

# WELCOME TO THE OFFICIAL GUIDE OF THE EVENT THAT WILL TRANSFORM YOUR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAREER!

## Here you will have a taste of what the IDCE has to offer.

With this free eBook, you will be prepared in advance for the event, learning about the different entry points for a career in International Development, the different types of organizations that you can work in, as well as the main competencies sought by recruiters for positions in the field.

And that's not all: you will also have access to **practical tips** on how to craft your application documents and how to prepare for the interview for vacancies in International Development.

#### This is just a teaser of what you'll find at our 5-weekends event, you will:

- Be able to have hands-on experience on the work of a development professional;
- Strengthen essential competencies that will drastically improve your employability in the field;
- Fully personalized mentoring sessions to get extensive feedback on your CV and on your competencies;
- Fully grasp the main activities of a development specialist with our group case study challenge.
- Be able to network with experienced experts in the field and with people from all over the world;
- And much more!

## SO WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

The IDCE will have a limited number of participants!

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#### **CHAPTER 1**

# AN INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

#### What you will learn?

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Despite being offered by hundreds of great universities postgraduate programs around the world, International Development (ID) studies do not have a "professional body nor an academic association to prescribe core skills and standards, or to facilitate discussions about curriculum requirements and core competencies of graduates" as other more established professions have. There are no such things as specific entry schemes or explicit ladders to be climbed in this multifaceted career domain. In turn, that can lead, on the one hand, to a sense of confusion with so much sparse information, and on the other, to a lack of structured information about the possibilities of this area.

Thus, if you are here, it probably means one of these things: you are either curious about the universe of International Development practice, considering to pursue a career in the area, or you are already in the field but trying to understand how to make a career shift or progress.

Taking that into account, this first chapter's goal is to provide a clear picture on how a career in International Development really looks like and what it involves. In order to do so, we are going to present the fundamental concepts, themes, trends, players and organizations encompassed in this field of study and praxis, as well as the essential competencies expected of a candidate or a professional in the area, the different career levels and respective levels of education.

1. As observed on Engel, S., & Simpson Reeves, L. (2018). What do they need to know? Core skills for postgraduate development studies students. Asia Pacific Viewpoint, 59(2), 212-225.



## **DIFFERENT CAREER LEVELS AND ENTRY POINTS**

Besides the complexity of institutions, themes and trends involved in the area, International Development is also complex when it comes to job opportunities due to its various entry points, contract types, grades, career levels, etc. To succeed in the quest of landing your dream job in the sector and avoid wasting emotional energy unjustifiably, it's important to understand the basics on how recruitment processes are structured and what's the type of opportunities available that best match your experience. Therefore, in this section, you'll be provided with an overview of aspects related to career levels and entry points in ID organizations that are essential for more efficient and effective application processes.

## Career Stage

Before anything, it's fundamental to reflect upon **which stage you are in your career**, as the entry points in the sector vary according to candidates' experience level. It may seem obvious, but it's not: almost half of applicants to international development positions do not meet the minimum requirements<sup>2</sup> and are disconsidered early in the process.

Applying for a position that fully corresponds to your degree of experience is crucial for a realistic chance to be hired. On the whole, the opportunities for joining ID organizations can be summarized in the following levels: internship, volunteer, Junior career, Mid-level career, Senior career, Senior Executive career, and Consultancy. In addition, it's important to notice that seniority criteria varies across the sector's different organizations. The UN system adopts a different structure than the World Bank, for example: the first one adopts the P/D scale, in which P1 is a junior grade, P3 and P4 are mid-career and P5, D1 and D2 are senior grades; the second one adopts the G structure, in which GA-GD corresponds to administrative jobs and the junior grade, GE-GG are mid-career grades, and GH-GJ corresponds to the superior grade.

The table below provides a useful overview of the requirements related to work experience and educational training degree throughout ID's main institutions. Despite the fact it's a non-exhaustive list, the table can be very useful for you to make a better assessment of where you stand in relation to the available opportunities in the sector.

<sup>2.</sup> According to Gedde, M., 2015, "Working in international development and humanitarian assistance: a career guide", Routledge.

## Years of Work Experience and University Degree required for different entry points in International Development organizations

required for different entry points in international Development of Saint Lations		
Level	Years of Experience	Education
Internship	No experience is required	Enrolled in a BA or Master's degree program
<b>Volunteer</b> (International Youth, between 18-29 years old)	No experience to 2 years can be required	Usually minimum required is a BA degree
Volunteer	Usually minimum of 2 years	Usually minimum required is a BA degree
Young Professionals Programmes/ International Professionals Programmes (up to 32/33 years old)	1-3 years	Master's Degree
Junior career	0-4 years	BA/Master's degree
Field Services	Usually minimum of 6 years	Usually, High School diploma
Service and Support	0-10 years	Usually, High School diploma
Mid-level career	5-9 years	Master's degree
Senior career	10+ years	Master's degree
Senior Executive career	15+ years	Master's degree
Consultancy	Usually accessible to all levels of experience	Depending on the themes, various levels of education can be required

**Source:** Information was compiled and adapted by OpenIGO based on the UN, the World Bank, and International Financing Institutions careers' guidelines.

## **Q** Location Positioning

In this process of understanding how to be successful in landing a job in International Development, it's necessary to understand that **there are a variety of criteria related to the location's position that may influence your success** throughout the process. That is, ID's institutions usually offer positions that vary from being located in the applicant's country of nationality, in another country where there's an office, in another country where their headquarters are located or in a country where there's a crisis going on. Make sure to pay attention to these details and check which nationalities are being accepted for the position you want, as not always the vacancies abroad are offered to other countries' nationals.

For instance, regional development banks and regional multilateral organizations - like the African, Asian, Inter-American and Islamic Development Banks, as well as the International Monetary Fund and all of European Union institutions - usually only hire nationals from their member countries with rare exceptions to other nationalities. General support and services positions in

the United Nations different agencies and the World Bank are usually open qualified nationals of the job location only, but when it comes to positions within these same organizations that require work experience of more than 10 years, they are often open to all nationalities.

