



# UN Volunteers – Moving Forward

An evaluation on direct and indirect effects of a first mission as UN Volunteer Intern or Specialist on retention in international cooperation and the UN

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# Management Summary

The investment of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme represents a substantial and highly successful one in talent management for development assistance in general and for that of United Nations (UN) agencies in particular. It promotes the goal of increasing the number of Swiss nationals working within the United Nations system, provides Swiss graduates the opportunity to obtain a first field experience and contributes to the development of a skilled, motivated and mobile work force of young development professionals in Switzerland. All this along with the promotion of volunteering for peace and development.

As this evaluation shows, the retention rate of UN Volunteers in international cooperation (IC) and the UN is high: Two years after the end of their first mission as UN Volunteer, more than 30% of all former UN Volunteers Interns and more than 50% of all UN Volunteer Specialists are still working for the UN. Additional 49% of all former UN Volunteers Interns and 41% of all former UN Volunteer Specialists are active professionally in

IC, mainly carrying out functions in a Swiss Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), the public sector or an international organisation other than the UN. Summed up, a total of 87% of all former UN Volunteers are, two years after mission, still engaged in IC. The numbers are expected to remain stable over the years.

From a career perspective, however, those two years after their mission mark a critical stage for former UN Volunteers: They go through a period characterised by professional instability and a generally high number of short-term professional contracts. For this reason, it is very important to provide former UNVs with support and help them strengthen their career management skills.

The following report is based on a quantitative survey complemented by individual interviews conducted with Swiss UN Volunteers Interns and UN Volunteers Specialists who were on a mission with UNV between 2002 and 2013. In total, the sample group consisted of 266 persons. The main objective of the report is to draw results of the impact of a UNV mission on the career development of Swiss former UN Volunteers.



Spices in the Russian bazaar, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

# Evaluation: Purpose and Context

Increasing the number of Swiss nationals working in IC, and particularly in the context of the UN, has been an important strategic focus of Swiss foreign policy for many years. Due to the limited entry possibilities for professionals in general, and young professionals in particular, various measures have been undertaken with UN agencies and international organisations to enhance the chances for qualified Swiss women and men to succeed in joining organisations Switzerland considers as particularly relevant to development. Within this context, in 2001 SDC, the UNV Programme and cinfo established a partnership focusing on the placement of Swiss professionals in these organisations.

## UNV in a Nutshell

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organisation that supports peace and development globally through the promotion of volunteerism. To this end, UNV advocates for the integration of volunteerism into development programming, and mobilises volunteers throughout the world. Volunteers are placed in what are termed host organisations, which can be any agency of the UN system, though three-quarters of the assignments are normally hosted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

There are two categories of volunteers: «Specialists» (also referred to as «UN Volunteers Specialists»), who are selected directly from the UNV roster and deployed for assignments lasting from six months to two years. On average, Swiss Specialists have a total of 2 to 3 years of experience when taking on their missions. The UN Volunteers Internship Programme of UNV, on the other hand, is funded and supported by donor countries with the aim to deploy selected young graduates as «Interns» (also referred to as «UN Volunteers Interns<sup>1</sup>») to a UN host organisation for one year.

More information: [www.cinfo.ch](http://www.cinfo.ch) → Multilateral Organisations → [Entry points](#)

<sup>1</sup> In 2013 the title of the UNV Internship Programme was changed to UN Youth Volunteers Programme. Ever since UN Volunteers Interns are referred to as UN Youth Volunteers

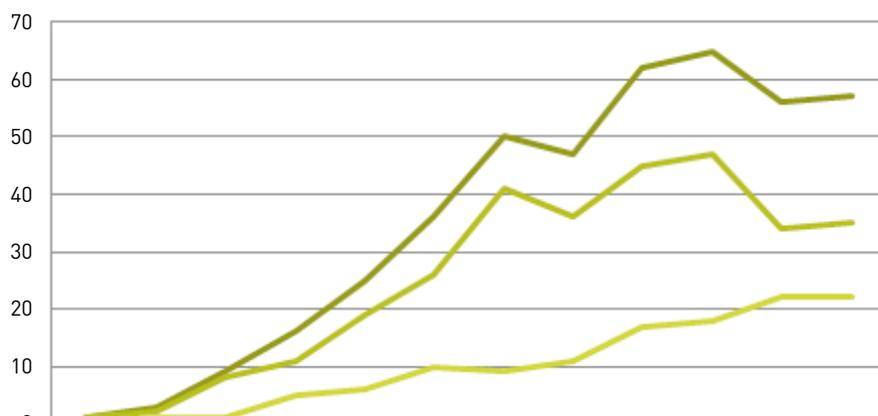
## Costs of a UN Volunteer Intern

For a donor country, the average cost estimate of a UN Volunteers Intern is USD 39'000.–. This cost includes pre-assignment costs (briefing, travel and pre-departure expenses), field-based expenses (living allowance, insurance and training), the repatriation, the security provision and the UNV administrative costs. This cost estimate varies extensively according to duty stations, and the effective costs of the Swiss UN Volunteers Interns average around USD 34'000.–. In comparison, the annual cost of a Swiss funded Junior Professional Officer (JPO) is between USD 125 000.– and USD 200 000.– and depends on whether the assigned JPO is in a family or hardship duty station, and whether the JPO has dependents or not.

From 2002, FDFA and SDC have devoted considerable financial resources to this partnership. From initially funding two to three 12-month internship positions reserved each year for Swiss graduates, both entities now offer more than 20 positions yearly. The outreach, recruitment and support of these interns is carried out by cinfo.

In addition, every year, cinfo, as UNV focal point for outreach and pre-selection of candidates, organises recruitment and information missions of UNV to Switzerland and conducts additional targeted outreach as well.

**Graph 1**  
**Swiss UN Volunteers<sup>2</sup> Back from Mission 2002–2013**



	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total (n)	1	3	9	16	25	36	50	47	62	65	56	57
UN Volunteers Specialists	1	2	8	11	19	26	41	36	45	47	34	35
UN Volunteers Interns (donor-funded)	0	1	1	5	6	10	9	11	17	18	22	22

Source: yearly report from UNV Bonn, last update 2013

The collaboration of the FDFA, UNV and cinfo is highly successful; between 2008 and 2012 nearly 3 times more Swiss nationals worked for UNV than in the previous years. The greatest number of Swiss UN Volunteers Interns and Specialists was in 2011 due to the high number of Swiss UN Volunteers Specialists on mission. The UNV Internship programme, while highly competitive, continues to be a well-known and popular entry-door to starting a career in development since then. This is all the more important given that there are very few entry opportunities or young talent management programmes in development cooperation in Switzerland. One of the most interesting aspects of a UNV assignment is that it provides initial field exposure for young graduates.

A UNV assignment as intern or specialist is temporary, a transitional phase in one's career, but not a career in itself. Little is known about the career paths Swiss UN Volunteers pursue after their assignments. Are they offered the opportunity to remain with the agency they volunteered for? Or do they go on to work for the government, other multilateral agencies, NGO or consultancies? In what way does their experience gained on mission as UN Volunteers influence subsequent career development decisions? Can one say that the investment of FDFA and SDC in UNV is a wise one with respect to talent management for Swiss development agencies in general and for UN organisations in particular?

