



# How to join the United Nations and apply successfully

ICD, Lucerne, March 2023

UNDP Office of  
Human Resources,  
Bureau for  
Management Services



# The United Nations System

## UN Principal Organs

General Assembly

Security Council

Economic and Social Council

Secretariat

International Court of Justice

Trusteeship Council<sup>5</sup>

**Subsidiary Bodies**

Main and other sessional committees

Disarmament Commission

Human Rights Council

International Law Commission

Standing committees and ad hoc bodies

**Programmes and Funds**

**UNCTAD** United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

- ITC** International Trade Centre (UNCTAD/WTO)

**UNDP** United Nations Development Programme

- UNCDF** United Nations Capital Development Fund
- UNV** United Nations Volunteers

**UNEP** United Nations Environment Programme

**UNFPA** United Nations Population Fund

**Subsidiary Bodies**

Military Staff Committee

Peacekeeping operations and political missions

Sanctions committees (ad hoc)

Standing committees and ad hoc bodies

**Advisory Subsidiary Body**

UN Peacebuilding Commission

**Functional Commissions**

Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

Narcotic Drugs

Population and Development

Science and Technology for Development

Social Development

Statistics

Status of Women

Sustainable Development

United Nations Forum on Forests

**Regional Commissions**

**ECA** Economic Commission for Africa

**ECE** Economic Commission for Europe

**ECLAC** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

**ESCAP** Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

**ESCWA** Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

**Other Bodies**

Committee for Development Policy

Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

Other sessional and standing committees and expert, ad hoc and related bodies

**Departments and Offices**

**EOSG** Executive Office of the Secretary-General

**DESA** Department of Economic and Social Affairs

**DFS** Department of Field Support

**DGACM** Department for General Assembly

**DM** Department of Management

**DPA** Department of Political Affairs

**DPI** Department of Public Information

**DPKO** Department of Peacekeeping Operations

**DSS** Department of Safety and Security

**OCHA** Office for the Coordination

**OHCHR** Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

**OIOS** Office of Internal Oversight Services

**OLA** Office of Legal Affairs

**OSAA** Office of the Special Adviser on Africa

**OSRSG/CAAC** Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children

**UNODA** Office for Disarmament Affairs

**UNOG** United Nations Office at Geneva

**UN-OHRLS** Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

**UNON** United Nations Office at Nairobi

**UN-HABITAT** United Nations Human Settlements Programme

**UNHCR** Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

**UNICEF** United Nations Children's Fund

**UNODC** United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

**UNRWA<sup>1</sup>** United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

**UN-Women** United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

**WFP** World Food Programme

**UNITAR** United Nations Institute for Training and Research

**UNRISD** United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

**UNSSC** United Nations System Staff College

**UNU** United Nations University

**Other Entities**

**UNAIDS** Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

**UNISDR** United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

**UNOPS** United Nations Office for Project Services

**Related Organizations**

**CTBTO PrepCom** Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

**IAEA<sup>2</sup>** International Atomic Energy Agency

**OPCW** Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

**WTO<sup>3</sup>** World Trade Organization

**Specialized Agencies<sup>4</sup>**

**ILO** International Labour Organization

**FAO** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

**UNESCO** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**WHO** World Health Organization

**World Bank Group**

- IBRD** International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- IDA** International Development Association
- IFC** International Finance Corporation
- MIGA** Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
- ICSID** International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes

**IMF** International Monetary Fund

**ICAO** International Civil Aviation Organization

**IMO** International Maritime Organization

**ITU** International Telecommunication Union

**UPU** Universal Postal Union

**WMO** World Meteorological Organization

**WIPO** World Intellectual Property Organization

**IFAD** International Fund for Agricultural Development

**UNIDO** United Nations Industrial Development Organization

**UNWTO** World Tourism Organization

**NOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> UNRWA and UNIDIR report only to the General Assembly.

<sup>2</sup> IAEA reports to the Security Council and the General Assembly.

<sup>3</sup> WTO has no reporting obligation to the General Assembly (GA) but contributes on an ad-hoc basis to GA and ECOSOC work inter alia on finance and developmental issues.