## **Contracts**

Finally, before applying for a job in the sector, it's also important to understand that besides these different levels that correspond to your work experience load, **there are also different types of contracts**: fixed ones, like career (staff) positions; and flexible ones, like short-term, extended-term assignments and consultancies. Knowing that, make sure to apply for your entry point vacancy considering the type of contract that best suits your current goals, needs and priorities. When reflecting upon these matters, candidates must also evaluate their academic background with the work developed by the intended Organization/Agency.

### **EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND**

As previously noted, International Development addresses a myriad of concerns. So, despite the specificity importance of postgraduate studies in this domain of knowledge for an array of opportunities, **the area also needs professionals from different educational backgrounds**, with different expertise. For a clearer picture, the table below presents a non-exhaustive list of more than five dozen possibilities of educational specialty and, therefore, work specialty within the field of ID.

The idea is to highlight how broad is the scope of work within the field of international development and how you can take part in it by exploring the domains with which you identify the most: **postgraduate studies in International Development are not the only way to get into the sector** - in fact, nowadays it may not even be the main one due to the generalist character of this specialty in contrast to the growing needs of the sector for specialists. For the ones who are looking into making a transition from another sector to ID, this list may be useful for you to understand if your past experiences are transferable and could help you to stand out in selection processes.

Each one of these different areas and the opportunities related to them have, indeed, specific technical criteria to be met. However, with respect to educational degrees in general, it's possible to make the following considerations: 1. as seen in the previous section, formal education provides an important foundation for a career in International Development; 2. in ID's main organizations, holding **a Master's degree is a standard requirement** for almost all positions ranging from internships to Senior Executive (except for a few internships that can be done while enrolled in an undergraduate program); 3. finally, positions strictly related to research and policy-designing, no matter in which of the 50+ domains of International Development, whether in a think tank or a development bank, usually require a doctorate degree from its candidates.

## **54** Areas of Specialty Within International Development

- Advocacy and Campaigns
- Camp Management
- Capacity Building
- Communications
- Country Director
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
- Disability
- Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)
- Economics
- Education
- Energy, Environment and Climate Change
- Engineering
- Farming and Agribusiness
- Finance and Accountancy
- Food Security
- Fundraising
- Gender
- Governance
- Handicrafts and Design
- Health Professional
- HIV, AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
- Human Resources (HR)
- Human Rights
- Humanitarian Response Management
- Information and Communication Technology
- Knowledge-Policy Interface
- Law and Development

- Livelihoods
- Livestock and Veterinary Care
- Logistics
- · Maternal, Child and Reproductive Health
- Media and Journalism
- Microfinance
- Migration
- Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)
- Natural Resource Management (NRM)
- Nutrition
- Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC)
- Peacebuilding
- Policy
- Private Sector Development
- Procurement
- Project Management
- Proposal Writing
- Protection
- Public Health
- Research and Academia
- Rural Development
- Shelter and Housing
- Social Protection
- Sustainable Tourism
- Urban Planning
- Value Chain Analysis
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Source: Gedde, M., 2015, "Working in international development and humanitarian assistance: a career guide", Routledge.

#### CHAPTER 2

## OPPORTUNITIES WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS

#### What you will learn?

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When considering working in the area of International Development or just trying to comprehend its complexity, keep in mind that the field encompasses a vast array of institutions that interact among themselves and with countries in the international community.

Besides non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of various types - which are the first institutions that people think of when talking about the sector -, there are also government aid agencies or bilateral organizations, development banks, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), multilateral agencies, local civil society organizations (CSO), foundations and charities, think tanks and academia, volunteer organizations, consulting firms and private sector.

For a clearer picture on their operating dynamics, they may be broadly classified into funders - which are those who provide financial and human resources, different types of assistance, research development and project direction; support services - which are the institutions running the operations on the ground, providing support for projects' implementation and management; and finally, there are other institutions that do not necessarily fit into any of these two categories, but are part of the International Development landscape for providing innovative solutions in regards to the area's concerns.

These are the institutions you may work for and, even if you plan to apply specifically for only one of them, it's important to know what role the other ones play in the system and contribute to ID.



## AN OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTIONS

Below, you can find an overview of the different types of International Development Institutions in which you can seek to start a career. Each one of them will be explained further throughout this chapter:

## **Bilateral Organizations**

They are constituted by governmental agencies or nonprofit organizations, whose goal is to be of service in times of crisis, providing targeted and specific aid to another country, and are considered key players in ID's dynamics. Their assistance to the country in need can be made through different mechanisms, namely funding, provision donations or human resources. A few known examples are the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the Agencia de Cooperación Internacional de Chile (AGCI).

### **Multilateral Organizations**

These institutions are formed between at least three countries and are destined to work on issues that are of concern to all of the parts involved in the organization. There are more than two hundred of them in the world, of different sizes and purposes, and they are considered the best forums to effectively deal with global issues and establish common priorities for action. A few well-known examples are the United Nations (UN, the World Bank (WB), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). They are funded by the governments of their member states and, in so, can be characterized as intergovernmental.

#### **Development Banks**

These non-private institutions aim to support economic development projects by providing long-term financial, technical and managerial assistance for both public and private sector industries. They can operate at community, national, regional or multilateral levels. Some well-known examples are the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Inter-American Development Bank, the BRICS New Development Bank, the Brazilian Development Bank and the Development Bank of Southern Africa.

#### Academic, Research Institutes & Think Tanks

There are many institutions around the world dedicated to academic teaching, researching and policy work on ID, whether as part of universities, public domain or independently, providing important training, insights and new ideas on the area. At the university level, some well-known examples of research institutes are the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (in Geneva, Switzerland), the Institute of Development Studies (in Sussex, UK) and the Centre for Development Innovation (at Wageningen, The Netherlands). At the think tanks level, which are public policy research organizations that seek to influence global policy and decision-making through advocacy, some well-known institutions are the Chatham House - Royal Institute for International Affairs and the Inter-American Dialogue.