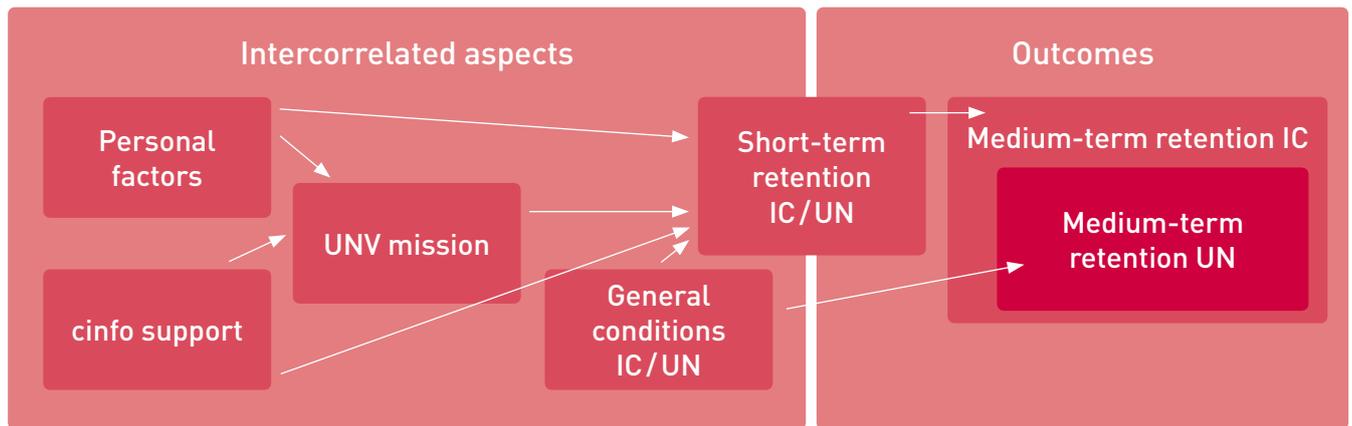
In 2008, an evaluation of the collaboration of the FDFA, UNV and cinfo was conducted<sup>3</sup>. It provided a first analysis of the previous seven years of this cooperation and focused on the retention rate of UN Volunteers Interns half a year after termination of their assignment. The small sample group and the short time-span analysed provided only little information on mid-term career paths. Conducting a new evaluation five years later was deemed important to deeper analyse the career paths Swiss young professionals choose short- and mid-term and direct and indirect effects their first mission as UN Volunteer Intern or Specialist has on this kind of decisions.

The present study is based on a survey conducted with former Swiss UN Volunteers Interns and Specialists who accomplished their missions between 2002 and 2013. The evaluation model in **figure 1** illustrates the aspects defined as relevant for the analysis of the career paths of former UN Volunteers, the most important of these being the short- and midterm retention of UN Volunteers in IC and in the UN system. These served as the cornerstones for the design of the online questionnaire and the interview guidelines.

<sup>3</sup> La promotion des Suisses au sein du Programme des Volontaires des Nations Unies. Evaluation intermédiaire de la collaboration instaurée en 2001 entre le Programme des Volontaires des Nations Unies (VNU), la Direction du développement et de la coopération (DDC) et cinfo. cinfo, 2008

<sup>2</sup> The term UN Volunteers is used to talk about both UN Volunteers Interns and Specialists

**Figure 1**  
**Evaluation Model**



Source: cloud solutions 2013



**Bus station**  
**Bohicon, Benin**

# Methodology

The present evaluation is based on the results of a survey conducted in two forms and phases: Phase one consisted of an online questionnaire designed to point out significant trends, which was sent to both Swiss former UN Volunteers Interns and Specialists. Phase two consisted of semi-standardised interviews; these served to deepen the understanding of the results generated in the online survey and were conducted with a limited number of candidates via skype.

Participants in the online survey were requested to provide information on their first UN Volunteers assignment, on career steps after their mission and on their current professional situation. In addition, the interview looked into more personal subjects such as motivation, career decisions and perspectives for the future.

As seen in **figure 2**, a total of 266 former Swiss UN Volunteers on mission in the period between 2002 and 2013 were identified and subsequently contacted by the UNV office in Bonn and cinfo. The online survey was filled out by a total of 107 people. Of these, although they represented the smaller group, UN Volunteers who were assigned as interns to their first mission made up two-thirds of the respondents contacted for the survey. This is because cinfo could reach out to them directly and remind them of filling out the questionnaire.

Due to the small sample of UN Volunteers Specialists and the small number of respondents, whose missions finished at least seven years ago, results concerning these groups are non-existent or demand cautious interpretation.

As for the content, both surveys were similarly structured. Again, personalised interviews made it possible to delve more deeply into such psychological aspects as: personality, decision-making, influences, experience and motivation.

**Figure 2**  
**Methodological Approach**

Phase 1		Phase 2	
<b>Survey period</b>	November/December 2013	<b>Interview period</b>	January 2014
<b>Form</b>	online questionnaire	<b>Form</b>	semi-standardised interviews
<b>Sample group</b>	266 former Swiss UN Volunteers Interns and Specialists	<b>Interviewees</b>	6
<b>Returns</b>	107	<b>Selection criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3 former UN Volunteers Interns on mission 2005/2006:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ one currently working in UN</li> <li>▫ one currently working in IC</li> <li>▫ one working neither in UN nor in IC</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ 3 former UNVs on mission after 2008:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ one UN Volunteer Specialist</li> <li>▫ two UN Volunteers Interns</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ first UNV mission</li> <li>▪ career support services by cinfo before, during, and after mission</li> <li>▪ professional steps immediately after first UNV mission, then after 2, 5 and 7 years</li> <li>▪ current professional situation</li> <li>▪ future career perspectives</li> </ul>	<b>Themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ first UNV mission</li> <li>▪ career development</li> <li>▪ career support services by cinfo</li> </ul>

Source: cinfo

# UN Volunteers on Their First Mission

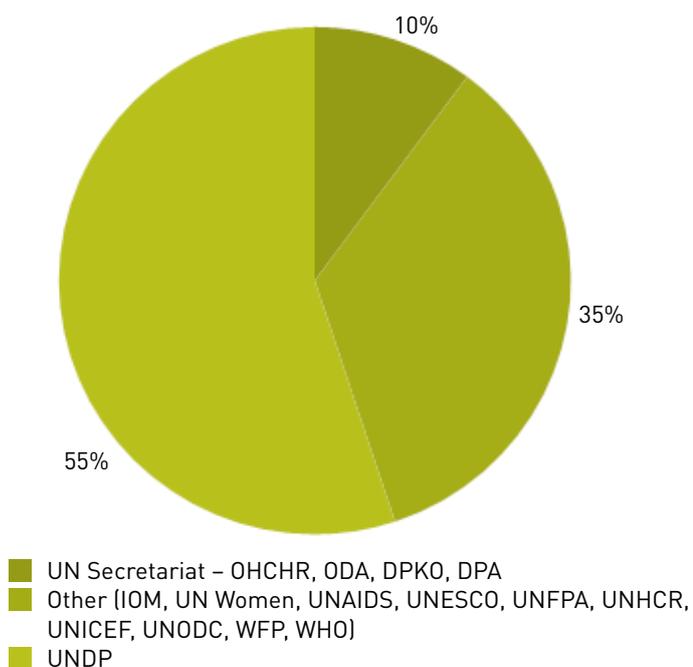
In the following chapter main results from both the quantitative and qualitative survey are presented and discussed. The findings of the online questionnaire are complemented with statements from the interviewed UN Volunteers.

