

Careers with UN Organisations

LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE



- Please keep mics on mute unless you'd like to ask a question;
- Use the chat box lots;
- Trouble with sound? Trying leaving and coming back, try a different browser;
- The session will be recorded and put on Moodle with slides, in the 'Calendar: What's On' section

Meet the Careers Team



Fiona Telford

Mondays and Tuesdays

Lucy Hawkins

Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays

Josh Phillips

Wednesdays, Thursdays & Fridays

Contact us on careers@lshtm.ac.uk

Session Support & Insights



Lilia Ormonbekova

An evaluation, gender and programme management professional with more than 15 years of experience across the United Nations system. Since 2008, she has worked with a range of UN entities, including UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF, and the UN Secretariat.

Lilia's work has spanned development and humanitarian contexts, with a particular focus on evaluation and evidence-based decision-making. She has a Master of Arts degree in Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences from Columbia University; and through her proposed doctoral research at the LSHTM, Lilia seeks to investigate access to gender-affirming care for transgender and gender-diverse persons in Central Asia.



What we will cover today

- **Who** - Who are the UN organisations)
- **Why** - Why might you want a Career with UN Organisations
- **How** – How do you get in to the UN
- **What** – What is a career at the UN actually like
- **Insights and Q&A from Lilia Ormonbekova** - 15+ years across UN system



Who

LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE



The UN System: More Than One Organisation

The “UN” is a family of 30+ organisations, each with its own mandate, budget, HR system and jobs portal.

- **UN Secretariat:** New York, Geneva, Nairobi, Vienna and field missions (e.g. OCHA, DESA, OHCHR)
- **Funds & Programmes:** funded voluntarily by donors (e.g. UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, UNHCR, UN Women)
- **Specialised Agencies:** independent organisations with their own Member States (e.g. WHO, ILO, FAO, UNESCO, World Bank Group)
- **Related Organisations:** e.g. IOM (migration)

You don't apply to “the UN”. You apply to a specific agency.

Where Public & Global Health Lives in the UN

- **WHO:** the lead UN health agency. HQ in Geneva, 6 regional offices (including PAHO for the Americas) and 150+ country offices. It also hosts IARC (cancer research), Unitaid and TDR.
- **UNICEF:** child health, immunisation, nutrition, WASH
- **UNFPA:** sexual and reproductive health, maternal health, population data
- **UNAIDS:** HIV coordination. Its future is under review: UNAIDS' board has set up a working group to guide its transition and integration into the wider UN system. [eatg](#)
- **UNHCR / IOM:** refugee and migrant health
- **WFP:** nutrition and food security in emergencies
- **UNDP / World Bank:** health systems, HIV, financing
- **UNOPS:** procurement and infrastructure for health programmes

Health-adjacent but NOT UN: Gavi, the Global Fund, MSF, ICRC. These are great alternatives with similar skill sets.



LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE



Why a UN Career? The Upside

- **Impact & purpose:** working on global norms, emergencies and policies that affect millions
- **Global reach:** country offices, regional hubs and HQs on every continent
- **People:** multicultural, multilingual teams of technical experts
- **Pay & benefits:** competitive, tax-free salaries, with pension, health insurance, generous leave, education grants and relocation support
- **Career mobility:** move between agencies, countries and functions over a career

Show Me the Money: How UN Pay Works

- Professional (“P”) staff are paid on one global scale set by the ICSC, plus a cost-of-living top-up. Post adjustment is a cost-of-living adjustment intended to give staff the same purchasing power at every duty station. ([un](#))
- 2026 net base salary ranges, before post adjustment: P-2: \$56,046 – \$74,640; P-3: \$71,335 – \$92,127; P-4: \$86,027 – \$108,485 ([unvacancies](#))
- In Geneva, for example, the post adjustment is 83.7% on top of base salary. ([unvacancies](#))
- Hardship and mobility allowances apply in tougher duty stations.

Typical entry: P-2 (Master’s + 2 years’ experience) or P-3 (Master’s + 5 years).

The Reality Check: Challenges & Trade-offs

- **Fierce competition:** hundreds of applicants per post, and recruitment can take 6–12 months
- **Short-term contracts:** many people spend years on consultancies before a staff post
- **Hardship postings:** duty stations are graded by difficulty, and some are “non-family” (you can’t bring partner or children)
- **Bureaucracy:** slow decisions, politics and donor priorities shape the work
- **Work-life balance:** emergencies, travel and relocation every few years
- **A tough moment for the sector:**
 - The UN started 2026 with a regular budget of \$3.45 billion and plans to cut its workforce by 19%. ([gulfnews](#))
 - The US, normally the source of 22% of the regular budget, plans an 80% cut to its contributions in 2026. ([peoplematters](#))
 - Agencies have also been hit hard by deep cuts in US foreign aid.