## \*\*International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) \*\*Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

These organizations comprise the largest share of ID's institutions and, essentially, are non-profit and unaffiliated agencies of all sizes (global, national and community-based) and purposes (usually social or political issues). They are players of great importance in ID dynamics, as they are responsible for facilitating opportunities to address important issues for people's lives, for channeling a part of development aid, for articulating cooperation routes among other players, and for running advocacy campaigns and projects on the field. Some well-known of these institutions that operate both at the international and local level are the International Committee of the Red Cross, Médecins sans Frontières, CARE International, Mercy Corps and OXFAM.

#### **Foundations & Charities**

These institutions have a philanthropic essence and provide funding through grants, donations and bursaries to implementing agencies - some of them also deliver support on the ground through supplies donation and human resources. They also come in different sizes and support different areas of need, and can be either private (whose resources come from a family, a corporation or an individual) or grant-making public charities (whose resources come from the collection of various sources). Some of the well-known institutes of this branch are the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Salvation Army, the Global Fund for Women, the Aga Khan Development Network and the Clinton Foundation.

#### Local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

These non-governmental institutions encompass and support the interests and will of citizens and work directly in the local communities. They deliver social services and assistance and their funding is often received from bilateral organizations, foundations or NGOs.

#### **Development & Professional Services Consulting Firms**

These businesses sell their technical and specialist expertise to governments, aid donors, multilateral organizations, NGOs and to the other players in ID that demand project execution. In fact, that's the role they assume in the dynamics of the area: they are not involved in the project identification phase, but will be charged to design and implement the projects on behalf of clients, focusing on a variety of specific topics. They are usually hired throughout bidding processes. Some well-known examples of these firms are Accenture, CESO, DAI, Deloitte Consulting, International Resource Group, McKinsey, PwC and Oxford Policy Management.

#### **Volunteer Organizations**

These institutions provide a route into International Development dynamics for people who voluntarily offer their time for a service, be it in person or on the internet. The most well-known institution example of this branch is UN Volunteers, which operates on a global scale and throughout a myriad of fields, but there are several other organizations that support specific thematic focuses and operate in different locations.

#### **Private Sector**

Despite not encompassing one specific type of institution and playing one specific role in ID's dynamics, the private sector is becoming increasingly involved in it: whether by encompassing the principles of Corporate Social Responsibility to their chores, by delivering development projects or collaborating with other players to carry out their projects. Social enterprises are also part of this branch and take part in ID's dynamics, as they combine a market approach with a social purpose that can significantly influence development in the long run.

#### **CHAPTER 3**

## COMPETENCY-BASED SELECTION PROCESSES IN THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### What you will learn?

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The majority of selection processes in the field of international development seek specific competencies that are considered important in future employees. These processes are known as **competency-based recruitment**. The different job opportunities establish their own criteria to select those who best meet their requirements. Thus, a set of competencies will be analyzed and tested in the applicants throughout the process.

Since the United Nations is a model for many international development organizations around the world, its specific case will be evaluated in this chapter, in which the selection process for jobs is tailored towards looking for competencies in candidates, according to the type of opportunity being offered and the corresponding agency, fund, program or organization that is advertising it. These competencies will be tested all throughout the selection process and you should pay special attention to them when writing your cover letter and being interviewed.

But what are "competencies"? What is competency-based recruitment? How can the competencies desired by the United Nations be understood? Can competencies be developed? A candidate must know how to answer these questions, in order to be successful in the selection process.



## **UN COMPETENCIES: AN OVERVIEW**

Recruitment is a process in which an organization selects the person most qualified to fill a specific position from various candidates, in line with pre-established evaluation criteria. One of the most widespread recruitment models is **competency-based recruitment**, in which the competencies the organization requires and, more specifically, those for the position it is looking to fill, have been previously identified. The selection process is structured from this pre-established profile, seeking the candidate who meets those pre-defined technical and behavioral requirements. Competency-based recruitment has been able to decrease organizations' turnover and increase productivity.

Preparing for a competency-based selection process firstly requires understanding how the organization perceives "competencies" and "values": what definitions are given to these terms, and which ones are adopted by the organizational culture.

#### For the United Nations, values and competencies are described in the following way:

Values  "Shared principles and beliefs that underpin the organization's work an guide actions and behaviors of staff"	
Competencies	"Skills, attributes, and behaviors directly related to successful job performance" <sup>3</sup> .

The majority of selection processes across the UN System follows this recruitment model and seeks specific competencies in candidates which are described in the job opening. Each body within the UN System, whether it is a fund, program, agency or organization may have their own set of values and competencies, independent of those set forward by the United Nations itself. But, at the end of the day, even when an institution chooses to have their own set of competencies, you will notice that they are very similar to those of the UN, which makes this valuable to anyone looking for an opportunity in the field of international development. Below, you will find the main values and competencies of this organization, which can also be found – sometimes even with the same wording – in some institutions across the UN System:

Core Values	Core Competencies	Managerial Competencies
<ul><li>Integrity</li></ul>	Communication	• Vision
<ul> <li>Professionalism</li> </ul>	Teamwork	<ul> <li>Leadership</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>Respect for Diversity</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Planning and Organizing</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Empowering Others</li> </ul>
	Accountability	<ul> <li>Managing Performance</li> </ul>
	Creativity	Building Trust
	Client Orientation	<ul> <li>Judgement and Decision-Making</li> </ul>
	Commitment to Continuous Learning	
	Technological Awareness	

<sup>3.</sup> United Nations, 2012, "Competency-based Interviewing for Applicants", UN Careers.

Each competency has their own set of positive and negative indicators. It's important to pay attention to those when writing your cover letter, crafting your CV and answering questions during the interview. It is crucial to show the recruiters that you display the positive indicators for the competencies the job position requires.

Let's take a look at some positive and negative indicators of three very common competencies listed in UN job openings:

#### **Professionalism**

An ability to work in a calm, competent, and committed manner is critical for all staff members.