<sup>4</sup> Specialized agencies are autonomous organizations working with the UN and each other through the coordinating machinery of ECOSOC at the intergovernmental level, and through the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) at the inter-secretariat level. This section is listed in order of establishment of these organizations as specialized agencies of the United Nations.

<sup>5</sup> The Trusteeship Council suspended operation on 1 November 1994 with the independence of Palau, the last remaining United Nations Trust Territory, on 1 October 1994.

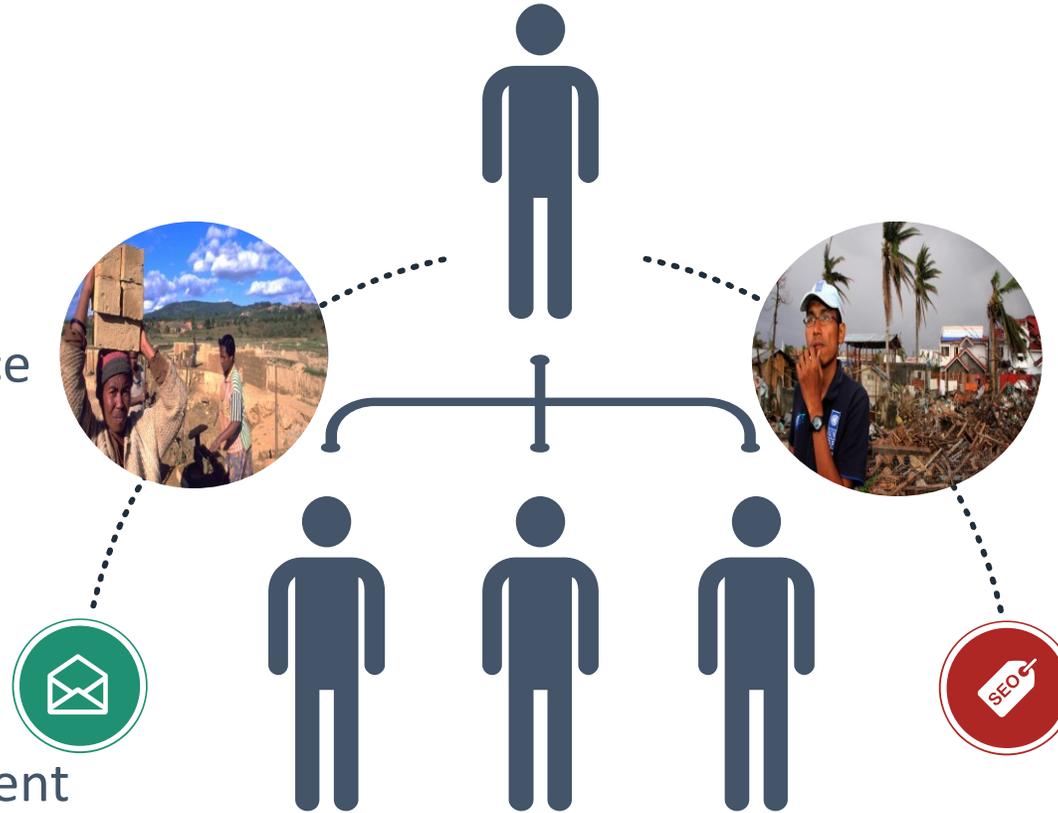
# Good news: there is probably a UN job for you!



## UNDP's example

### Programmatic profiles

- Rule of Law & Governance
- Climate & Environment
- Disaster Risk Reduction
- Poverty Reduction
- Private Sector Development
- Urbanization
- Youth, Gender



### Thematic profiles

- Communication
- Partnerships & Advocacy
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Procurement
- Legal Services
- Project Management
- Monitoring and Evaluation

# UN Career entry points



## Staff Contracts

- Internationally-Recruited (IP)
  - UN/UNDP/etc. job sites - Vacancies
  - Entry and Mid-Level Professional Programmes
  - Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme
- Locally-Recruited staff /National Officers
- Fixed-Term and Short/Temporary -Term Contracts (FTA-TA)