## Demographic Information

As highlighted already in the evaluation of 2008, women make up the majority of Swiss UN Volunteers Interns. From that time until today, the ratio has increased from 2:1 to 3:1. Also for UN Volunteers Specialists, the percentage of female respondents is slightly higher than 60%.

40% of UN Volunteers graduated in international relations. Approximately 20% have a Master's degree in political or social science and only a small percentage (9%) has a degree in law (9%). On average, a UN Volunteer Intern has 10 months of work experience in IC upon beginning her or his mission. A UN Volunteer Specialist has behind her- or himself an average of 23 months of experience in this sector.

**Graph 2**  
**Host Organisations of UN Volunteers Interns**



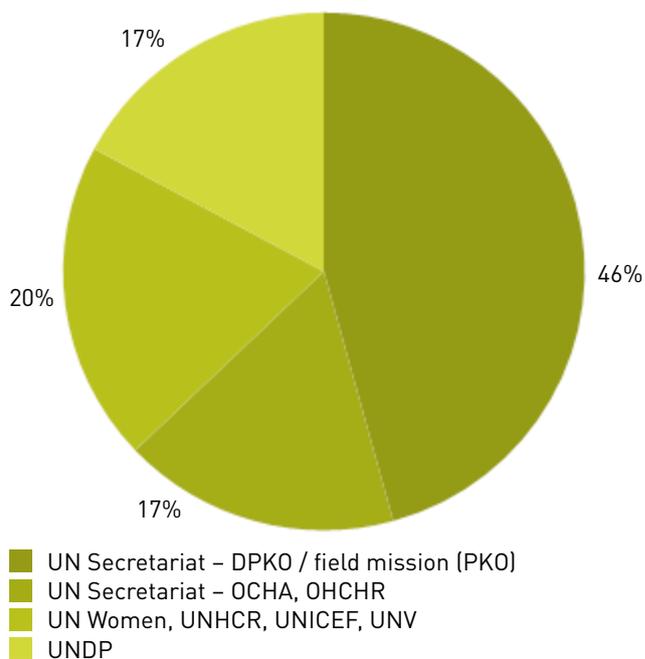
Source: Survey «UN Volunteers – moving forward» (n= 73)

## First Mission as United Nations Volunteer

Virtually no United Nations Volunteers work directly for UNV. The «host organisations» most UN Volunteers worked in between 2002 and 2013 were UNDP, DPKO and UNHCR.

While most UN Volunteers Interns work with UNDP or other UN agencies, funds or programmes in a development context, 45% of UN Volunteers Specialists are assigned to peacekeeping or humanitarian-aid missions. Generally, DPKO, followed by DPA (Department of Political Affairs) are the two UN entities with the largest number of international staff in a host country. In the context of certain peacekeeping/peacebuilding operations, UN Volunteers Specialists comprise up to 33% of mission personnel (e.g. MONUSCO, the UN's largest peacekeeping mission, where out of a total of 1'571 international staff in August 2013, 573 were international UNVs)<sup>4</sup>.

**Graph 3**  
**Host Organisations of UN Volunteers Specialists**



Source: Survey «UN Volunteers – moving forward» (n= 34)

<sup>4</sup> Source: MONUSCO Facts and Figures: [www.un.org](http://www.un.org) → Peace and Security → Peacekeeping → Peacekeeping operations → Current operations → Monusco → [Facts and Figures](#), last update: 28 March 2014

## Preparation

Nearly two-thirds of the interviewees felt very well prepared for their assignment. This figure can be attributed to the quality of the preparation services provided by cinfo and UNV. However, it is for many UN Volunteers difficult to envision what their mission would be: Only one third of all respondents stated that they had formed a realistic picture of their mission beforehand.

« Preparation services before the mission were useful. What could be added? Perhaps more information on career perspectives directly after the mission and the advice that one should start looking for employment opportunities post-UN Volunteers assignment early enough. »

UN Volunteer Intern 2005/2006

### Preparation of Swiss UN Volunteers Interns

Preparation of UN Volunteers Interns consists of three components: training sessions delivered by cinfo, a briefing session at UNV headquarters in Bonn and a subsequent session at FDFA headquarters in Berne. Switzerland's comprehensive training package for its nationals entering the UN Volunteers Internship Programme is considered by UNV management to exemplify best practices. cinfo's training of UN Volunteers Interns involves one pre-departure session designed to sensitise young volunteers as to the importance of intercultural challenges and professional transition in the context of expatriation and a second session that focuses on personal security and stress prevention in the field.

Following these sessions, a two-day briefing session at UNV in Bonn brings together all interns who are part of the yearly UN Volunteers Internship Programme (as many as 100 participants from around the world). During this time participants are given an overview of UNV and the UN, taught the importance of a commitment to volunteerism and provided with information on practical issues such as conditions of service, travel arrangements and integration into the country office.

The briefing at FDFA headquarters lasts half a day, during which interns are briefed by desk officers handling relations with their future host organisation on Switzerland's interest in funding their particular position.

While the first two training sessions are mandatory for all UN Volunteers Interns, the briefing held at FDFA headquarters is only for those funded by its Human Security Division (HSD). UN Volunteers Specialists are not offered any specific preparation services by UNV or cinfo.

One criticism some UN Volunteers had, both in the survey and the interviews, was the lack of information on career opportunities directly after their UN Volunteers mission. They would have appreciated obtaining more information right at the beginning of their engagement on the professional opportunities a UN Volunteers assignment would provide them.

## Added Value of First UNV Mission

According to respondents, the value added of a UN Volunteers assignment for young professionals is significant. Overall they considered their assignment very useful to their personal careers.

More specifically, most of the former UN Volunteers stressed the acquisition of field experience, knowledge of the UN system in general and the entity they worked for in particular as being most important and valuable to them. Furthermore, they appreciated having the opportunity to build up a personal and professional network. Knowing that support could be provided in any case from UNV offices in the field, the candidates interviewed stated that they felt at ease and safe throughout their entire assignment. However, some respondents, especially interns, claimed that their mission was too short and did not allow them to gain sufficient experience to become competitive in the IC job market. This sometimes made it difficult for them to later apply for a professional position with the UN or other entities.

### Most Valuable Aspects of a UN Volunteers Mission

- Field experience
- Knowledge gained about IC and the UN system
- Gain of specific expertise
- Networking possibilities
- Intercultural skills
- Social skills

« The mission gave me a very good insight into what a UN field office is and how it works. This cannot be replaced by theory or anything else. It allows you also to see the limitations of international aid and international cooperation. After the experience as UN Volunteer, you can understand the important links between international cooperation offices (UN system and countries representations) and the national government in place. »

UN Volunteer Intern 2011/2012

# UN Volunteers – Moving Forward

## The End of a UN Volunteers Mission: What Next?

For UN Volunteers the end of their mission results in a situation that is characterised by professional instability, meaning that some professionals will have considerable difficulties searching for and finding adequate employment. Most UN Volunteers Interns and Specialists feel ambiguous about the career path they want to follow after their assignment.