#### **Positive Indicators**

- Shows pride in work and in achievements
- Demonstrates professional competence and mastery of subject matter
- Is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and achieving results
- Is motivated by professional rather than personal concerns
- Shows persistence when faced with difficult problems or challenges
- Remains calm in stressful situations

## Negative Indicators

- · Less motivated than others to achieve
- · Appears less knowledgeable to others about subject matter/field
- Complacent about achievements
- · Sets easy targets and personal objectives
- · Allows pressure to get to him/her
- Tends to find it hard to bounce back after setbacks/ difficult challenges

## Teamwork

Working within an established team; supporting colleagues; sharing responsibility for decision making and results; encouraging other to contribute; collaborating with colleagues across work units, departments, or divisions.

#### Positive Indicators

- Works collaboratively with colleagues to achieve organizational goals.
- Solicits input by genuinely valuing others' ideas and expertise; is willing to learn from others
- Places team agenda before personal agenda
- Builds consensus for task purpose and direction with team members
- Supports and acts in accordance with final group decisions, even when such decisions may not entirely reflect their own position
- Shares credit for team accomplishments and accepts joint responsibility for team shortcomings

## Negative Indicators

- Rarely offers support to colleagues.
- Prefers to work alone
- Emphasizes achieving personal goals
- Shows limited consideration of the ideas and input
- Is prepared to ignore/disrupt majority decisions
- Tends to find it hard to bounce back after setbacks/ difficult challenges
- Takes the credit for team accomplishments; passes on responsibility for team limitations

## Planning e Organizing

Delivering one's own workload in an organized and time-efficient manner; setting goals and targets for oneself; prioritizing the delivery of one's own work; adjusting work priorities to take account of changing circumstances; setting detailed plans for one's day to day work; monitoring one's own delivery against a plan.

#### **Positive Indicators**

- Develops clear goals that are consistent with agreed strategies
- Identifies priority activities and assignments; adjusts priorities as required
- Allocates appropriate amount of time and resources for completing work
- Foresees risks and allows for contingencies when planning
- Monitors and adjusts plans and actions as necessary
- Uses time efficiently

### **⋈** Negative Indicators

- Has no clear system of priorities
- Appears disorganized and unsystematic
- Organizes impractical work schedules
- Is unrealistic about timescales
- Efforts get sidetracked
- Deadlines not met
- Tasks not completed
- No checks on activities
- Is unwilling to change plans to meet new demands

Source: United Nations, 2010, "UN Competency Development - A Practical Guide".

To understand in greater depth what each competency encompasses, we highly suggest you take a look at the publication "UN Competency Development—A Practical Guide":

https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/Un\_competency\_development\_guide.pdf

In this guide, you will find a detailed description of every UN competency and the aspects of each that are analyzed during selection processes. We suggest you read the ones listed for the job opening you have applied for and only then, based on the information in this guide, should you prepare your cover letter and most suitable past experiences to share with the interviewers.

If the institution you decide to apply for has its own set of competencies, we suggest you to take a look at its official website! Usually, at the page "About Us" you can find out more about the institution's values and core competencies. Another good tip, if you cannot find this information directly on the website, is to look for keywords on "Google".

Here's an example:

If you are applying for a vacancy with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and want to know more about this specific organization's values and how it perceives "competencies", you could simply type "FAO Competencies and Values" on Google. Some organizations usually prepare what they call a "Competency Framework", which is usually published as a booklet.

If you want to take a look at FAO's Competency Framework, click here!

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With this free eBook, you will be prepared in advance for the event, learning about the different entry points for a career in International Development, the different types of organizations that you can work in, as well as the main competencies sought by recruiters for positions in the field.

## What will you learn in this event?

- Experience the daily life of an entry/mid level staff from International Development organizations
- Understand the process of solving the many challenges that development professionals face
- Meet HR and IGO experts that will help you strengthen essential competencies
- Get hands-on experience with the most common development tasks
- Build your network with professionals from around the globe

## SO WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

The IDCE will have a limited number of participants!

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#### **CHAPTER 4**

# CRAFTING THE IDEAL CURRICULUM VITAE/RESUME

#### What you will learn?

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All selection processes for vacancies in the field of international development require candidates to send their Resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV) online to apply for opportunities. The selection team will use these documents to gain an initial impression of the candidate's competencies, professional experience and academic qualifications, and to evaluate the suitability of their profile according to what is required for the position and organization. Although there can be cases when a CV and Resume are interchangeable, these documents have a few key differences.

Most international organizations will be willing to accept one or the other, and for this reason, in this chapter, we decided to guide you through the process of putting together an effective Resume. If it is the case that the Job Opening you are applying for only accepts CVs, you will easily be able to adapt your Resume based on the information provided in section 1.1, where we explain the main differences between the two documents.

Constructing a good CV/Resume is essential, in order to maximize your chances of success in competitive selection processes and to stand out from other candidates.



## **GENERAL ASPECTS OF THE RESUME**

General information on a Resume will be presented in this section, including the difference between this document and a curriculum vitae, and the most common types. It will also include the importance of constructing a narrative in this document, to increase your chances of success in the selection process.

#### **Curriculum Vitae and Resumes: The Fundamental Differences**

Generally speaking, job or internship selection processes request a Resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV) from candidates. These documents are different, but they are often interchangeable. In the case of international development organizations, most of them will be willing to accept one or the other. Make sure to check out the job opening that you are applying for and contact the organization in this regard.

The expression "Curriculum Vitae" comes from Latin and means "the course of life", in reference to a complete bibliographical description of an individual's educational and professional background. Therefore, a CV (also called Vita or Vitae) is a longer and more detailed document than a Resume, with the candidate's full job and academic history (including relevant internships and voluntary work), as well as information about their language knowledge, competences, publications, awards, honors and scholarships, among others. A CV is usually required for positions in which academic knowledge is one of the relevant factors, such as academic (at universities) and research positions (at think tanks and research institutes, etc.) or at national or international state bureaucracies.

