



Exploring Careers in Charities, NGOs, & International Development

A guide and resources

Made for **S**tudents from:

Laws,

Arts & Humanities,

Social

& **H**istorical Sciences,

and the **I**nstitute

of **E**ducation

Exploring Charity & Development Sector Careers

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Is the Charity & Development sector right for me?

So you're interested in the Charity & Development sector, but not quite sure if it's for you. That's understandable, it's not always clear how the sector is organised and operates.

The first thing to say is not to focus on the differences between Charities, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO), or International Development organisations. All are non-profit and they can even do similar work. Charities are generally focused on local or national issues and populations, whereas the others focus on international / regional issues and populations. As outlined below, it seems better to focus on the issues and populations you find interesting.

Because of the range of organisations and the diverse issues with which development is concerned, the opportunities are wide-ranging and potential career paths vary. Broadly speaking, roles fall into four categories; Support, Policy /Advisory, Advocacy /Outreach, and Practitioner.

The aim of this document is to help you understand which of these four categories you would prefer. Work through the following four questions and carry out the research described to understand the types of roles available and whether they are right for you.

- Q 1. What am I interested in?
- Q 2. How do I want to influence the agenda?
- Q 3. What skills do I want to use?
- Q 4. How do I know the job suits me?

Q 1. What am I interested in?

When people talk about having an interest in Charity & Development work, they often talk about doing something which has a real impact in the world. Sometimes this is a general sentiment, sometimes this relates to specific issues. Can you reflect now on what issues are important to you?

What current affairs issues do you find yourself drawn to? What grabs your attention in the news and/or social media? Do you notice any consistent themes here?

During your course have you chosen any modules or found any particularly enjoyable? Are there any connections here to broader issues?

Are you involved in any societies? Do you have any hobbies with a social or political element?

Are there any consistent themes that link to any of the broad issues overleaf?

If you cannot identify any consistent themes, try prioritising the list overleaf; what would you like to influence, which are you more or less interested in?

You should now be able to identify at least one issue which is important to you. If you identify many, prioritise them.

DON'T worry if you cannot prioritise, or if there are many which interest you. Simply note your reflections, skip the next question, and move on to Q 3.

Having one or two preferences is a good starting point and can help to focus your search, however one can influence the agenda in many ways. The next question asks you to consider in what way you want to work on the issues.

Which issue is most important to you?

Social equality
Human rights
Legal rights
Financial / Economics
Physical health
Mental health
Educational
Political
Security
Environmental standards
Infrastructure
Business development
Forced migration
Emergencies, conflict and disasters
Other?

