



Interoffice Memorandum

To: Resident Representative/
Resident Coordinators

Date: 17 September, 1999

From: Deborah Landey
Director, Office of Human Resources
BPRM

Extension: 5200

Subject: UNDP JPO Programme

File:

As part of our human resources planning for the 2000-2001 biennium, I would like to review with you some key aspects of the UNDP Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme, including the process to follow for tapping into it. I also wish to inform you about some recent initiatives for strengthening the JPO Programme at Headquarters and within our country offices.

BACKGROUND

The JPO Programme provides UNDP with a cadre of young professionals selected on a competitive basis to serve on 2-3 year assignments that are fully-funded by donor governments. UNDP runs the largest JPO Programme in the UN system. About 250 UNDP JPOs are on board at any given time, of whom 85 % are assigned to our country offices. In 1998, UNDP engaged about 110 new JPOs, the largest corporate recruitment campaign within UNDP. The annual \$22.0 million contributions from 19 sponsoring governments would place the UNDP JPO Programme eleventh on the donor list of voluntary contributions to regular UNDP resources.

The JPO unit of BPRM/OHR/Recruitment is at the hub of the UNDP JPO Programme. It acts as the UNDP focal point with donors on day-to-day human resource matters, including JPO recruitment, selection, placement and reassignment. The JPO unit works closely with the bureaux and Managed Funds in these areas, providing advice to management and developing new tools to improve the JPO Programme.

Since its inception in 1968, the UNDP JPO Programme has generally worked well. JPOs are attracted to a unique opportunity to learn, contribute and widen their career horizons. For donors, the JPO Programme offers another means for providing development assistance while at the same time giving their young nationals the opportunity to apply what they learn to the work of development. The benefits to UNDP are obvious. The JPO Programme is indeed a win-win-win proposition.

As with other forms of development assistance, the UNDP JPO Programme and similar programmes within the UN system are coming under increased scrutiny from government sponsors. In a review of these programmes held last February in Den Hague, JPO donors cited several areas for improvement. These included supervision, learning, orientation and integration into the work life of the office. Recent donor assessments of our JPO Programme as well as feedback from the JPOs themselves have echoed these concerns.

JPO Recruitment and Selection

JPO recruitment aims to be a demand-driven exercise. Country offices interested in recruiting a JPO are invited in September/October by the respective bureaux to submit a Terms of Reference (TOR) for an assignment to be filled the following year. The TORs are used by the bureaux to determine their JPO priorities and by the donors to evaluate sponsorship and facilitate selection of JPO candidates with the right competencies for the assignments. The TOR form has now been standardized and expanded to give more specific information on supervision and learning, and will soon be available on the BPRM/OHR web page (Attachment A). Following a competitive interview process, selected JPOs are presented to country office management for approval. In 1998, about 90% of the planned JPO assignments were filled.

Attached is a detailed description of the JPO recruitment planning and selection cycle (Attachment B).

JPO Orientation

Country Office

It can take about three to six months for the new JPO to arrive in the duty station following approval of the candidates by the country office. In some instances, this waiting period is out of our control as it may involve, for example, pre-recruitment training by donors. To welcome the selected JPO and begin the orientation process, we strongly encourage management to be in direct contact with the JPO prior to arrival. As you know, such early communication with a new staff member can make a real difference in terms of morale, effectiveness and integration with other members of your office team. We would also like to share with you an orientation checklist of best practices and a suggested set of materials for forming a briefing kit for new staff in your office (Attachments C and D).

Headquarters

After several months in the duty station, new JPOs participate in a two and one half week training course at UNDP Headquarters. The course is timed so that the JPOs can build on their unit orientation to gain maximum benefit from learning and exposure to Headquarters operations. The curriculum focuses on strategic, macro-level issues and includes sessions on UNDAF/CCA, the

Resident Coordinator system, global hub/SURFs and human rights. The JPOs also attend bureau briefings and meet with key colleagues in relevant areas of their work.

We ask your help in implementing these initiatives which we believe will improve the overall quality of the JPO Programme. I would also welcome your suggestions for further strengthening the JPO Programme.

cc: Directors, Regional Bureaux
Executive Secretary, UNCDF
Executive Coordinator, UNV
Executive Director, UNIFEM