«« I would have appreciated having had a mentor who could have guided me in career choices and warned me about the difficulties and pitfalls of getting an assignment after my mission as a UN Volunteers intern. Looking backwards, I have to admit that I really did not know which position would allow me to gain the experience I needed at that stage. I applied to several different places – including a large multinational corporation – before I finally got a JPO position at International IDEA in Stockholm. »»

UN Volunteer Intern 2005/2006

UN Volunteers assignments do not automatically lead to an appointment with the host agency and offer no mid-term job prospects. Thus, UN Volunteers are not automatically «absorbed» into the UN. Instead, they must apply for professional positions or work as consultants under an «appointment of limited duration». The competition is fierce, however, and UN Volunteers – Interns above all – are not yet good competitors in the international UN job market.

Nevertheless, 21% of all UN Volunteers Interns and 44% of all UN Volunteers Specialists continue working for the UN immediately after their initial assignment, in many cases as consultants or as UN Volunteers Specialists. This difference can be attributed to the large demand for UNVs in the sector most UN Volunteers Specialists work in and their generally more substantial work experience.

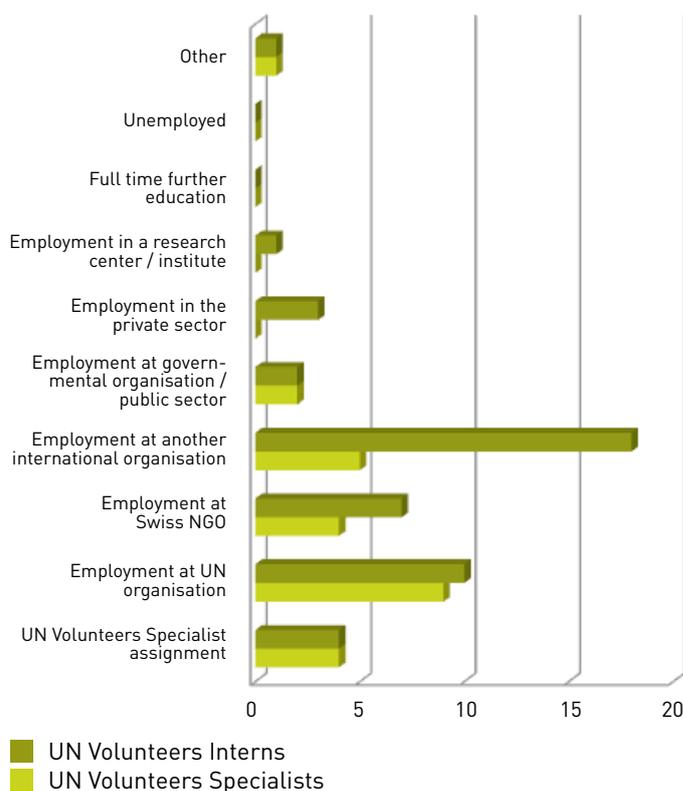
Of those who do not remain with the UN but who are active in the field of development, many work for a different international organisation (13%). Another significant group starts work with an international NGO (20%). It is assumed that these are typically NGOs that the UN Volunteers had established links with during their assignment. Only few UN Volunteers move to the public or private sector.

Of those who do not continue working in the area of international cooperation after their mission, most are employed in the private sector (15%), carry out research activities (15%) or do work for other international organisations (9%). One out of five is unemployed or holds other (usually part-time) jobs.

«« After my assignment as a UN Volunteers Intern at UNODC in Vietnam, I was offered the opportunity to continue within this organisation as Junior Consultant, which I did for two years. »»

UN Volunteer Intern 2011/2012

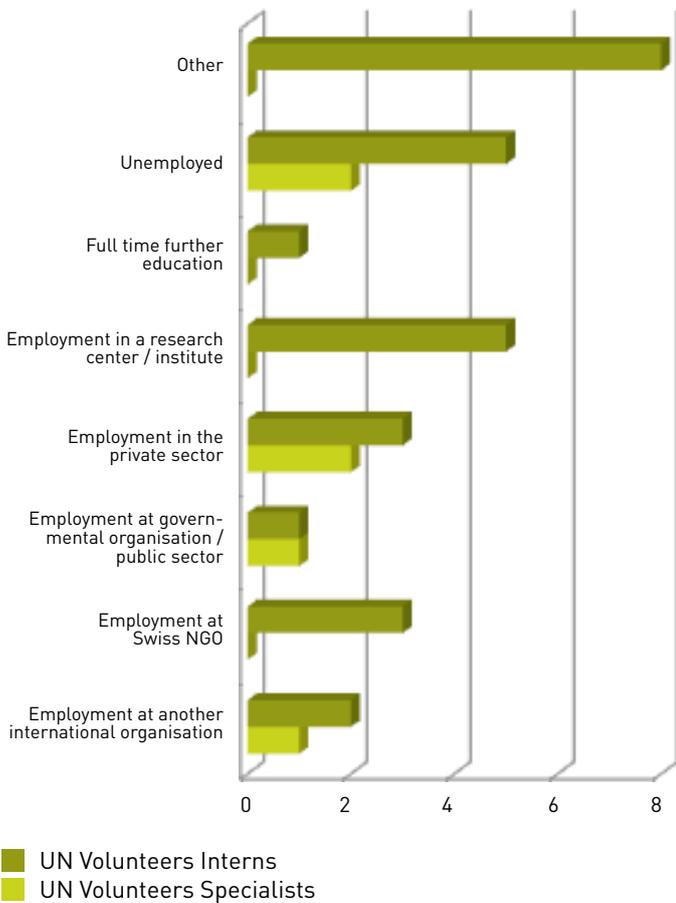
**Graph 4**  
**Employment Situation: UN Volunteers Working in IC Directly After Mission**  
by type of organisation



Source: Survey «UN Volunteers – moving forward»  
(UN Volunteers Interns: n=46, UN Volunteers Specialists: n=25)

**Graph 5**  
**Employment Situation: UN Volunteers not Working in IC Directly After Mission**

by type of organisation



Source: Survey «UN Volunteers – moving forward»  
 (UN Volunteers Interns: n=28, UN Volunteers Specialists: n=6)

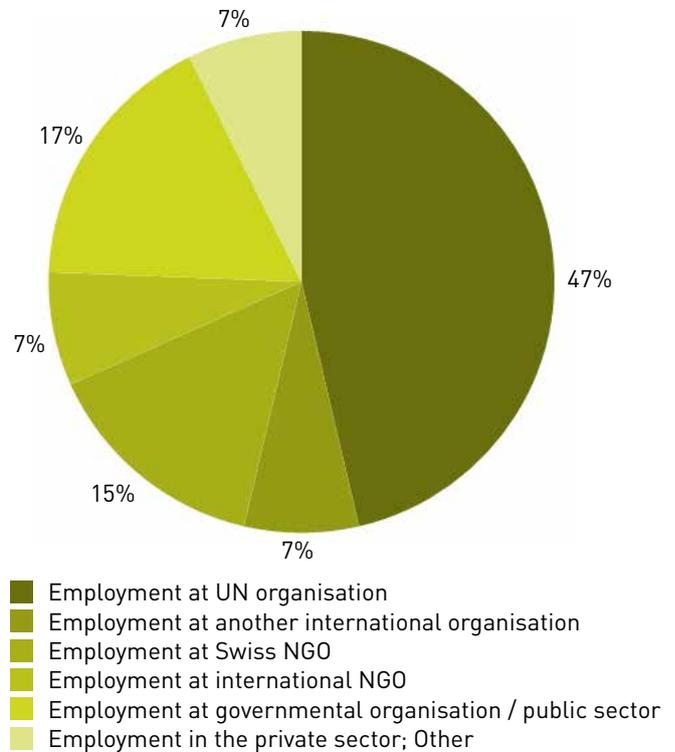
**UN Volunteers Two Years After Their Mission**

Two years after terminating their first contracts, a substantial percentage of former UN Volunteers are still engaged in development. 81% of all former UN Volunteers Interns and 94% of all former UN Volunteers Specialists indicate that they are still working in IC. Of these, 32% of all former UN Volunteers Interns and 53% of all former UN Volunteers Specialists continue to work, or accept a new position, with the UN – mainly with the UN Regional Commissions or at the UN Secretariat (DPKO, OCHA, EOSG).