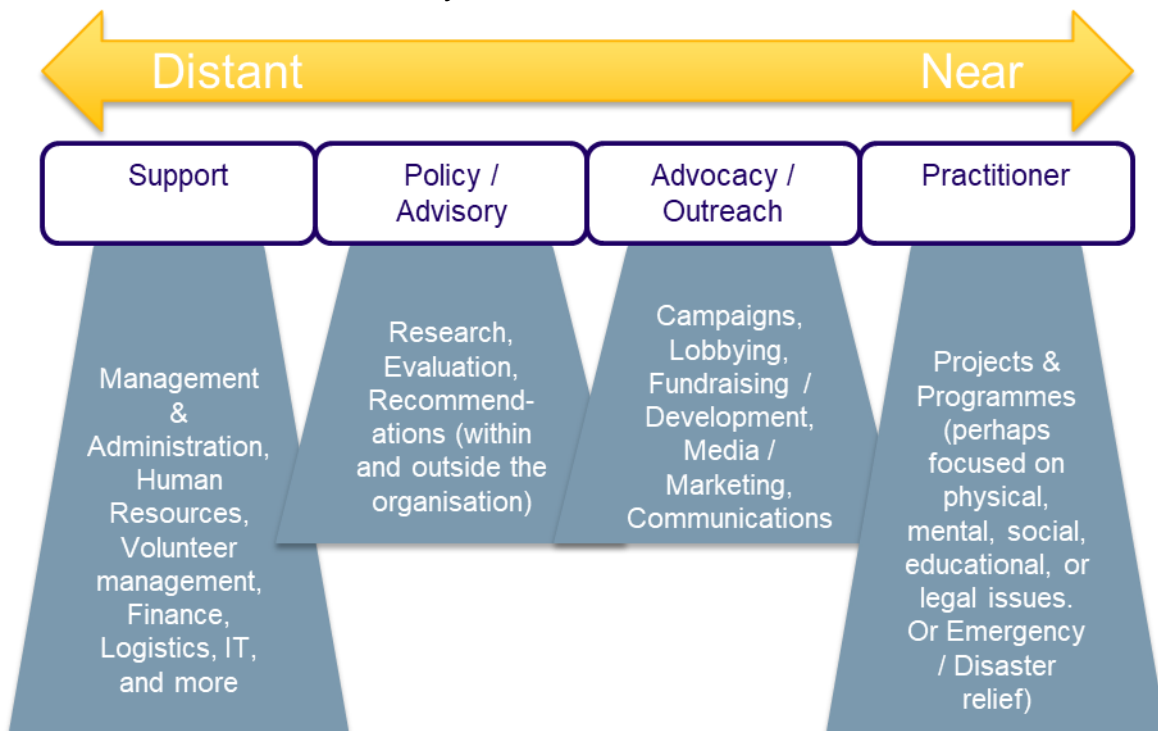
Q 2. How do I want to influence the agenda?

Pick one of the issues which are important to you (as listed above). You may want to refine this further by considering the population you would most like to serve, e.g. the elderly or children, specific ethnic groups, those in a specific region (perhaps utilising a second language).

When you imagine yourself in this area, how distant are you from the 'frontline'? How close do you want to be to the people being served by the charity/development organisation?

Broadly speaking, job roles fall into four categories. Which of the below four categories suit you best? If you identify many, prioritise them.

How do you want to influence this issue?



Once you have prioritised and identified your most preferred job category you can move on to Q 4. However, you may want to review Q 3 now or at another time.

DON'T worry if you cannot decide at this stage. In one way this just means you are open and flexible to many roles. However, it is advisable to understand where you are best suited so that you can target your search and have better conversations with potential employers. The next question takes a different approach to understanding which of the four categories best suit you.

Q 3. What skills do I want to use?

Instead of thinking about where you would prefer to be, we could consider where your skills would be most suited. Let's first identify those skills you associate with most.

Sometimes it's hard to notice those things we are good at. Our friends and family have the advantageous perspective of seeing you flourish in many different areas. You could try asking them what skills they think you have...or try to take on this perspective yourself.

Review your past activities and experiences; your hobbies, voluntary work, societies, work experience, and academic life. Can you recall things that went well, good grades, people praising you, what made you proud? What skills were you using which led to such a good outcome? Do you notice any skills being used consistently? If you are using the skills often and enjoy the process, we can call these *strengths*.

At this point, compile a list of your skills and strengths. Can you group any of them together? Are there any themes? Is any one theme or group more dominant than the others? What does this tell you about your preferences / what you want to use in a job?

Do your preferences fit more or less into any of the below skill areas? You are multi-skilled and likely fit more than one, but try prioritising and selecting your most preferred skill area.



These skill areas can be, *somewhat*, mapped onto the four job categories mentioned in the last section. All jobs use multiple skills, however some jobs have a greater requirement for these skill areas than others. Accordingly, which of the four job categories fit your skill preferences?

Once you have prioritised and identified your most preferred job category move on to Q 4.

There may be a difference between how you want to influence the agenda (Q 2) and where your skills suggest you would fit in (Q 3). If so, this may suggest you have more skills to develop and hone before you can influence the agenda in that particular way, and so rather than your first job perhaps it will be your next job. The best way forward will be to research roles across both job categories to understand the different pathways and skills required (as described in the following section).