## Other Contracts

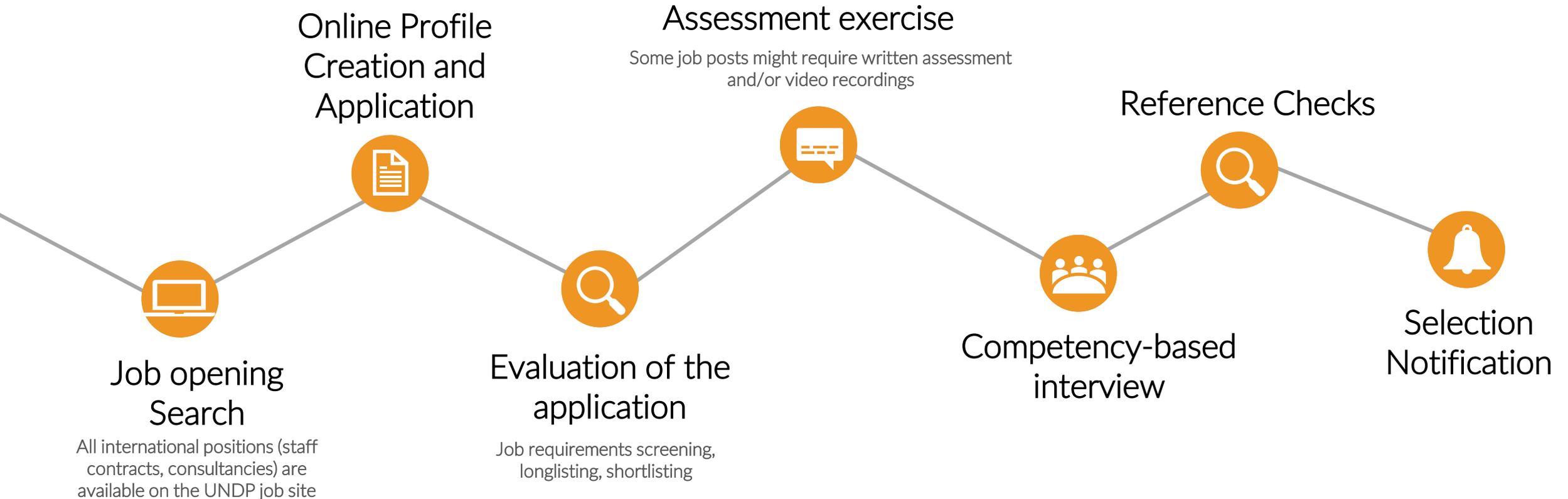
- Consultants and Contractors
- United Nations Volunteers (UNV)
- Fellowship programmes
- Internships

# What the UN looks for in candidates



- Motivation and drive
- Innovative mindset, teamwork
- Multicultural interest
- Educational & Professional requirements must be met
- Various core and job-specific personal competencies
- Language requirement: English + another UN working language an asset (French, Spanish, Arabic)
- Prior field and development experience a strong asset

# Typical recruitment process



# UNDP Job Requirement Overview



## Work Experience

Level	Years of Experience
D-2	Over 15
D-1	Min 15
P-5	10
P-4	7
P-3	5
P-2	2

## Core Competencies

- Achieve Results
- Think Innovatively
- Learn Continuously
- Adapt with Agility
- Act with Determination
- Engage and Partner
- Enable Diversity and Inclusion

## Cross-Functional Competencies

- Strategic Thinking
- Business Acumen
- Entrepreneurial Thinking
- System Thinking
- Effective Decision Making
- Negotiation and Influence

## Education

Usually requires advanced degree or bachelor degree with 2 years working experience or above

## Language

Working proficiency on English and/or French. Knowledge of other UN languages is an asset

## Technical Competencies

Job/function specific skills and competencies

Business Development and Management

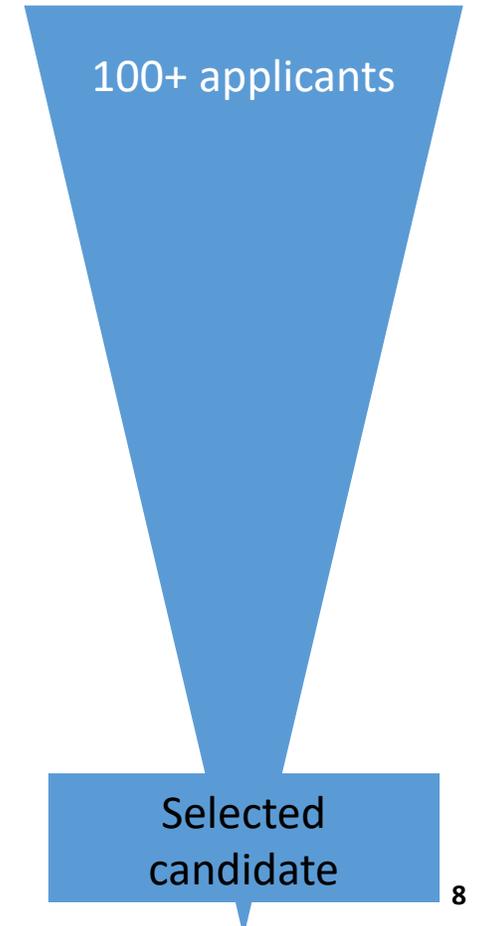
## Values

Exemplifying Integrity, Demonstrating Commitment, Embracing Diversity, Embracing Change

# Selection process in the UN



- Internship / consultancy / regular position advertised OR
- Call for applications to a talent roster advertised
- No unsolicited applications
- Computer screening (based on must-have requirements)
- First Human Resources screening (longlisting) based on must-have and nice to have requirements
- Second HR or hiring unit, considering cover letters, and video interviews at times (2nd longlisting or shortlist)
- Eventually, written test to finalize the shortlist, or as part of final scoring
- Competency-based interview (3-4 candidates) to choose final candidate, subject to positive reference checks



# Preparing to apply



- Know yourself & your competencies: is this the position for me?
- Do I meet the qualifications and experience requirements?
- What do I know about the organization?
- What do I know about this particular job?
- Have I considered all the implications if I am given the position?  
(Moving abroad, leaving family, culture shock)
- Will I actually take the job if I am selected?

# Writing your CV



- Be careful with acronyms
- Make sure there are no date or spelling mistakes
- Develop a result-oriented CV: what did you achieve?
- Use figures, volume, impact indicators
- Build a “story thread” in your CV
- Make the connection between your qualifications and job competencies
- Adapt your CV each time – no “one size fits all” CV

# Writing your application letter



- Identify key words related to knowledge, qualifications and competencies
- Tailor motivation letter & application form to the vacancy announcement
- Think about what message you want to send, and try to stand out
- Keep the layout and formatting simple and clear
- Be careful with acronyms & make sure there are no mistakes
- Make the connection between your qualifications and job competencies

# Preparing for the interview



- Find out as much as you can about the organization and duty station
- Understand the position: reference the vacancy announcement and look at the required competencies
- Prepare real examples matching your accomplishments to the competencies and practice beforehand
- Be aware of non-verbal communication
- If possible, do a mock interview, record and review it!
- Dress on the side of conservative
- For phone/remote interviews, find a private location, check your background, check IT equipment beforehand

**Homework  
pays off!**

# Competency-Based Interviews: CARL



- **Context:** briefly describe the context, the “what”. Do not go into too many details.
- **Action:** explain your role in addressing whatever issue in question, the “how”.
- **Result:** what was the outcome? (Negative outcome can be fine if you learn from it)
- **Learning:** what did you learn from this experience? What would you do differently today?

# Final thoughts: the importance to plan ahead



- Building a logical thread in your CV
- Planning two jobs ahead
- Flawless and result-oriented cover letter and CV
- Do your homework when applying: job content, selection process, etc.
- Know yourself and your competencies: is this the position for me?
- Have I considered all the implications if I am given the position?