The figures for the rest are distributed more or less equally between the government, private sector or Swiss NGOs.

**Graph 6**  
**Employment Situation: UN Volunteers Two Years After Mission**

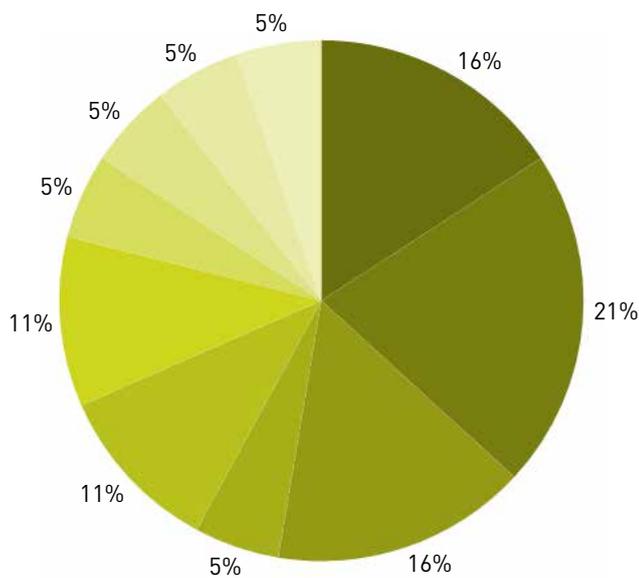
by type of organisation



Source: Survey «UN Volunteers – moving forward» (UN Volunteers: n=41)

**Graph 7**  
**Break-Down of UN Volunteers Working with the UN Two Years After Mission**

by type of organisation



- UN Secretariat – DPKO, DPKO field mission
- UN Secretariat – EOSG, OCHA, ODA
- UN Regional Commission (ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA)
- UNFPA
- UNHCR
- WFP
- UN Resident Coordination Office
- UNIDO
- UNODC
- UNRWA

Source: Survey «UN Volunteers – moving forward» (UN Volunteers: n=19)

### UN Volunteers Five Years After Their Mission

A closer analysis of the careers' course of 11 former UN Volunteers Interns who were still actively engaged in IC and more specifically with the UN five years after their first assignment allows following suppositions:

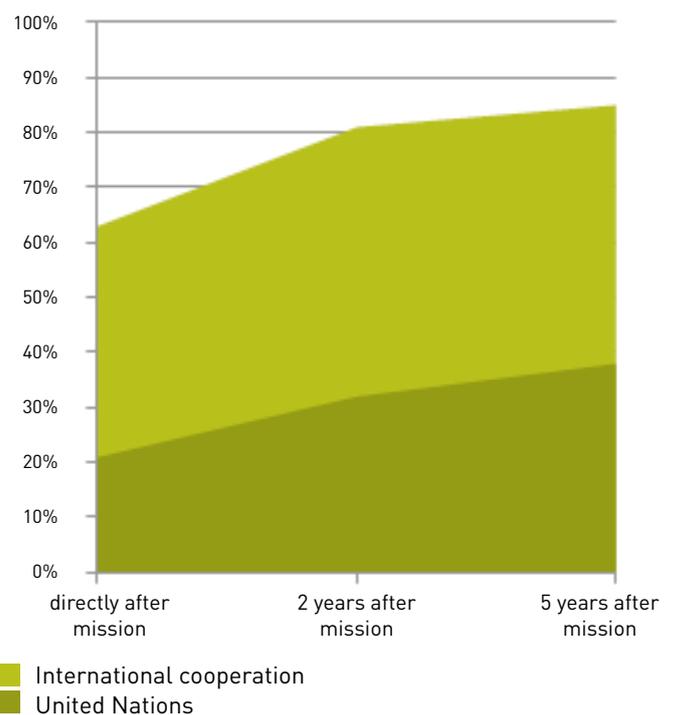
- Assignment to a mission as a UN Volunteer Specialist immediately after a period of internship has a positive effect on one's chances of pursuing a medium-term career within the UN system

- Persons who remain in the IC field immediately after their internship are highly unlikely to change to another area (at least not within the first five years after their mission as a Youth Volunteer)
- The probability of obtaining a permanent contract in IC, especially with the UN, within the first five years after a UN Volunteers assignment is very low

This last point is due to the fact that, especially during the first two years after the UNV assignment, assignments with the UN are of short duration, thus requiring employees to be highly mobile. Once one becomes a staff member of a UN organisation, however, rapid moves within a short period of time become less likely.

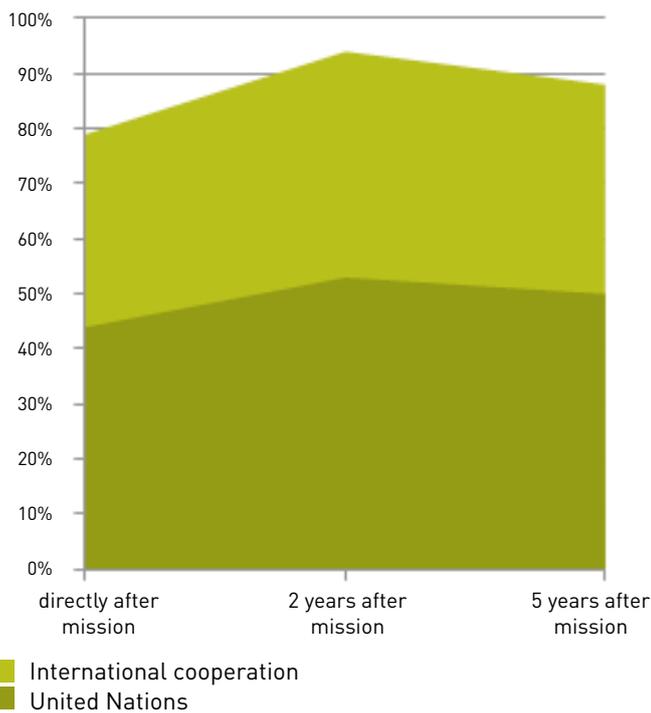
Although results for the sample group of UN Volunteers Specialists still engaged in international cooperation or working with the United Nations five years after their first mission cannot be considered statistically significant, there exists, both in the case of Interns and Specialists, a positive correlation between the time-period between the conclusion of a UNV mission and the number of persons still active in IC or working with the UN which is empirically shown not to result from bias in the evaluation.