Again, DON'T worry if you cannot decide at this stage. In one way this just means you are open and flexible to many roles. However, it is advisable to understand where you are best suited so that you can target your search and have better conversations with potential employers. Simply select one category at a time to start researching roles as outlined in the next section.

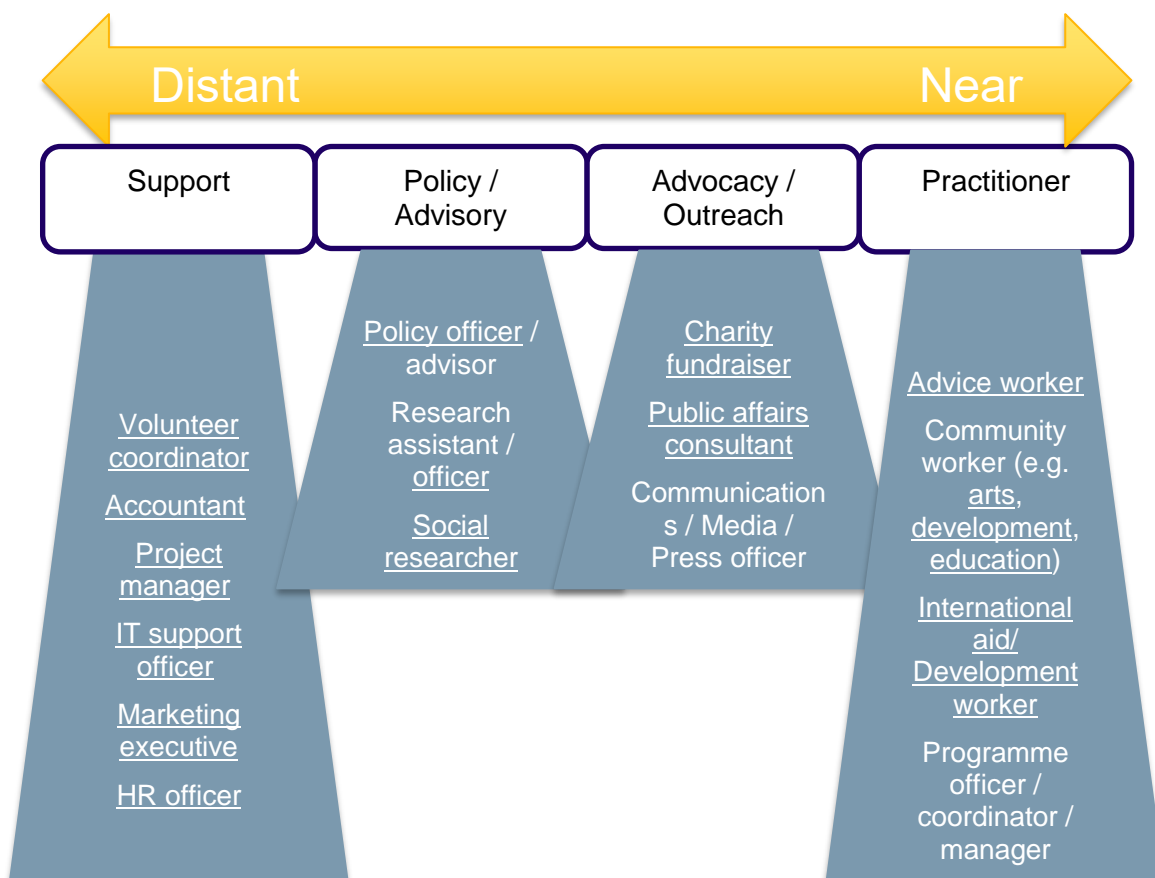
Q 4. How do I know the job suits me?

