



Fair Internship Initiative

2017 UN INTERNSHIPS REPORT



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Geneva



ABOUT THE FAIR INTERNSHIP INITIATIVE

The Fair Internship Initiative advocates for fair, quality and accessible internships for people of all backgrounds. A youth-led advocacy group with chapters in Geneva, Vienna and New York, it aims at generating discussion and solutions to ensure that UN internship programmes remain valuable, regulated and sustainable, whilst promoting equality, maintaining transparency and protecting the rights and welfare of future interns. The Fair Internship Initiative asks no less of UN organizations than to be coherent with their own principles and values, as well as with development objectives enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

For more information, visit: <http://fairinternshipinitiative.org>

Access to the survey database can be granted for research purposes by writing to: fii.geneva@gmail.com

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Taking on an unpaid or underpaid internship can cause financial difficulties to interns as well as their families. Even more worryingly, the absence of any financial support to most UN interns causes profound inequalities in terms of access to such opportunities, with negative consequences for social and geographic mobility. **Unpaid internships score consistently worse than paid ones in nearly all dimensions analysed** (geographic diversity, socio-economic diversity, transparency of recruitment, effectiveness of on-boarding procedures, quality of supervision and support, meaningfulness of tasks performed, career prospects).

Geographic Diversity

Geographic distribution of interns by country of nationality is even more skewed than the one of UN staff members. **64% of the respondents were from high-income countries.** Some countries, mainly African ones, are not represented at all in the sample. As is the majority of UN internships are located in expensive cities Europe or in the United States, the absence of any financial support to cover relocation and living costs favours local recruitments and applicants from wealthier countries.

Unpaid internships are considerably less geographically diverse than paid ones: although interns from high-income countries remain the majority, among paid interns they amounts to 55.4%, while among unpaid ones to 67.8%. Such majority of interns from affluent countries “crowds out” other groups, which are consistently less represented than in paid internships, as per below graph. Conversely, **interns from low-income countries are the first beneficiaries of paid internship**, as half of those represented in the sample were undertaking a paid one.

Socio-Economic Distribution

Only a few UN organizations provide financial support to their interns through some form of stipend. **83% of the interns receive no financial support at all from their organizations.** Contrary to the commonly held belief that interns often have access to finance from a 3rd party (university, government, foundations, etc.), **the percentage of interns who are able to access these funds is only 24.78%.**



Participation of economically less privileged people in unpaid UN internships is 3.5 times lower than in paid ones (respectively 4.5% and 14.1% of total number of interns). **83.5% of unpaid interns would have been unable to afford the internship without their family’s economic support**, while only 31.6% of paid ones had the same problem. This suggests that **by paying interns a decent living allowance, accessibility of those without a wealthy family could be increased by 50%.**

26.6% of interns need to take a second job, often in the informal economy and in violation of host country’s immigration rules. As high as **50% of the unpaid interns report that their internships have either caused them and their families financial difficulties or affected their living conditions.** Only 15.8% of paid ones report similar difficulties.

Under-paid internships (namely when the financial support provided is not sufficient to cover basic living expenses, as in the case of UNICEF or UNITAR) do not necessarily alleviate financial pressure on interns and their families. On the contrary, they **may even have a regressive effect**, providing a (certainly useful) contribution to those who would in any case be able to afford the internship.

Only 12.3% of the interns receive financial contributions from employers to cover health insurance costs. Interns at the World Health Organization receive no support for health insurance (besides receiving no living allowance).

The Internship Experience

The majority of successful internship applications occurred through an official website application (61.7%). **Less transparent methods of recruitment remain however highly popular, especially to get an unpaid UN internship, which in nearly 30% of the cases is obtained outside of the formal channels (mainly through personal contacts).** This is the case only for 14.5% of paid internships.

The data show that nearly **half of the unpaid UN interns have no formal rights and entitlements (including leave days, sick leave, insurance, access to justice, etc.)** stated in their contract. **Some survey respondents reported cases of sexual harassment**, which however went unreported as **interns have no access to formal justice** and are therefore in a vulnerable situation.