**Graph 8**  
**Retention: UN Volunteers Interns in IC and UN**



Source: Survey «UN Volunteers – moving forward» (n= 73)

**Graph 9**  
**Retention: UN Volunteers Specialists in IC and UN**



Source: Survey «UN Volunteers – moving forward» (n= 34)

Why the number of former Swiss UN Volunteers Interns and UN Volunteers Specialists working in IC and more specifically with the UN plunges right after their assignment and rises over time has yet to be clarified. As seen earlier, a certain number of Interns and Specialists are offered another assignment in the UN immediately after the conclusion of their mission. While others are given an opportunity to continue their work in IC, be it with a different international organisation, in the public sector or with an NGO. There exists a third group of persons who for various reasons are not active in the IC sector directly after their mission. It is assumed that since a large portion of these persons intend to return to the IC field or work within the UN system one day, what they do in the interim is related at least peripherally to IC. Indeed, several survey participants working in the field of IC or with the UN five years after their first mission stated that they gained relevant work experience in other sectors before returning to international cooperation or the United Nations system.

## UN Volunteers – What the Future Holds

Among all UN Volunteers Interns and Specialists approximately 20% no longer work in IC. 90% of these persons would like to do so once again. Nearly all of the former UN Volunteers Interns that are still working in IC see themselves continuing to work in this sector, and a great majority (77%) wish to get their foot back in the UN system.

Of those who are not working in IC anymore, 45% would like to work for the UN again. The percentages for UN Volunteers Specialists are comparable.

Former UN Volunteers not wishing to work again for the UN justify their decision by stating that:

- the UN failed to provide them with sufficient career prospects
- they felt incapable of making a difference
- the UN does not correspond to their own notion of a work-culture in terms of values and interests.

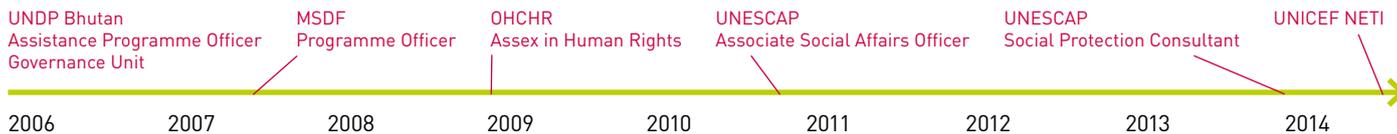
« I enjoyed my mission as a UN Volunteer Intern. It was valuable in many ways: besides being a plus for your CV, you get field experience, get to know other cultures and learn to live under unfamiliar circumstances. This being said, the temporary nature of the assignment motivated me to search for employment that offered me a long-term contract and career perspectives... »

UN Volunteer Intern 2005/2006,  
 now diplomat at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland

# Case Studies: My Path into the World of International Cooperation

The following three career examples provide an idea of the multiplicity and variety of career possibilities after an assignment as a UN Volunteer.

## UN Volunteer Intern 2006/2007 – Programme Officer, UNDP Governance Unit, Bhutan



Recruited in 2005, this person was deployed in 2006 to the UNDP Country Office in Bhutan. In her function as Assistance Programme Officer she was responsible for the management of governance and decentralisation programmes and acted as focal point for human rights.

Fully aware of the challenges of obtaining a position directly after a UNV assignment, during her mission she already applied for a position as Programme Officer in Mongolia. Successfully selected, she started working only one month after termination of her UN Volunteer Intern contract for the Mongol-Swiss-Development-Foundation (MSDF), an NGO established to promote cooperation between Switzerland and Mongolia. There she was able to further develop her programme-management skills in the development of two SDC-funded programmes focusing on combatting human trafficking and violence against women.

Successfully selected for an HSD-funded position as Associate Expert in Human Rights at the OHCHR Regional Office in Bangkok, Thailand, she left Mongolia in 2008.

During the last period of this mission she was selected for a position as Associate Social Affairs Officer at UNESCAP, the regional arm of the UN Secretariat for Asia and the Pacific which is also located in Bangkok. In her role there, she managed projects on social protection, gender and women's economic empowerment and ageing, while strengthening

the relationship with different stakeholders. Due to the temporary nature of this position, she changed in October 2013 and became a Social Protection Consultant, co-managing an interregional project on social protection policies and programmes.

Selected for this year's cohort of UNICEF's NETI<sup>5</sup> Programme, she just started a new adventure in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with that Fund.

« I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be a UN Volunteer Intern. It was a great opportunity to gain longer field experience and enabled me to acquired valuable skills in project management and insights into UNDP's work particularly in the area of governance. I really enjoyed working at the country level, but think that an experience at the regional level may offer more career opportunities, partly due to the numerous possibilities to enlarge your network. I believe that this mission helped me obtain my position in Mongolia and the Associate Expert position at OHCHR, which then got the ball rolling in the right direction. »

<sup>5</sup> The New and Emerging Talent Initiative (NETI) is an entry point for professionals interested in a career with UNICEF.



- ← Pendjari National Park, Benin
- Women in Benin (left)
- Woman cutting gras, Saratq, Tajikistan (right)

## UN Volunteer Intern 2011/2012 – Programme Analyst, UNDP Kosovo



By the time she applied for the UNV Programme in 2010, this young graduate had already worked as an intern at the headquarters of Terre des Hommes Foundation (Tdh) in Lausanne and for Engagement Global's ASA Programme in Berlin.

Her work experience helped her obtain the UN Volunteer Intern position as Programme Analyst in the Democratic Governance Programme at UNDP Kosovo, where she was deployed in 2011. In this role she carried out various tasks related to the monitoring of projects and programmes in the field of Justice and Security: Gender-Based Violence, Kosovo Small Arms Control and Disaster Risk Reduction.

At the end of her mission she was offered to stay at UNDP Kosovo as a Junior Consultant with a one-month renewable contract. Nevertheless, she accepted another job offer in Kosovo as Project Manager for Child Protection at Terre des hommes, an employer she knew from her internship back in 2009.

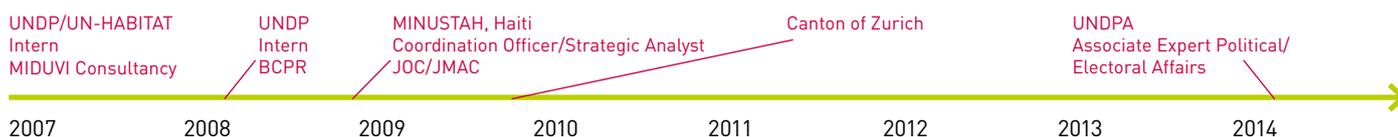
After one year she decided to take a job as Civil Society Advisor for GIZ in the occupied Palestinian territories, where she currently works in the Local Governance and Civil Society Development Programme. Her functions involve: a) increasing

the transparency of municipalities towards their citizens; b) enhancing the latter's participation in local decision-making processes; c) improving public services and d) promoting democratic principles.

