

Building a career in the development sector: Essential know-hows

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The development sector is a popular choice for individuals who are not afraid to take up challenges, from living in rural areas to travelling to war zones for humanitarian causes. This always-expanding sector pays the staff lucrative stipends with generous donor funding worldwide. Aspirants may pursue their careers locally in Bangladesh or beyond the border in regional or global stations of global development organisations. In recent times, given the unique appeal of getting paid while working for social welfare, more and more individuals are becoming interested in pursuing a career in this sector. Therefore, with increasing competition, aspirants must build themselves from the ground up to secure jobs and make the most of their potential in the development sector.

VOLUNTEER FOR A CAUSE

According to Md. Abdul Quayyum, Head of Communications at a leading international development agency, work in the development sector intrinsically requires individuals to commit to working for people, community, country and global good without an ulterior motive of profiting from it. Therefore, volunteering for any cause is always a brownie point, whether for their neighbourhood or during any emergency response. Current students may seek volunteer opportunities through UN Volunteers Bangladesh or other volunteer programs from local NGOs/ INGO. "First, we want to see the reflection of your true spirit towards social causes and soft skills you have, then the technical know-how. It comes from voluntary work at your school and neighbourhood. So stay alert and grab volunteering opportunities around you," adds Md. Abdul Quayyum.

EXERCISE COMMUNICATIONS SKILL

Both oral and written communication skills are essential tools at all levels in the development sector. Proper

documentation of work is required for convenient collaboration within agencies, reporting progress to donors, and advocacy to groups needed based on projects. Mr Galib Ibn Anwarul Azim, regional policy and regulation specialist at a UN development agency, says excellent writing and speaking skills are a priority in the development sector. He adds, "You may consider joining competitive debating, public speaking and part-time writing opportunities to enhance your communications skills." Moreover, poor communication skills can potentially lead to misunderstanding, which is uniquely harmful in this sector since many ongoing projects are advocacy-oriented, where accurate and strategic messages are an absolute must.

LEARN A SECOND UN LANGUAGE

Many goals of the development sector are universal. More often than not, collaboration within the global, regional

money, the priority to be cost-efficient while running projects is a significant priority. As such, smaller teams with efficient multi-skilled individuals are becoming more frequent in the sector. For instance, if someone is excellent with specific technical knowledge, they would even be ahead in preference if they can do intermediate quality graphic designing. This is because the combination of these two skills can reduce procurement process complications for quick graphic support during work. This applies to any other secondary skill, whether fundamental data analysis or photography. "We often prefer interns who have multiple skills and can flexibly support a range of work when required," adds Mr Galib Ibn Anwarul Azim.

SHOWCASE YOUR PROFILE

Most job openings in the development sector come with a detailed job description known as Terms of Reference



and local level stations is needed for an array of different projects. Although English is one of the most common languages, the other official UN languages are also frequently used. Beyond English, the other UN official languages are Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish. Learning any one of those languages at least would unlock many doors of opportunities. Whether it is working as a translator, transcriber, proofreader, editorial in project proceedings or any other job position, language proficiency always helps. Aspirants aiming to join global stations beyond borders may wish to learn the language of their dream destination and interest.

DEVELOP MULTIPLE SKILLS

The job market worldwide is shifting towards specialisation, and the development sector is no exception. However, given this sector is run by donor

(ToR). These documents, in most cases, explicitly explain the ideal candidate and the necessary skill requirement for the position. The cover letter and the resume must reflect that the candidate has taken that extra time to read the ToR extensively and craft the application accordingly. As such, a relevant master who equips you with the skills necessary to thrive in the development sector is essential. Sourodip Paul, consultant at a world-leading development organisation, says that one's application should reflect their educational learning. "The development sector, like any sector, has its characteristics that do not suit everyone. Please research well and talk to people already working there before you decide to pursue your career here," he adds. Therefore, the application should reflect the spirit and well-informed understanding of the required job opening.



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