Entry is possible but harder right now. Build transferable skills and a Plan B.



How

- **Internships**

- WHO internships: minimum age 20, 6–24 weeks, with medical insurance and a living allowance for eligible interns based on financial need [etcareers](#)
- Most agencies require you to be enrolled in, or recently graduated from, a degree programme.

- **Junior Professional Officer (JPO)**

- A donor government funds a 2–3 year post for its own nationals.
- There's no general age limit, but many donor countries require applicants to be under 32. [un](#)
- UK route: candidates need UK citizenship and at least a Master's degree. [undp](#)
- Check [jposc.org](#) and the UK government's call.

- **UN Young Professionals Programme (YPP)**
 - The UN Secretariat's entry exam. Applicants must be 32 or younger in the exam year, and the list of participating countries changes every year. [opportunitiesforafricans](https://www.un.org/en/young-professionals-programme)
 - Also check agency YPPs, such as FAO's.

- **UN Volunteers (UNV)**
 - The age limits are 18–80, and since July 2024 UNV no longer uses age to decide which volunteer category you're eligible for. [unv](https://unv.org)
 - Experience requirements by category: Youth/University Volunteers need at least 1 month, Specialists 3+ years, Experts 7+ years. [unv](https://unv.org)
 - Register at app.unv.org.
- **Consultancies / individual contracts:** short, project-based technical work (evaluation, data analysis, research). This is a very common “foot in the door” for LSHTM graduates.
- **Direct applications for staff posts:** P-grade (international) and NO-grade (national officer) roles, advertised on each agency's portal

Where to Look & How to Stand Out

Job portals:

- [UNvacancies.org](https://unvacancies.org)
- careers.un.org (Secretariat)
- careers.who.int
- jobs.unicef.org
- jobs.undp.org
- app.unv.org
- UNjobnet and Impactpool (aggregators)

To stand out:

- Learn the **UN competency framework** and use it in your CV and interviews.
- Prepare for **competency-based interviews** using the STAR method.
- Highlight **field experience, quantitative/technical skills** and **languages**. French, Spanish and Arabic are especially valuable.
- Network through LinkedIn, alumni, conferences and informational interviews.
- Get evidence of impact: publications, evaluations, programme results.



What



What Does a UN Career Actually Look Like?

Common health-related roles:

- Technical Officer
- Programme Specialist
- M&E / Evaluation Officer
- Epidemiologist
- Health Emergencies Officer
- Data/Information Management

Where you work:

- **HQ:** policy, norms, global guidance
- **Regional office:** technical support to countries
- **Country office:** programme delivery, working with governments

A typical career path is often non-linear: internship or consultancy → UNV or JPO → fixed-term staff post → move across agencies and countries.

Session Support & Insights



Lilia Ormonbekova

An evaluation, gender and programme management professional with more than 15 years of experience across the United Nations system. Since 2008, she has worked with a range of UN entities, including UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF, and the UN Secretariat.

Lilia's work has spanned development and humanitarian contexts, with a particular focus on evaluation and evidence-based decision-making. She has a Master of Arts degree in Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences from Columbia University; and through her proposed doctoral research at the LSHTM, Lilia seeks to investigate access to gender-affirming care for transgender and gender-diverse persons in Central Asia.



- How did you get your first UN role, and what was the “door-opener”?
- What’s a typical week like for an evaluation specialist?
- How different is the culture across UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF and the Secretariat?
- How do you balance field postings with personal life?
- How is the current funding crisis changing UN work and hiring?
- What skills would you prioritise if you were an LSHTM student today?
- Is a PhD an advantage in the UN system?

Your situation, and possible next steps



Can you apply for
'in-country' posts in
your country?

Could you
afford to do
an unpaid
internship?

How much
experience do you
already have?

Would you consider
yourself a Tier 1, 2 or
3 networker?

What languages do
you speak?

Are UN jobs what you
thought they were? Are
you keen enough to
persevere on this route?

What steps
would bring
you closer?

Which would be the
most appropriate UN
organisation for you?

Would YPP or JPO be potential
route for you?

What other organisations
could you work for?!

What are your values?
Can you articulate
them?

We value your feedback



<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/4p7U5N14cT>



Questions?

LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE



- [UNDP JPO Service Centre – Who can apply](#)
- [UNDP JPO – United Kingdom](#)
- [UN DESA JPO – How to apply](#)
- [UNV – Updated volunteer categories FAQ](#)
- [ICSC salary scales](#)
- [UN salary scale 2026 summary](#)
- [Gulf News/AP – UN 2026 budget and job cuts](#)
- [People Matters – UN financial crisis](#)
- [EATG – UNAIDS board transition process](#)
- [WHO internship programme summary](#)
- [UN YPP 2026 summary](#)

Thank you

LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE

