Event Recap — Global Focus, D.C. Office: Jobs in International Service

Panelists:
- Rachel Quint ‘10, M.A. ‘11, Strategy Manager, International Rescue Committee
- Robin Swearingen M.A. ‘14, Zika Program Technical Coordinator, Global Health Supply Chain Program, USAID

General Tips from Panelists

Rachel
- Three things I wish I had worried less about at the beginning of my career:
  - Worried about getting a job with a ton of responsibility, rather than working my way up
  - Worried about what the narrative of my resume would be when making career decisions, rather than doing what felt good because the story of my career will write itself
  - Worried about making professional decisions based on my personal life
- Two things I wish I had worried more about:
  - Paid more attention to the concrete skills I was learning in each position and kept a written document with everything I was doing and learning
  - Paid more attention to whether I cared about the mission of the organization because no matter how difficult the work is, doing it for something I believe is always great

Robin
- My advice is to follow your passions, don’t compromise intellectual interests, but be ready to adapt professionally
Every government has their own interests, objectives, and priorities which will affect the international development work available.

Look for mentors! Specifically look for people who have similar interests and passions. And mentorship is not a passive experience, you have to do the work to find a mentor and work with them.

**What types of jobs are there in the landscape of international service?**

*Robin*

- A lot of the entry level positions in international development are largely administrative, so expect to do that work at the beginning.
- For the job search, there are a few listservs including DevEx’s listserv that are great and most international development organizations participate. I would also recommend the Society for International Development.

*Rachel*

- In my experience there are a few categories of jobs in international service.
  - Firstly, there’s a difference between development work and humanitarian work, so be aware of your preference.
  - As for categories of work, there’s:
    - Operational, or doing programming on the ground
    - Advocacy, or pushing an agenda in the local country or on the world stage like the UN
    - Research-focused, or think tanks that work to determine best practices
    - Foundational, or fund distribution
    - Fundraising and writing, or working on proposals and grants
- I learned I hated doing research; I wanted to be doing something. So, even though think tanks were invested in topics I cared about, the function of the jobs was not something I was attracted to, so be aware of that in your job search.

**How many of your jobs came from online applications and how many were from networks?**

*Rachel*

- Most of my jobs came from online applications, actually. It’s only when you’re more senior that jobs are created around and for you.
• However, having networks at places you’re applying to is useful because they help in getting your application considered, they can endorse you.
• But the idea that your network will give you a job is false; your networks help you find positions and they can endorse you.

Robin
• Informational interviews are helpful because not only are you building your network, but you can get additional information about the organizations you’re applying to which will help you in job interviews.
• It’s good to know people at the places you’re applying to.

As an international student, are there opportunities for me in international development?

Robin
• Yes! I know quite a few international citizens working at the World Bank. In fact, as an international citizen it might be easier to get a job at the World Bank. Just know that a lot of the positions there are consulting.

Rachel
• The United Nations is also like that, it’s harder to secure a full-time position as a U.S. citizen. Also, big international organizations, like the International Rescue Committee, have a better ability to endorse visas.

Given you’ve each done a different one, what are the benefits of doing a 2-year program like Peace Corps versus a 1-year program like Princeton in Africa?

Rachel
• So, I did Princeton in Africa and I loved it. I got to live in Ethiopia for a year and actually got to work at an organization while I was there. When I was applying for jobs after my experience, I was able to point to Princeton in Africa to show my interest and commitment to the work.
• However, it did not give me an emergent experience like Peace Corps and there wasn’t a focus on language acquisition.
• When considering these programs, be reasonable with yourself about what’s feasible for you. It has always been useful to point to my international experience and spending time international can be really helpful and open up opportunities to you. But international experience
can come in different ways, whether it be short stints abroad or dedicating a full year or two.

Robin
- The language training with Peace Corps was very valuable.
- However, you do get sent to random places in countries so that’s something to consider. You don’t have much control of where you end up. And a lot of Peace Corps members have extreme experiences.
- For all these positions, though, remember that culture shock is real, and it takes time to process your experience.

Is it better to work in DC in a field related to your interest area or work abroad in the region you care about but in an unrelated field?

Robin
- My advice is to stay in the profession you want to work in no matter what. It’s better to do that and develop skills that will help you transition into region you want to work in. It’s easier to shift your regional focus than it is to switch job functions.

Rachel
- I would focus on what is making you feel excited when you’re reading job descriptions and run with that. You’ll eventually figure out the thread and story in resume, so focus on what is making you excited. Remember you have more flexibility now than you will later so do the things that inspire you.

Fellowships to look up: Cardinal Quarter fellowships, including the Sand Hill Fellowship, ABA Rule of Law Initiative