and Lakshminarayanan Preethi for notes on this session.

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund)

About them

Representative Michael Bichel, Chief of Human Resources. With regional offices spanning seven regions, including one in South Asia. The organization offers diverse career paths through International Professional, General Service, and National Officer categories, tailoring opportunities to various skill sets and experience levels.

'The inclusive nature of UNICEF's initiatives, coupled with its focus on critical issues and commitment to professional development, positions the organization as an attractive and impactful choice for individuals seeking to make a difference on a global scale.'

Roles they recruit to

- UNICEF has two main tiers of staff positions: International professionals who are subject to mandatory rotation every few years and national officers who are usually employed in a country office and not expected to rotate. UNICEF offers employment in programmatic areas which require technical background e.g. childhood vaccination but they also have roles in other areas such as logistics, Financing, human resources, and IT.
- Fixed term and consultancy staff are recruited as well as permanent positions.
- Internships are available and are paid. Eligible to apply for up to 2 years post-graduation from a bachelor's, master's, or PhD. These can be at headquarters in Geneva or in Regional or national offices.
- Additionally, the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) program is available after accumulating 2-4 years of professional experience, providing a structured path for career advancement. Recruitment is only done from donor countries. Funding of projects is provided by donor country.
- Some of the positions at the research office in Florence are based around operations and programme roles such as monitoring/evaluation, planning, supply etc.
- Average age of employment for a fixed professional position is 42 years - prior experience is essential.
- Vacancies are dropped in regular and batch format at different times of the year, can be ad hoc.

Requirements

- Showcase a genuine commitment and passion for promoting and protecting the rights and well-being of children.
- Relevant work experience is required for most positions. Typically, a minimum of a master's is required.
- Proficiency in a second language is preferred.
- UNICEF now does blended interviews which are more like conversations than simply competency based or simply technical. They are more like conversations apparently

(differed quite a lot from what the interview style was at UNHCR which is purely competency based.

- An important point that was mentioned was that unpaid work does not count towards work experience, but it does help highlight your passion and motivation. Hence, applicants must present their volunteering experience accordingly.
- A tip given by the speaker to help candidates stand out in their applications is to collaborate with the UNICEF research centre in Florence, Italy on a project and establish connections with the UNICEF staff."
- Tip: register and complete an online profile at any time so that it's ready to go when jobs come up. each UN agency needs a separate profile.

Thanks to Neelina Jaggardwal, Michelle Del Carretto, Ife Nwimbe, Elisha Powell, Elizabeth Reddan, Ishant Arora, VarshaJaisimha, Vidushi Bahl and Lakshminarayanan Preethi for notes on this session.

UNV (United Nations Volunteers)

About them

Online or offline volunteering for UN agencies including UNICEF, WHO etc.

Roles they recruit to

- Various options are available such as online, abroad and in your own country.
- Volunteering is not paid, but living expenses, accommodation, and fees needed to move and settle are provided.
- Once we enrol on the website, we can apply to volunteer programs. It may also be a case that the recruiters will contact you in person if they think your speciality is a match for their job.

Requirements

- You do not need prior experience to become a volunteer.
- UN volunteers are given short assignments (few months, to a year or more) - commitment is crucial for the success of the program.
- Although the organisation wants "those who come for the pure sake of volunteering, not for a career", volunteers often work with professionals in the UN organisation. Thus, many volunteers get networking and job opportunities in the UN organisation.

Thanks to Neelina Jaggardwal and Vidushi Bahl for notes on this session.

World Bank

About them

The World Bank Group includes World Bank, IFC, ICSID, and MIGA. There are offices at more than 130 locations. They have funding for healthcare and nutrition, from an economic development perspective; the health system team is based in New York. They tend to focus more on the root cause, e.g. climate change, government transparency.

World bank Values: Impact, Integrity, Respect, Teamwork, Innovation

Roles they recruit to

They have introduced the employment type and recruitment process which can both be found on the website (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/careers>) but they did recommend using LinkedIn to follow up the job application.

Roles include:

- Internships - they are usually in winter and summer, and about 2-4 months.
- JPA program application opens all year around – applications are kept active in database for 6 months. For recent graduates under 28 years old. Provides 2 years professional experience. Additional languages an asset.
- YPP program, usually requires master or PHD, and relevant professional experience.
- Consultant opens at September.
- Staff can be both local and international appointment, ongoing recruitment.

Requirements

- Most jobs require a bachelor's degree and at least 2 years of professional work experience. Professional and technical jobs usually require a master's and/or PhDs.
- Internships can also count to working experience requirement.
- Cover letter is very important in the application process.
- The recruitment process: Application, Long list, Shortlist, Interview, Selection

WFP (UN World Food Programme)

About them

Has 2 centres of Excellence: China and Brazil - to learn from them how they've fought against hunger. Most of their positions are field based thus require significant mobility, however some of the more specialised positions (desk based) are in the headquarters in Italy.

Roles they recruit to

- No specific timeline for vacancies - check careers website - <https://www.wfp.org/careers>
- Whole recruitment process takes around 3-5 months and includes: screening --> short-listing --> technical assessment (e.g. video) which looks at behaviour --> virtual interview --> background checks --> reference checks --> job offer.
- JPO roles – requires master's and 3-5 years' work experience. Only open to candidates of certain donor countries. Age limit is 32-35. JPOs are often found a consultancy within the country section of WFP when their JPO role is completed (if available)
- P roles – permanent professional roles requiring prior work experience and usually a masters+.
- A good, suggested career pathway is to start from regional bureaus and work towards HQ - so you understand operations on the ground. There was also a discussion of consultancies as being a common first position to have with WFP as opposed to securing a P level position right away.
- Internships - They encouraged those who do not have relevant postgraduate experience to apply for their internships which do not require any. These do not

however lead to a job offer. These positions are only open for a period of 2 weeks."

Requirements

- Technical skills required- data analysis, supply chain, project management, and logistics.
- They're looking for mobility, diverse mindset, and stakeholder management. One of the competencies (soft skills specifically) required is communication. This includes an ability to create partnerships as well as to work with diverse stakeholders.
- Education and work experiences in international relations, development studies, nutrition, logistics, and other similar disciplines.
- When it comes to 'work experience', they only consider post-graduation experiences only - anything done during undergrad is not considered, and it must be relevant.
- Need to express a genuine passion for humanitarian work.
- Focus on cover letter – important to convey why you're the best candidate?

Thanks to Neelina Jaggard, Michelle Del Carretto, Dana Kusnir, and Wan-Jen Lee for notes on this session.

Panel Discussion - Chair: IOM Panellists: AIIB, IMF, UNHCR, AfDB

Key organisational priorities

- All organisations named climate crisis as a serious concern for the future of their organisation, UNHCR specifically shared projected severe impacts of human displacement due to extreme weather events.
- Tackling issues of sustainability and sustainable investing has been difficult for the organisations represented on the panel, but it is a major priority going forward.
- Many organisations face issues with gender parity in their leadership, AfDB mainly in their more junior professional levels, whilst Asian development bank more in their senior leadership

Key take home messages

- Embrace the uncertainty, do not fear the uncertainty, everyone's career starts with uncertainty.
- Most UN agencies require at least 2 years' work experience for entry level jobs. However, the AIIB is piloting a graduate scheme this year, aimed at people who have just finished university.
- There is a big focus across all agencies around sustainability. An ideal candidate with have experience/interest in environmental health.
- In interviews, they look for people demonstrating honesty. I.e. people who can talk about mistakes they have made and what they have done to learn from them. "

Thanks to Zara Nelson, Han Han, and Elisha Powell for notes on this session.