In turn, a Resume is a shorter document, of only one or two pages, with a short description of your professional experience, academic profile and competences. This document presents a candidate as having the profile and competences required for the position and organization. Studies show that a recruiter spends an average of 15 seconds evaluating a Resume. Therefore, it should be concise and objective, containing only essential information for the position sought. A Resume is a widely disseminated document in business related selections, particularly in the United States, and in the majority of selections for employees at intergovernmental organizations (IGO).

#### **VIDEO TIPS**

CV vs Resume: What's the Difference? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zlp4CwNIs7g

## **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A CV AND RESUME**

	Aim	To present a candidate's full professional and academic history
	Content	Full professional history
	Length	There are no limits, but a maximum of 3 pages is recommended
CV	Selection processes to which it applies	Academic and research organizations; medical organizations; Applying for fellowships;
	Sections within the document	Personal data; aim; educational background; professional experience; languages; courses; conferences; publications; scholarships, academic awards, honors and other information



Resume  Content Relevant professional experience for the position s  Length 1-2 pages Selection processes to which it applies IGO internships; Private sector organizations;	Aim	To show that the candidate has the experience and competences required for a specific vacancy
	Content	Relevant professional experience for the position sought
	1-2 pages	
	IGO internships; Private sector organizations;	
		Personal data; aim; academic background; professional experience and abilities and competences

## **FINAL TIPS**

- **Tip 1** After finalizing your Resume, show it to your colleagues and ask them to provide sincere comments on its content and organization. In this way, any mistakes, which the candidate had not noticed when preparing the document can be identified and corrected. Ideally, you should ask for the opinion of someone who does not have a close emotional tie with you or has enough maturity to be neutral, since, generally speaking, people who are very close are embarrassed about being critical and tend to praise the resume, even when they have identified mistakes;
- **Tip 2** Use the first person singular to describe your personal accomplishments and achievements;
- **Tip 3** Only put information, which can be proven on your Resume. Everything, which is included in the document, can be questioned by the organization in the future. Be 100% transparent and honest with the organization;
- **Tip 4** Be careful about the email address you provide, especially if it is personal and includes informal words, such as johnthebest@hotxx.com or marylittlecutie@gxx.com, for example;
- **Tip 5** Try to be clear and direct when writing your Resume. There is no need to include wordy texts or provide unnecessary information on a Resume;
- **Tip 6** There is no need to put "Resume" as the document heading. The assessor will know what it is, as soon as they look at the document. The first piece of information to appear on a Resume should be the candidate's full name;
- **Tip 7** Do not include personal data irrelevant to the professional area on your Resume, such as marital status, document numbers and religion, among others;
- **Tip 8** | If you are writing your Resume in a foreign language, avoid using automatic translators (such as Google Translator), since they frequently make mistakes. Always contact a person who is proficient in the selected language to assist you with the translation;
- **Tip 9** Avoid using the passive voice. This form of writing may lead to mistakes and is not always consistent with the correct way of expressing yourself;
- **Tip 10** If there is a large gap between your professional experience, explain the reasons for this. For example, a person who had a 3-year gap between their last two jobs may explain that they were studying for a post-graduate qualification during this period, which involved an international experience or can also allege family reasons.

#### Resume Sample

An example of a Resume that was submitted to a job position within an international development organization is presented in this section, to serve as a model, so that you can create your own document.

## DANIEL MARTINS DA SILVA

#### PERSONAL INFORMATION

Brazilian / Bolivian, Male. Date of birth: April 18, 1994

Address: Rua Sabino de Aguiar, 27, Apt. 403 - Jardim das Flores

São Paulo, SP, Brazil (55) 11-99456-1111

danielmsdevelopment@gmail.com

**SUMMARY** 

A proactive professional with a Master's in Environmental Sciences and almost 4 years of experience in the field of sustainable development with special interest for the areas of Water Demand Management for Agricultural use, Ecosystem Restoration and Carbon Neutralization. Has extensive experience working in team-oriented projects to develop innovative solutions to deep rooted environmental issues, especially in developing countries.

**EDUCATION** 

#### • Master's in Environmental Sciences

University of São Paulo (USP), São Paulo - SP, Brazil, Apr 2018 - Apr 2020

Adviser: João Matos Rodrigues

Scholarship from: Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES).

Thesis title: Water demand management for agricultural use in semiarid regions.

#### • Bachelor's degree in Sanitary and Environmental Engineering

Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), Salvador - BA, Brazil, Feb 2013 - Dec 2017.

#### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### • University of São Paulo (São Paulo - Brazil)

Oct 2019 - Present

Position: Assistant Professor and Researcher

Status: Part-time

**Activities:** Teaching, developing and supervising research and undertaking extension activities in the fields of sustainable development and environmental management. Implemented a post-class career training and motivation program for over 250 students, reducing absenteeism by 20% in regular classes.

#### • Environmental Secretariat of São Paulo State (São Paulo - Brazil)

Feb 2018 - Present

**Position:** Forest Restoration Coordinator

Status: Part-time

**Activities:** Coordination of the team actively engaged in a collaborative, landscape-scale initiative designed to restore ecosystems. Delivers annual reports to the Governor of São Paulo. Suggested and led the implementation of the state's "Sustainable Project Best Practices" establishing research collaboration, on leveraging natural resources, between neighbor states, the private sector and NGOs, gathering more than 30 stakeholders.

• **GroundWork** (Pietermaritzburg – South Africa)

Aug 2017 – Nov 2017

Position: Lead Program Manager

Status: Full-time

**Activities:** Led team of 15 people on the development of a technology center that develops clean and cheap energy alternatives for over 100 low-income families. The project has improved the community's quality of health by 63% since its implementation. Leadership, teamwork and planning & organizing skills were essential to the good outcome of the initiative.

