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The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

How did you start your career?

I started during my Masters with an internship at The Geneva Forum that works in disarmament. Following my graduation, I worked for numerous entities including an anti-human trafficking campaign, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Sri Lankan Permanent Mission, CARE International, and the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). My series of short term posts finally ended when I started at the Global Fund where I have received a long-term contract.

Why did you choose to study at the Graduate Institute?

I had originally applied to the Graduate Institute due to its proximity to all the international organisations, as well as its reputation. At the time when I was accepted, I was on a very different path to teach English in China for a year. The Graduate Institute's scholarship and financial assistance also positively affected my decision.

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Why did you choose a career at The Global Fund?

Having worked in NGOs, government, international organisation and UN-settings, I have seen the various ways in which large and small entities function, and The Global Fund has the reputation of having less bureaucracy than the UN, and acting more on results-based performance. I did not originally imagine I would work for a financing organisation, but given that I get to see results on a regular basis, is very fulfilling.

In your opinion, what are the qualities necessary for a successful career at the Global Fund?

I believe that in order to work at the Global Fund one has to be determined, skilled in multi-tasking and critical/strategic thinking, pay very close attention to detail and have some experience in monitoring and evaluation. Communication and negotiation skills are key and approaching countries with no prejudices is very important in order to work in the best interests of the country requesting funds.

Did the Graduate Institute prepare you well?

The composition of the student body particularly helped prepare me for my career – having to deal on a daily basis with people of very different cultures and mindsets taught me a lot about the importance of communication, tolerance, cooperation, listening, etc. – all necessary for being a good Programme Officer and all useful for moving forward in any position.

What advantage did the Institute give you from an intellectual point of view?

The Institute's opportunities to study abroad were very useful, where my exchange at the University of George Washington proved to be enriching. Moreover, the Graduate Institute's requirement to either complete an internship and/or take some practical-skills workshops were very useful and can be applied at work settings (such as negotiation skills). The Institute also provided us with a research-based/academic background that was vital during my research posts.

How did you benefit from your position at The Global Fund?

In the 11 months at the Fund, I have grown significantly in terms of work skills – from applying negotiation skills, monitoring, communications, problem-solving, evaluation and inevitably some diplomacy and politics. There is never a dull day and the fact that the Fund is a cross between the best aspects of an international organisation and a financing institution makes the work more rewarding. The international health and development component is addressed using a private-sector-like approach thereby addressing more substance and producing tangible results in a short span of time. To work in a humanitarian field in a dynamic and results-based environment has only brought me more motivation and skills to develop my career.