

My job in international cooperation

Fortunat Büsch



Age

39

Current position

Programme manager Swiss Red Cross, Berne

Education

Master's in Social Anthropology, English linguistics and literature; Master's in International Health

Most significant jobs to date

- Civil service as a project assistant, then programme manager, mission 21, Basel (6 and 9 month)
- Project advisor, mission 21, Tanzania (14 month)
- Project manager, SolidarMed, Tanzania (3 years)
- Co-researcher for SNSF funded «Ageing, Agency and Health in Urbanising Tanzania» research project, University of Basel and Swiss TPH (12 month).

How I started

I studied anthropology, English language and literature, and people, society and the environment at the University of Basel. Then I completed nine-months' civilian service as a project officer and took over a maternity leave replacement at mission 21. This was followed by a 14-month posting in Tanzania. Returning to Switzerland was very difficult, both personally and professionally. After further training in health care and management in tropical countries, I finally found a job for three years as a project manager in Tanzania for SolidarMed. On my return, I completed a Master's in International Health at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute

« In my job I bridge gaps between different worlds.»

(TPH). I further developed my skills in applied research before becoming programme manager for the Swiss Red Cross.

My motivation

The inequalities in our globalised world continue to grow and, as consumers, we all contribute to this. Through my work as a programme manager, I want to contribute to a redistribution that improves the situation in beneficiary communities. The multicultural and multilingual aspects of the work are very important to me and also reasons why I'm employed in international cooperation.

My daily work

In many ways, I bridge gaps between different worlds: between the field offices and headquarters as well as between research and practice. My tasks are varied: I work conceptually and help develop strategies. I'm in regular contact with my delegates in the programme countries and I often travel. I also maintain close contact with the financial administration and the communication sections.

The rewards and challenges

What I particularly enjoy about my job is developing and implementing ideas together with delegates in the field. Managing staff is a rewarding challenge. I also find it exciting to develop new strategies based on practical experience. I don't enjoy the financial administration as much: regulations from headquarters sometimes lack sensitivity to the realities in the field.

My personal situation

My wife and I have now settled down well in Switzerland. Postings abroad are not always easy, but, through them, we've grown as a couple.

What I've learnt

As a programme manager, it's important to recognise your role as a facilitator and coordinator and to take account of different needs. I'm always learning something new and IC continues to throw up global questions for me, for example, about climate change and poverty.

My future

I see myself still here in my current position in five years, because I think that there's still so much to discover. I would like to better understand the context of the programme countries so that I can achieve a greater impact as a programme manager.

My advice to people interested in working as a programme manager

Field experience is enormously important: it can become very difficult if an understanding of the realities in project countries is missing. And despite the seriousness of the situation, in terms of poverty and other development related issues, humour is always important.

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