#### QUALIFICATIONS/SKILLS

- Experienced coordination and organization with public, private and NGO sectors
- Strategy and policy making
- Contact negotiations and strategic alliances
- Information collection, protection and sharing
- Professional research and investigation in the field of Sustainable Development
- Advanced knowledge of software packages: Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Adobe Acrobat
- SPSS (Statistic analysis and database management)
- NVivo (Qualitative research tool)
- ASANA (Project management software)

**LANGUAGES** 

- Portuguese: Native Speaker
- English: Advanced Comprehension, Speaking, Reading and Writing Skills
- Spanish: Advanced Comprehension, Speaking, Reading and Writing Skills
- French: Advanced Comprehension, Speaking, Reading and Writing Skills

#### SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

- Professor Honored by graduating students at the University of São Paulo (USP) (2019)
- Granted a CAPES scholarship to study for a Master's degree at the University of São Paulo (USP);
- Granted a Fulbright scholarship to carry out research at the University of California (Berkeley) (2015-2016).
- First Place in the prestigious Vale-Capes Science and Sustainability Award for my Master's Thesis.

#### OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

- Visiting scholar at the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley) Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering (2015)
- Ad hoc professor for courses on Regional Sustainable Development for employees of the Bank of Brazil (Banco do Brasil), Federal Savings Bank (Caixa Econômica Federal), São Francisco Hydroelectric Company (Companhia Hidro Elétrica do São Francisco: CHESF) and Petrobras.

#### CHAPTER 5

# WRITING AN EFFECTIVE COVER LETTER

#### What you will learn?

through the process of writing and structuring it.

As part of the application process of most job opportunities in international development, candidates are usually required to submit a cover letter. The main goal of this document is to give candidates a chance to introduce themselves and explain their motivation in applying for the vacancy. Since the cover letter is a very important part of your application, in this chapter, we will guide you

- **X** 



## **COVER LETTER: OVERVIEW**

As the name suggests, a cover letter serves as a "cover" for the documents you submit for a job application. It should provide a summary of a candidate's skills, professional experience, and qualifications that meet the needs of a job opening, emphasizing why the candidate should be selected. Cover letters are usually seen as a personal marketing tool. Typically, they are meant to "sell" the candidate by showing recruiters the qualities and skills that s/he possesses that are in line with the prospective job. This way, evaluators are able to gain a better perspective on the candidate's attributes and their main motivation for applying. The text should represent the candidate positively and objectively. It should be short, yet contain enough information to keep the reader interested in reading the rest of the application. When well written, such a document immediately demonstrates the participant's abilities in written communication and the organization of ideas, as well as their argumentative capacity.

In most selection processes of international organizations, the cover letter (or letter of motivation) is one of the documents candidates must submit when applying for it, to serve as an introduction to their Curriculum Vitae or Resume. It should contextualize your CV/Resume and all its information in an objective fashion, highlighting the elements that are in line with the job opening you are applying for. Its main objective is to reinforce the candidate's positive qualities in order to arouse the evaluator's interest and desire to know more about the individual.

In order to write a strong cover letter, it is important to know what the recruiters will be looking for, so here are some of the aspects the recruiting team seeks to evaluate:

#### **Competencies**

Competencies may be understood as the candidate's set of knowledge, abilities, attitudes and values. The majority of selection processes in international development organizations are competency-based. Therefore, it is important that the candidate shows that s/he has the main competencies the organization is seeking, such as teamwork, leadership, negotiation, problem solving, analytical and strategic thinking. **Note that the required competencies can change according to the post being advertised and to the organization.** Since most organizations that work with international development are value-driven, your personal values and the manner in which they are linked to the organization's should also be highlighted.

#### Knowledge about the organization

It is expected that the candidate demonstrates knowledge about the organization they are applying for, such as its mission, its operational approach, activities, and main objectives.

#### **Cultural fit**

Showing sound knowledge of the organization is not enough. The candidate should highlight that there is compatibility between their values, principles, objectives, and understanding of reality with those of the organization.

#### **Communicative capacity**

The cover letter enables the recruiter to evaluate the candidate's writing skills and their ability to structure ideas and coherently defend arguments.

### Technical knowledge

The candidate should present how s/he would contribute to the organization. Expert assessors from the area the candidate is applying to will assess if the candidate has the technical knowledge required by the organization and if s/he fully grasps the fundamental concepts of their specialized area.

When writing your cover letter, take all of the aforementioned aspects into consideration and make them evident throughout the document when expressing three main things: your interest in working for the organization, the reason you are interested in the vacancy, and why you are a strong candidate for the position.

In the next sections, we will present you with an optional model to structure your cover letter around, offer guidance on how to cover each of the aspects mentioned, and advise on what kind of relevant content you can include in it. But, overall, know that a good cover letter should:

- Introduce the candidate;
- Talk about the candidate's motivation for applying;
- Contextualize the candidate's Curriculum Vitae or Resume (linking the information provided and prior experience with the job position);
- Demonstrate the applicant's knowledge of the organization, its values, and the competencies required for the specific job;
- Show the candidate's enthusiasm, but in a professional manner;
- "Sell" the candidate;
- Be written in a formal style with no grammar mistakes.

#### **SAMPLE COVER LETTER**

Dear Mr. Johnson,

I am writing to express my deepest interest in the ET Consultant vacancy in the Water Sector. Based on my exceptional academic background in biology and engagement on water supply initiatives, I believe that I am a strong candidate for this position. I am very excited about the potential and significant opportunities it offers me to excel as a proactive, achievement-oriented professional, and I can't think of a more noble calling than contributing with my knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm in assisting the World Bank Group in stimulating the process of change towards sustainable development across the globe, especially in developing countries.

At the age of 15, when I moved from Spain to Brazil to attended high school, I had contact with the harsh reality of a developing country, experiencing corruption and abuse of power, constant economic crisis and social inequality. Learning that one of the largest economies of the world, the largest in South America, has part of its population living without proper sanitation and suffering from lack of water in semi-arid regions, motivated me to want to help with its transformation. After graduating from the prestigious University of California, Berkeley in Biology, I pursued my Master's degree in Water Resources Management and my Master thesis looked into the importance of water resources for territorial development, seeking to place social and environmental objectives on an equal footing with economic goals.