No one can tell you what job you should do. There are likely to be many jobs that you will find equally fulfilling. Only you can decide which of the many suitable jobs you would prefer most. The following outlines an approach to researching and narrowing your options and get a clearer idea of what roles might suit you.

a) *Initial Research*

Start with your preferred job category and read about the different roles within the category as presented in the below graph. You can follow the links provided and complement this with further internet searches for job descriptions. Importantly, this is just a starting point, the below list is not exhaustive and you will inevitably come across related roles. Through your research you can start discounting the less appealing roles. The aim is to narrow your options by selecting the more appealing roles which you will subsequently research at a deeper level.

You may want to repeat this process with another job category, but be wary of taking on too many roles to research deeply at the same time (do what is manageable and take your time).



b) *Deeper Research*

You should now have a select number of roles to research further. We are going to look into specific organisations so that you can gain a better understanding of how they work; both internally within and across teams, but also externally with their clients, the public, and other organisations.

Selecting the issue you are most interested in, e.g. environmental issues, create a list of all the charities, NGOs, and/or development organisations involved in this issue. Who is being vocal in the media; online and offline publications? Perhaps you have come across some organisations through your studies. You can use larger 'donor' organisations (funding bodies like the UN) to locate smaller accredited organisations, e.g. [DPI NGO Directory](#). There are also several other online [directories](#).

If you have been unable to prioritise issues which interest you, simply choose one and start researching as described. Selecting an issue helps to focus the research and allows you to understand the role within a specific context.

You may want to search such directories more thoroughly in the future, but for now simply pick a couple of organisations, perhaps those based locally and relatively well known. Research their webpages, newsfeeds, and reports to understand the work they do – and what teams are involved. Looking at a recent project can you discover how your preferred roles were involved? What related and peripheral roles have you found – these may also be worth researching.

Take this further and speak to people in one or two of these organisations working in your preferred roles.

- i. Search [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com) for the organisation.
- ii. Then select the “People” option on the left to see all the people registered on the platform who work in that organisation. From here you can search and filter the display to find the person doing the work you are most interested in.
- iii. Contact them with a *personal* message requesting to learn more about their career history and the role. Ideally you will find someone with a common connection, e.g. UCL or previous university, degree subject, or a friend/family member who can introduce you.

See [Information interviewing questions](#) for an ideas of what to ask. You may also find the UCL mentoring platform quite useful as graduates have signed up to help you! – uclalumnicommunity.org.

Tips for researching:

- What the organisation(s) has done recently.
- Finding out what how your chosen role contributes to this work.
- Interrogate the job, e.g. what is the average day in the life of someone in that role?
- What experience is valued / did other people have before starting?

Sources:

- Reviewing the organisation’s webpages, annual report, and where they have appeared in the news.
- Watching videos / reading case studies on organisations webpages.
- Reading person specifications and job descriptions for any advertised roles.
- Reading ‘job profile’ summaries on [prospects.ac.uk](https://www.prospects.ac.uk).
- Watching people’s stories on [icould.com](https://www.icould.com) and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) (some on our channel).
- Looking at successful professionals’ work history on their [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com) profile.
- Talking directly to graduates currently doing the work (find willing graduates on the alumni mentoring platform uclalumnicommunity.org).

c) *Evaluate*

Consider what you have learned about the role in light of your original motivations. Is it what you expected? Does one influence the agenda as hoped? Does it involve the skill set you expected? Does it meet your expectations around salary, work/life balance, development opportunities, or whatever else is important to you in a job?

It seems unlikely you will have found a role which meets *all* of your expectations. You may decide that it doesn't come close and so discount the role for now, continuing the research process with a different role. Or you may decide that it meets *enough* of your expectations and so you will be prepared to give it a try. In that case, it will be time to apply to jobs.

It is perfectly normal not to be certain. You may even have identified a couple of roles, none of which stand out above the others. Although you could continue researching, sometimes you have to experience the workplace before feeling confident that it is a good fit. If you think it is time, focus on a manageable number of jobs to search and apply to.

d) *Try it out*

Having narrowed down your options to a couple (manageable number) of roles it is time to find and apply. You will find guidance and resources for this on our [webpages](#).

While looking for advertised roles you may discover unheard of titles, don't be put off evaluating these and applying. Sometimes gaining that ideal role involves an intermediate job(s) or 'stepping stone', an opportunity to build experience and show motivation for the issues. The research process should clarify if this is the case. These intermediate jobs are not always clearly advertised. Thus, in this sector, it is advisable to approach organisations directly with a quality [speculative application](#). You may find your previous LinkedIn contacts useful for this, but don't be put off contacting an organisation completely 'cold'.

Tips for trying it out:

- Volunteer with an organisation you are interested in and try to get included on their internal communications.
- If you've volunteered or interned in the past, let them know you're job hunting.
- Join networks that promote good practice in the area you are interested in (e.g. [professional associations](#)), and also the more general LinkedIn groups such as *Non-Profit & Charity Network*.
- Use the UCL alumni mentoring platform [uclalumnicomunity.org](#) and LinkedIn to find mentors in the area.
- Send speculative applications, showing knowledge & motivation of the issues/what they do, a relevant skill set, and a suggestion of where you would fit in. You are inviting a discussion so be flexible about the role you will take, and follow up even if there is no reply.

Resources based on Organisations of interest:

Governmental organisations

For example:

- [UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office](#).
- [French Development Agency](#).
- [German Development Agency](#).
- [US Agency for International Development](#).

(Other countries will have an equivalent department responsible for aid.)

Intergovernmental/ Multi-lateral/ Regional Organisations

A list of [inter-governmental organisations](#).

For example:

United Nations

- Learn more about [working in the UN](#).
- Find [jobs with the UN](#) and other international organisations.
- The [United Nations Volunteers \(UNV\) programme](#) contributes to sustainable human development through volunteerism. They have many [online volunteering opportunities](#).
- Internships are unpaid, but you may want to [read more about the different internships](#) with UN agencies.
- If you have experience you may consider starting as a [Junior Professional Officer](#) (e.g. with [UNICEF](#)). If you have less experience consider the [Young Professionals Programme](#).
- Some opportunities will not be advertised centrally. Consider searching the [agencies and bodies](#) you are most interested in, e.g. [UNESCO](#), [UNHCR](#), [UNICEF](#), [WHO](#), etc. to find their paid and unpaid opportunities. For example, UNICEF also run a [New and Emerging Talent Initiative](#) for experienced professionals.
- Review this [range of information and resources](#) for those interested in working in the multilateral organisations, in particular this guide on [how to secure an internship in the UN](#).
- Keep updated via social media, e.g. [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

NATO

- Learn more about different roles via their [website](#).
- Find [jobs for international civilian staff positions](#) available in the various NATO locations world-wide.
- Employment at [NATO headquarters](#).
- More information about vacancies and employment in other NATO Bodies, can be found on the list of "[NATO Agencies and Commands](#)".
- Consider their [NATO-wide Young Professionals Programme](#) and range of internship programmes, i.e. [NATO IS/IMS Internship Programme](#), [NATO Defense College Internship Programme](#), [SHAPE Internship Programme](#), [NSPA Internships](#), [HQ LC Internship Programme \(Izmir\)](#), [ACT Internship Programme](#), [NCI Agency Internship Programme](#), [HQ AIRCOM Internship Programme](#), [CSO Internship Programme](#).

Organisation for Security & Co-operation in Europe

- Learn more about working there via their [website](#).
- Search [current jobs](#).
- Consider their [internships](#).

Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD)

- Learn more about the OECD via their [website](#).
- Search [current jobs](#).
- Consider applying to their [internship, young professionals, or young associates' programmes](#), depending on the amount of experience you currently have.

World Bank

- Learn more about them via their [website](#), including their '[speakers bureau](#)' and [open learning campus](#)'.
- Search [current jobs](#).
- Review their [range of programs and internships](#) for eligibility criteria and application timelines.

International Monetary Fund

- Learn more about what they do via their [website](#).
- Complete some of their online learning via [EdX](#) and [YouTube](#).
- Search [current jobs](#).
- Review their [range of roles and programs](#) (including internships) for eligibility criteria and application timelines.

World Trade Organisation

- Learn more about them via their [website](#), which includes 'brochures' like their "[understanding the WHO](#)".
- Search [current jobs](#).
- Review the [range of core and other role types](#) for inspiration. These pages also include information on their [Internships](#) and [Young Professionals Programme](#).

World Health Organisation

- Learn more about what they do via their [website](#), including their vast array of [programmes](#) (issues they are involved in).
- Search [current jobs](#).
- Review the [range of roles and programmes](#) (including [internships](#)) for eligibility criteria.

World Food Programme

- Learn more about what they do via their [website](#), including how they work (see 'Our work' tab at top of page) and their focus areas, e.g. [gender equality](#).
- Search [current jobs](#).
- Read more about their [Internships, Junior Professional Officers, and Volunteering opportunities](#).

British Council

- Learn more about the [work of the British Council](#) and more about [working for them](#).

- Search [current jobs](#) in the organisation.
- Review their opportunities to [work and study abroad](#), or in [UK](#).

EU Institutions

- The Directorate-General for [International Cooperation and Development](#) is the Commission department responsible for EU policy on development and delivering international aid.
- Review [what the EU is doing](#) on international cooperation and development.
- [European Personnel Selection Office](#) includes an overview of routes and opportunities.
- Find out about [entry-level graduate opportunities](#).
- Consider applying for a [Traineeship](#) (or *stage*). They last approx. 5 months starting in March (applications close in August) and October (close in January). Degree certificate required.
- Opportunities for [linguists](#).
- Find out more about the [European Commission](#) and the [European Union](#).
- You may find this [EU Jargon buster](#) useful.
- Read this [guide on finding a job](#) in Brussels.
- Follow EU Careers on [YouTube](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

Including, but by no means limited to:

- [CAFOD](#).
- [Christian Aid](#).
- [Islamic Relief](#).
- [Oxfam](#).
- [Save the Children](#).
- [WaterAid](#).
- [World Vision](#).

Use the following to find more organisations:

- [World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations](#) directory of NGOs.
- [British Overseas NGOs for Development](#) (BOND).

Academic organisations/research institutes

Including, but by no means limited to:

- [Chatham House](#) (the Royal Institute of International Affairs).
- The [Institute of Development Studies \(IDS\)](#) (Sussex University).
- The [Overseas Development Institute \(ODI\)](#).

Use the following to find more institutions:

- [The Guardian](#) provide a list of think tanks in the UK can be found.
- [NIRA directory](#) of think tanks from around the world.
- [Sourcewatch](#) list of think tanks in UK, US and Australia.
- [80,000 hours](#) guide to think tank research.

Consultancies

Including, but by no means limited to:

- [Adam Smith International](#).
- [Africa Practice](#).
- [Crown Agents](#).
- [DAI](#).
- [Forum for the Future](#).
- [ITAD](#).
- [Justice Studio](#).
- [MASDAR](#).
- [MetaMetrics](#).
- [The Palladium Group](#).

Use the following to find more organisations:

- Search the [DEVEX community](#), use the organisation type filter.

Resources based on type of opportunity:

Volunteering

- [2Way Development](#).
- [Do-it](#).
- [International Citizen Service \(ICS\)](#).
- [Medicins sans Frontieres](#).
- [TimeBank](#).
- [UCL Volunteering Service](#) have opportunities to develop your own project, join established projects, or simply scan their directory of partnering organisations.
- [United Nations Volunteers \(UNV\) programme](#) contributes to sustainable human development through volunteerism. They also have many [online volunteering](#) opportunities.
- [Vinspired](#).
- [Volunteering Matters](#).
- [VSO](#).