« From a personal standpoint, you first have to get used to a new environment and to the fact that you won't see your family and friends in your hometown for quite a while. But very quickly I began to feel at ease and well integrated into my team. I had many responsibilities during my UN Volunteers Intern assignment, but only because I enjoyed having a lot of things to do. I wasn't refusing; I was eager to learn. My skills gained clearly helped me to get other jobs, but I was also very lucky. I clearly want to stay in the field of development and am certainly taking the UN into account. Right now I have to gain more work experience to be eligible for a P3 position. Currently I have a 2-year contract which I am happy of, because I like having the opportunity to move from 1 place to another and develop competencies in different sectors. In the long term I am aspiring to having a fix contract, preferable in the Swiss public sector, par exemple at SDC. »



## UN Volunteer Specialist 2008/2009 – UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)



Right after finishing his Master's degree in Law in 2007, this UN Volunteer Specialist travelled to Ecuador to take up his internship at UNDP/UN-HABITAT at the MIDUVI Consultancy, then at UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) for a peace and development programme.

Having gained some professional work experience abroad, he applied for a position as UN Volunteer Specialist at the UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). During the first half of his assignment he served as Coordination Officer at the Joint Operations Center (JOC), where he carried different tasks such as team management, monitoring and reporting.

He then was able to change his position and became a strategic analyst, providing, among other things, analysis and assessments on the country's security, political and socio-economic developments.

After one year with the peacekeeping mission, he decided to apply for a job at a department of the Canton Zurich, where he was promoted from team manager to Head of Section within three years.

Attracted by the position of Associate Expert in Political/Electoral Affairs (funded by HSD), he was recently selected and will start his assignment in New York in mid-2014.

« My first assignment as a UN Volunteer Specialist was very interesting, especially because I had a chance to carry out two different functions. At the beginning it was challenging, too, since as a Coordination Officer I worked in shifts. Furthermore, settling down in an unfamiliar country is not easy – especially when you have to start work immediately and at the same time need to handle all sorts of administrative issues or look for housing on your own. For me this wasn't too much of a problem, though; I quickly got used to the situation. I am very much looking forward to my assignment as Associate Expert and to continuing to work in a field that excites me, although knowing that it's a temporary position means that what I do afterwards is unclear. Why, you ask, would I ever leave a stable position in Switzerland? Because for me, the UN is the only organisation that addresses such a wide range of global problems to such an extent. Having people from different parts of the world, with different backgrounds working together on these important issues makes it an even more attractive employer. »

The above presentation of only three career examples shows how multiple and diverse career prospects after an assignment as UN Volunteer Intern or Specialist may be. Among the rest of the interviewees is a diplomat, currently working at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland (based in New York); a part-time Programme Assistant at DCAF and a Head of the domain 'Migration and Protection' of the Swiss Embassy in Tunis. All of the interviewees, and a large majority of former UN Volunteers surveyed, consider pursuing a career in the UN system. However, the importance of personal decisions compared to professional/career decisions is not to be underestimated.

# Conclusions

Given the above results, funding of UNV and UN Volunteers Internship positions for Swiss professionals is a cost-effective investment. In general, UN Volunteers Specialists are more likely to continue working for the UN immediately after their assignment than UN Volunteers Interns. But in the mid-term, this difference fades and an equally high number of former specialists and intern continue working in IC in general and with the UN in particular.

So far, the study confirms the expected outcomes of funding UN Volunteers Internship assignments and conducting outreach activities for UN Volunteers Specialists, as this investment is part of a talent management initiative with an impact felt far beyond the UN. cinfo recommends positioning the programme more in this context insofar as UN Volunteers could benefit from more detailed career-related information and support prior to and during their assignment so they can make the most of this opportunity. This is especially important in this difficult, initial post-UNV phase.

In our view, cinfo's role in the future should be to enhance its range of offerings in order to better support young professionals both before and during their UNV assignment in terms of job and career opportunities in IC. This would enable them to better evaluate and consider the career options open to them after their mission. It is important early on that young professionals take into consideration the various challenges of a career in IC. Here, cinfo can play a significant role as well.

However, for most former UN Volunteers today it can be concluded that personal decisions are equally important like professional ones. Choosing employment at the United Nations, as opposed to working for a national/international NGO, the public sector, etc., is no longer made automatically in favor of the former. Interrelated factors involving job security, contractual status and personal considerations will influence their final decisions. It is beyond UNVs or cinfo's power to influence a person's decision-making process. In this sense, the findings drawn from the evaluation on the impact of a mission with UNV on the retention of Swiss young professionals in international cooperation and more specifically the UN, are highly satisfactory.



Women fetching water near Kuljab, Tajikistan

# Abbreviations

ASA-Programme	Programm für Auslands- und Studienaufenthalte
BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery
DCAF	Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EOSG	Executive Office of the Secretary-General
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HSD	Human Security Division
IC	International cooperation
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
ILO	International Labor Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
JMAC	Joint Mission Analysis Centre
JOC	Joint Operations Centre
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
MIDUVI	Ministerio de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti
MSDF	Mongol-Swiss Development Foundation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Office for Disarmament Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Right
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
TdH	Terre des Hommes
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Populations Fund
UN-HABITAT (UNCHS)	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNICEF NETI	UNICEF New and Emerging Talent Initiative
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

# Annexes

## Annex 1

### Summary of the questions asked in the online survey «United Nations Volunteers: moving forward»

Note: Full questionnaire is available upon request

#### 1. First UNV assignment

- 1.1 What type of assignment was your first UNV mission?
- 1.2 In what year did you end your first UNV mission?
- 1.3 Which field of study did you graduate in before you went on your first mission?
- 1.4 In which UN organisation did your mission take place?
  - General Assembly (Secretariat and subsidiary organs)
  - Security Council (Secretariat and subsidiary organs)
  - EOSOC (Bureau and subsidiary bodies)
  - UN Secretariat – DESA
  - UN Secretariat – DFS
  - UN Secretariat – DM
  - UN Secretariat – DPA
  - UN Secretariat – DPA – Field mission (SPM, PBO)
  - UN Secretariat – DPI
  - UN Secretariat – DPKO
  - UN Secretariat – DPKO – Field mission (PKO)
  - UN Secretariat – EOSG
  - UN Secretariat – OCHA
  - UN Secretariat – ODA
  - UN Secretariat – OHCHR
  - UN Secretariat – OLA
  - UN Secretariat – OSRSG/CAAC
  - UN Secretariat – PBSO
  - UN Secretariat – Other
  - UNOG
  - UNON
  - UNOV
  - UN Regional Commission (ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA)
  - FAO
  - ILO
  - UN Women
  - UNAIDS
  - UNDP
  - UNESCO
  - UNFPA
  - UNHCR
  - UNICEF
  - UNOPS
  - UNV
  - WFP
  - WHO
  - WTO
  - World Bank Group
  - IMF
  - International Tribunals (ICTR, ICTY, other)
  - International Criminal Court (ICC)
  - International Court of Justice (ICJ)
  - Other UN entity
  - ...
- 1.5 How was your mission financed?
- 1.6 What kind of duty station did you serve in?