After my Master's degree I have been continuously engaged in the initiatives related to water supply for rural communities. In 2013, I worked with Water 3012 – an NGO which provides cisterns for rural communities with restricted access to clean water. While working for Water 3012, I devoted myself to an 11-month project from planning to implementing a water supply structure that would benefit the population of a rural community of 18,000 people in Chile. I was responsible for leading the studies and overseeing the construction of 6 (six) cisterns each with a capacity of 10,000 liters of water, which resulted in a 3-ton increase in food. I also assisted in the finalization of budgets and resource justification of project proposals, as well as in identifying areas that could have a better utilization of resources. Through meticulous analysis, I was able to identify inefficiencies – mainly in relation to project expenditures – that were affecting the overall project flow and would have had an adverse impact on the initiative's objectives. I, then, collaborated with a team to come up with and recommend new approaches of sustainable and cheaper cistern models to save some money and make the project run within budget. We were able to save around of US\$ 5,716.00 for each cistern that we built, decreasing our costs from US\$ 17,525.00 to US\$ 11,809.00.

Following this period, I coordinated the creation and development of a course designed for community leaders. This initiative focused on the promotion of sustainable use of water resources in agriculture; on the conscious management of this resource for the community as whole; its use for plantation and daily use in house activities; the importance of sanitation to control diseases; and on how climate change has been impacting the offer of water across the world. As the lead manager of this initiative, I was responsible for audit documentation and for preparing and monitoring the project's budget, as well as selecting and training new collaborator. This endeavor required advanced monitoring and evaluation skills—as this was a groundbreaking initiative in my country, I had to set clear goals and follow efficient strategies in order for it to be successful.

All of this knowledge and experience obtained during my academic and professional life has reassured me that it is possible to align economic development with sustainable measures as the World Bank Group preaches. Furthermore, it provided me with the ability to learn fast; understand the value of collaborative decision-making; and lead processes that bring out the best of what people have to offer, empowering team members to implement successful changes in their organizations. For these reasons, I strongly believe that I have gained relevant experience that has led to the development of the fundamental values and competencies required to be successful in the position I am applying for.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Surya Ankar

#### CHAPTER 6

## ACING THE INTERVIEW

#### What you will learn?

The selection process for jobs in the field of international development often include an interview stage, whose main aim is to find out more about the candidate and analyze their competencies, technical knowledge and experience. Interviews are an interpersonal research method used to obtain more in-depth information from someone, using questions and answers (conversation), and observing non-verbal elements such as attitude, behavior, and appearance, among others. Interviews can be conducted using different methods and approaches in order to identify the most appropriate candidate for the vacancy. Therefore, knowing about this important phase of a selection procedure, its exercises and logic, helps the candidate to be better prepared, increasing their chances of being selected for the desired vacancy.



## United Nations Interview Model

There are various ways to conduct a selection interview. Because of its importance, the United Nations has been chosen as the model through which we analyze how interviews are conducted in the field of international development. Be aware that interview models may vary from institution to institution and from each selection process. However, evaluating UN's model will serve as a solid basis for any vacancy you apply for that is related to international development.

The UN adopts a semi-structured interview combining different methods, which are the traditional and the competency-based interview. This interview is conducted by UN specialists and seeks to analyze technical and behavioral aspects of the candidates. In this sense, it should be expected a mix of competency-based and regular questions.

### The United Nations interview mainly to evaluate:

- 1. The candidate's knowledge of the specific UN organization's working areas
- 2. The candidate's competencies and skills
- 3. The candidate's general and technical knowledge
- 4. The candidate's cultural fit with the organization
- 5. The candidate's past behaviors and achievements

The interview may be conducted by a single person or by a panel consisting of two or three UN staff members, that seeks to analyze behavioral aspects of the candidate and their real competencies. Candidates should bear in mind that the main competencies sought by the interviewers will depend on the specific opening that they are applying for. Some of the most common ones sought by the UN are: Professionalism, Teamwork, and Planning & Organizing. During the interview, candidates must base their answers on the specific competencies listed in the job opening they have applied for.

#### What is a CULTURAL FIT?

It is increasingly common to speak of a **cultural fit** associated with selection processes. There are different types of fit, but the most important are the **person-organization fit** (**P-O fit**) and **person-job fit** (**P-J fit**).

To simplify, a person-organization cultural fit (P-O fit) can be explained as the coherence existing between a person's values, principles, objectives, understanding of the world, and preferences with those of an organization. There is an understanding that people select, are selected, and remain at organizations when there is a cultural fit. In other words, people are not selected solely because of their technical knowledge and competence but also on account of the degree of cultural fit they have with the organization. When there is a cultural fit between the person and the organization, there tends to be a lower turnover, and a higher level of job satisfaction and organizational performance.

The person-job fit (P-J fit) is the coherence between the person and the function which they will perform. In selection processes, this evaluation is made according to the person's knowledge and competencies and those required for a specific position. This type of fit has a more specific relation to an individual's performance at work. In the case of the United Nations, this is explained via the competencies sought by the organization.

Pursuant to these comments, the different methods on which the UN job interviews are based will now be presented. These explanations will be divided into the following sub-topics: 2.1) traditional interview; 2.2) the competency-based interview.

#### **Traditional Interview**

This type of interview is known by many people, since it is widely used by organizations in their selection processes. It is also one of the oldest methods of formulating an interview, following an easily-identifiable pattern: the interviewers ask questions, which require short and direct answers, and seek to identify a specific element. The questions posed to candidates are usually linked to elements listed on their resumés, information on the application form and cover letter. Examples of the questions at this type of interview are as follows:

- Do you prefer working in a group or alone?
- What are your strong and weak points?
- Why should we employ you?
- What are your three main achievements until now?