Sample Internships

- [Amnesty International](#).
- [British Council Internships](#).
- [British Red Cross](#).
- [Cancer Research UK](#).
- [IMF Summer Internships](#).
- [Macmillan Cancer Support](#).
- [Marie Curie Cancer Care](#).
- [NATO](#).
- [People and Planet](#).
- [The Starfish Greathearts Foundation](#).
- The UN's [Young Professionals](#) and [Internship](#) programmes.
- [WHO Internships](#).
- [World Land Trust](#).
- [WTO Internship Programmes](#).

Sample Graduate Schemes

- [Cancer Research UK](#).
- [CharityWorks](#).
- [IntoUniversity](#).
- [ODI Fellowship Scheme](#).
- [GradUnique](#).
- [Sanctuary Group](#).
- [The Wellcome Trust](#).
- [Worthwhile](#).
- [Year Here](#).

Sector vacancies (any entry point)

- [AidJobs](#).
- [BOND](#) (British Overseas NGOs for Development).
- [Charity Job](#).
- [Charity People](#).
- [DevNetJOBS](#).
- [Good Moves](#) (mainly Scotland).
- [Idealist](#).
- [Jobs Go Public](#).
- [LinkedIn Jobs](#).
- [LinkedIn Groups](#).
- [Net Impact](#).
- [The Development Executive Group](#) (Devex).
- [The Economist](#).
- [The Guardian](#) job website.
- [Third Sector: Jobs](#).
- [Jobs with the UN](#).

General Resources:

Directories

(search by region or issue)

- A list of [inter-governmental organisations](#).
- Charities: [Charity Choice](#).
- Charities: [Register of Charities](#).
- NGOs: [World Association of NGOs](#).
- NGOs: [BOND network](#).
- NGOs: [Berkeley Library](#) search engine.
- Think Tanks: [Nippon Institute for Research Advancement](#).
- Consulting Firms: search the [DEVEX community](#) and use the organisation type filter.

Sector news & research

- [BOND](#).
- [Charity Times](#).
- [UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office](#).

- [Development Gateway](#).
- [Development Studies Association](#).
- [Eldis](#).
- [Idealist](#).
- [Institute of Development Studies](#).
- [New Internationalist](#).
- Prospects' [overview of the UK charity sector](#).
- [ReliefWeb](#).
- [The Development Executive Group](#) (Devex).
- [Third Sector](#).
- [Thomson Reuters Foundation](#).
- [World Service Enquiry](#).

Sector careers advice

- [Development Worker](#).
- [Guardian Careers](#), e.g. [12 Tips for Getting into International Development](#).
- [How to get a job in International Development](#).
- [National Youth Agency](#) (NYA).
- [Third Sector: Careers](#).

Professional associations

- [National Council for Voluntary Organisations](#).
- [The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations](#).
- (Ireland) [Active Link](#).
- [Institute of Fundraising](#).
- [Charity Comms](#).
- [Aid Workers Network](#).
- [Global Aid Worker](#).
- [Development Studies Association](#) (DSA).

Recruitment agencies

- [Charity Job](#).
- [Charity People](#).
- [Eden Brown](#).
- [Harris Hill](#).
- [Jobs in Charities](#).
- [Prospect-us](#).
- [TPP](#).
- [UK Charity Jobs](#).

Note: Agencies receive a fee from the employer for placing candidates. If the role is openly available, a candidate not using an agency may be advantaged as they do not involve the fee. So check before you apply via an agency. Specialist agencies can have quality industry knowledge and so perhaps help you understand roles and improve your applications.

When engaging agencies, it is best to find a named person(s) to keep in contact with regularly, so don't sign up to more agencies than you can manage, and keep them informed if you are no longer looking for work.