- 1.7 Please indicate what your professional experience was prior to taking up your UNV assignment. Work experience related / not related to the field of international cooperation
- 2. Services of cinfo**
- 2.1 cinfo provides different services for UNVs before, during and after the UNV mission. Please indicate how useful cinfo's services have been for you.
- Preparation meetings before mission
  - Coaching during mission
  - Support / career counselling after mission
- 3. Preparation for first UNV assignment**
- 3.1 Please try to think back of how you felt before you went on mission. Indicate how much you agree with the following statements.
- Before going on UNV mission, I had a realistic picture of how the mission would be like.
  - Before going on mission, I felt very insecure about what to expect from the mission.
  - I was well prepared for the mission.
- 3.2. How did you prepare yourself for the mission?
- 4. Quality of first UNV mission**
- 4.1 Do you think that this mission was valuable for you in terms of career perspectives in the field of international cooperation?
- 4.2 In what terms was this mission valuable? Please rate the following aspects.
- Gaining knowledge about the functioning of the UN system
  - Gaining knowledge about the field of international cooperation
  - Gaining knowledge about the functioning of the Federal Administration
  - Field experience
  - Networking
  - Intercultural experience
  - Professional know-how (i.e. project management, monitoring and evaluation, capacity building, fundraising, budget and proposals drafting)
  - Social skills (i.e. communication, negotiation, flexibility, assertiveness)
- 5. I would recommend to do a UNV mission because of the following reasons**
- 5.1 The tasks I had to do in the mission were appropriate considering the competences and expert knowledge I had at that time.
- 5.2. The workload assigned to me was adequate.
- 6. «Stress» is a situation in which a person feels tense, restless, nervous or anxious or is unable to sleep at night because his/her mind is troubled all the time. Did you feel this kind of stress during your assignment as UNV?**
- 7. How important was the UNV mission for building your professional network in the following areas of international cooperation?**
- 7.1. UN related network
- 7.2. NGO related network
- 7.3. Network in the Federal administration (e.g., SDC, FDFA, SECO, etc.)
- 8. If you could turn back the time and had to decide once more, would you choose to do the mission again?**
- 8.1 If no: Why would you not choose to do the mission again?
- 9. Career Step after first UNV Mission**
- 9.1. Were you working in the field of international cooperation right after you completed your first mission?
- 9.2. For what kind of organisation did you work?
- Employment at UN organisation
    - 9.2.1 If UN organisation: By which UN organisation were you employed? (Same options as in question 1.2)
  - Employment at another international organization
  - Employment at Swiss NGO
  - Employment at international NGO
  - Employment at governmental organization / public sector
  - Employment in the private sector
  - Employment in a research center / institute
  - Other

- 9.3 What was your job title?
- 9.4 What type of contractual employment did you have?
- 9.5 What was the location of your employment?
- 9.6 In which area of international cooperation did you work?

**10. Professional steps 2 years after first mission**

- 10.1 What was your professional situation 2 years after your assignment as UNV?
- 10.2 What was your occupational status?
- 10.3 Were you working in the field of international cooperation?
- 10.4 For what kind of organisation did you work?

**11. Professional steps 5 years after first mission**

- 11.1 What was your professional situation 5 years after your assignment as UNV?
- 11.2 What was your occupational status?
- 11.3 Were you working in the field of international cooperation?
- 11.4 For what kind of organization did you work? (Same options as in question 5.2)
- 11.5 By which UN organization were you employed? (Same options as in question 1.2)
- 11.6 What was your job title?
- 11.7 What type of contractual employment did you have?
- 11.8 What was the location of your employment?
- 11.9 In which area of international cooperation did you work?

**12. Professional steps 7 years after first mission (same questions as in 11)**

**13. Current professional situation**

- 13.1 What is your current professional situation?
- 13.2 What is your current occupational status?
- 13.3 Are you working in the field of international cooperation?
- 13.4 For what kind of organization do you work at the moment? (same options as in 5.2)
- 13.5 By which UN organisation are you employed?
- 13.6 What is your job title?
- 13.7 What kind of employment do you have at the moment?
- 13.8 Where is the location of your employment?
- 13.9 In which area of international cooperation do you work?

**14. Future career perspectives**

- 14.1 Do you intend to continue working in the field of international cooperation?
- 14.2 Would you like to work again in the field of international cooperation?
- 14.3 For what type of organization would you like to work in the field of international cooperation? (More than one option possible)
- 14.4 Please indicate the reasons why you would not consider working for the UN (again).
- 14.5 Please rate how much the following statements are true for your situation. Working at the UNO...

## Annex 2

### Interview guideline for individual interviews

#### UNV Mission

1. Können Sie zu Beginn kurz beschreiben, was Sie für eine UNV Mission gemacht haben?
  - 1.1 Bei welcher UNO Organisation fand die Mission statt?
  - 1.2 In welchem Land fand die Mission statt?
  - 1.3 Was waren Ihre konkreten Aufgaben während der Mission?
2. Wenn sie aus heutiger Sicht auf die UNV Mission zurückschauen, wie wichtig war die Mission für Ihren beruflichen Werdegang?
  - 2.1 Welche konkreten Erlebnisse/Erfahrungen während der Mission wären dabei für Sie besonders prägend (negativ oder positiv)?
  - 2.2 Falls es eine negative Situation ist: Was hätte Ihnen in dieser Situation geholfen?
  - 2.3 Könnte aus Ihrer Sicht cinfo etwas anbieten, dass Ihnen in dieser Situation geholfen hätte? Was müsste dies konkret sein?

#### Laufbahn

3. Können Sie bitte kurz die wichtigsten beruflichen Stationen Ihrer Laufbahn nach der Mission bis heute beschreiben?
  - 3.1 Gab es schwierige Situationen in Ihrer Berufskarriere, wo Sie sich externe Unterstützungsleistungen (z.B. Beratungsangebote) gewünscht hätten, diese aber nicht vorhanden waren?
  - 3.2 Heutige Situation:

Sie arbeiten heute noch in der IZA/UNO. Sie arbeiten heute nicht mehr in der IZA/UNO: Was sind aus Ihrer Sicht die Gründe (Motivation, Situation) dafür?

- 3.3 Wenn Sie auf Ihre Laufbahn zurückblicken: Gab es entscheidende Punkte oder Übergangsphasen,  
... die dazu führten, dass Sie heute noch in der IZA/UNO arbeiten?  
... die dazu führten, dass Sie heute nicht mehr in der IZA/UNO arbeiten?

#### Dienstleistungen cinfo

4. Welche Dienstleistungen von cinfo kennen Sie?
  - 4.1 Haben Sie Beratungsdienstleistungen von cinfo genutzt? Welche?
    - a) Begleitung während der Mission
    - b) Laufbahnberatung nach Mission
    - c) Unterstützung/Begleitung während UNO Bewerbungsprozess
  - 4.2 Können Sie bitte die Situation kurz beschreiben, wo Sie die Dienstleistung in Anspruch genommen haben?

#### Blick nach vorne

Person arbeitet noch in IZA/UNO:

5. Möchten Sie weiterhin in der IZA/UNO arbeiten? Was ist Ihre Motivation dafür?
  - 5.1 Haben Sie in letzter Zeit auch Situation erlebt, wo Sie unsicher waren (Ängste, Probleme) in Bezug auf Ihre Arbeit in der IZA/UNO?
  - 5.2 Was würde Ihnen helfen, damit Sie mit dieser Situation besser umgehen könnten?

Person arbeitet nicht mehr in IZA/UNO:

6. Können Sie sich vorstellen wieder eine Stelle in der IZA/UNO anzunehmen?
  - 6.1 Was müsste konkret sich ändern, damit Sie dies tun würden?

Market-women on  
their way back home,  
Ganvié, Benin



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