This method, which is widespread at organizations, has advantages and disadvantages:

Positive Points	Negative Points
As it is a well-known method, candidates know how to prepare for this type of interview;	• It places the candidate in a passive position, as it uses a question-answer model;
<ul> <li>It is not difficult to hold this type of interview, which provides the interviewer with the information required;</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>The interviewer may not be able to go further into the candidate's specific details;</li> </ul>
• It is a simple and cheap method and does not take up much of the interviewer's time.	<ul> <li>Many candidates memorize ready and "correct" answers to the questions, which favors the candidate's performance during the selection process.</li> </ul>

**Source:** Prepared by the author.

This approach is demonstrated in the UN interview, in the form of questions about the candidate's prior work experience, their area of study and specialization (**technical questions**), as well as their course completion work (thesis and/or dissertation). **It may also be expected questions regarding international development topics or about the specific UN organization the candidate applied for.** The aim of these questions is to understand aspects presented by candidates on documents submitted during the process, which may raise questions, and to evaluate certain knowledge from their area of study.

#### The Competency-Based Interview

Competency-Based Interviewing (CBI), sometimes referred to as "behavioral" or "situational" interviewing, is a type of structured interview and an assessment method widely used by international organizations. It aims to identify candidates' values and competencies through their personal story and experience. In other words, Competency-Based Interviews are based on an applicant's past performance and the competencies displayed in performing previous jobs and solving problems. The main idea here is that if you have displayed a certain set of competencies before, it is very likely that you will perform accordingly in the future, therefore, your past experience is a very reliable source and, to a great extent, a predictor of how you might perform in the future.

The CBI is commonly used in the selection process of organizations that already know what competencies they are looking for in their candidates. Therefore, the questions posed during the interview aim to discover whether the interviewee possesses the competencies pre-selected by the organization. With that in mind, answers in a UN job interview should be tailored to the desired job opening's required competencies and values.

When attempting to identify an individual's competencies from their past behavior, the CBI seeks to: 1) make it difficult for the candidate to invent answers about competencies which they do not really have; 2) avoids subjective evaluations based on future hypotheses; and 3) allows the interviewers to explore details in related situations, thereby identifying inconsistencies in the answers provided. The advantages and disadvantages attributed to the CBI interview method are:

#### **Advantagens**

- The competencies required for the positions are identified from in-depth research with directors, supervisors, and current occupants of the position;
- Since it is developed through an organizational analysis, unnecessary questions are avoided;
- · Answers are classified according to an assessment scale designed to minimize subjectivity when selecting candidates. A response assessment parameter is constructed, ranging from "no evidence" to "excellent";
- The interviewer is able to identify the activities that the candidate has carried out and that led them to achieve a positive or negative outcome;
- It is presented as a more effective method than the traditional one, due to its levels of structure and evaluation based on the individual's past behavior as a predictor of future behavior.

#### Disadvantages

- Demands much more preparation time from those involved in conducting the interview;
- The interviewer should be highly trained in order to extract the principal information from the responses;
- The format for analyzing responses is not as practical. There is an assessment scale, and the interviewers compare interviewee responses with predetermined answers, trying to correlate the information with the scale in order to classify the candidate.

**Source:** Prepared by the author.

UN Competency-Based Interviews are usually structured around questions of the following types:

#### Introductory questions

#### Competency assessment questions

An **introductory question**, also known as a "rapport-building question", is considered an "ice-breaker" in the interview process and is usually asked at the very beginning of the conversation. An introductory question asks candidates to tell the interviewers a little bit more about themselves, or to explain things such as why they have applied to that job and what their main motivation is concerning the opportunity.

Since these are usually the first questions asked, it is also your chance to make a good first impression on the recruiter and set a positive tone to your interview as a whole.

The most common introductory questions are ones such as "What is your most significant strength?", "Tell us a little bit more about yourself", "What do you feel are your biggest achievements?", and "Why did you decide to apply for a job with the UN?", to name just a few.

You should answer every question that allows this kind of extension with a concrete example of a past experience. If you're telling the interviewer about a particular strength you have, for example, try to incorporate a real story of when this strength stood out and what you did in the situation. This is the perfect time to share your story with the recruiters and to contextualize your CV, especially if you're asked a general question such as "Could you tell us a little bit more about yourself?". Bring up some experiences from your CV and other documents but be careful not to just repeat the same information that is already stated in it—focus on expounding upon how these past engagements have made you decide to apply for the opportunity.

Questions asking for clarification of any aspect of your CV might also be asked during the first few minutes of the interview.

**Competency assessment questions** are directed towards the interviewee's past, focusing on past situations and allowing specific competencies to be revealed. Usually, these questions look like this:

- 1. Tell us about a situation when you went above and beyond your manager's expectations.
- 2. Give an example of a time when you used your problem-solving abilities to resolve an issue.
- 3. Tell us about an occasion where you had a number of demands being made on you at the same time. How did you handle it?
- 4. Tell me about a time when you had to work on a project which you considered daunting.
- 5. Describe a situation in which you tried to explain your reasoning to a group, but it was not understood. How did you deal with this situation?
- 6. Give me an example of a time someone came to you to resolve a complicated situation.
- 7. Tell me about a project which you finalized, even though many thought that you were not capable of doing so.
- 8. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an unexpected situation.
- 9. Have you ever had a project that failed? Tell me about this experience.

Based on the types of questions mentioned above, UN interviews are usually divided into three different moments:

**The first one** being when the panel members introduce themselves and ask more generic questions (introductory and traditional questions).

**The second** and main stage focuses on the competencies described on the job opening;

**The third** gives candidates the opportunity to ask questions regarding the vacancy if they happen to have any.

Usually, when there is a panel, the interviewers take turns asking questions in the first part (if they ask you more than just one question in this initial stage). In the second part, each interviewer focuses on one specific competency and asks relevant questions.

During the interview, some "fact-finding questions" or "probing questions" might also be asked after the candidate has given their answers, in order to make sure of the existence of a specific, expected competency. Interviewers then use these questions to clarify and/or confirm certain details about the situations and behaviors described by the candidates in their storytelling. This way, more assertive evaluations can be made. Probing questions can look like "Tell me more", "What happened next?", "So what were your specific responsibilities on the team?", or "Can you give me an example?".

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