Only 70.5% of respondents had an induction at the start of their internship. However, while 82% of paid interns received an induction, only 68.7% of unpaid ones did. Among those who did have an induction, only 56.6% believed this induction suitably prepared them for their internship. **Paid interns received an induction twice as effective as the one offered to unpaid ones.**

Only 33% of respondents had clear objectives to be achieved by the end of their internship. The remaining respondents either contributed to the day-to-day operations and complemented the work of staff members (32.8%), absorbed excess workload tasks from their team (29%), or completed repetitive and unqualified tasks such as print jobs and coffee runs (4.4%). **Respondents overwhelmingly (81%) state that they contributed to their overall team's objectives that might otherwise not have been met, suggesting that interns in the UN do indeed discharge core functions rather than merely engage in a "learning experience".**

79.2% of respondents stated they were expected to work 31-40 hours per week, with only 60.7% of all respondents actually working that many hours. **34% often worked more than 40 hours a week**, while a small minority (5%) worked less than 31 hours.

Respondents had a very wide range of experiences from fully supportive supervisors who prioritised feedback and mentorship, to those who were unclear of who their direct supervisor(s) was or whose supervisor was absent from the office for the entire duration of their internship. **Only 67% of all respondents felt very well or well supported by their supervisor during their**



internship. Those who did unpaid internships were more twice more likely to feel inadequately supported or entirely unsupported by their supervisor.

Internships' Employment Outcomes

The majority of survey responders (76.3%) stated that their Internships have helped them advance their career. Undertaking a paid internship clearly plays a positive role, as 89.5% of paid interns answered positively to the question, whereas just 74.3% of unpaid interns did so. Additionally, **unpaid internships often do not gain the same recognition on the job market as full-fledged work experiences**, even if the skills gained would be akin to paid internships.

Paid interns are radically more likely to be hired by their organization following an internship, while only 22,8% of former unpaid interns were offered a contract thereafter.

Conclusions

1. Geographic diversity among UN interns is even lower than among staff.
2. Paid internships favour better geographic representation, especially of lower-middle and low income countries, as participation for most applicants from those areas depends on the stipend.
3. UN internships are mainly accessible to people from above-average family background, although paid ones are considerably more balanced than unpaid ones.
4. Three quarters of unpaid interns receive no external finance besides from family.
5. Most unpaid interns economically depend on family support, while paid ones are economically empowered.
6. When organizations assign resources, and establish clear and transparent processes to internships, the intern's experience is dramatically improved.
7. The selection process for paid internships is more transparent and formalized, while for unpaid ones selection is more frequently informal and based on personal contacts.
8. Paid internships not only result in more fair internships (in terms of geographic and socio-economic diversity), but also more educational (due to their higher degree of formalization) and more effective in finding employment afterwards.



INTRODUCTION

Internships: an emerging global issue

There is no common legal definition of internships, as this labour market phenomenon remains highly unregulated both within national jurisdictions as well as at the international level. Although it has not yet provided an international definition, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has occasionally used working definitions such as:

- “a method for young people to acquire supervised practical experience in order to transition from education to the labour market”.¹
- “a short-term work experience during which the learner receives training and gains experience in a specific field or career area”²
- “work-based schemes whose purpose is to provide skills and knowledge in the workplace”³

The European Union’s Quality Framework for Traineeships defines a traineeship (one of the many synonyms of “internship”) as “a limited period of work practice, whether paid or not, which includes both learning and training components, undertaken in order to gain practical and professional experience with a view to improving employability and facilitating the transition to regular employment.”⁴

Prior to the 1990s, formal internships were quite rare. They represented a specific form of apprenticeships in credentialed professional programs such as health care or accounting.⁵ With time, the increasing reliance on interns by firms and the rising requirements of work experience for graduates rapidly determined a sharp increase in the number of young people undertaking one or – often more than one – internship. Data on internships remains scant, a trend reinforced by the absence of a universal definition and one underlying the insufficient attention paid so far to the phenomenon by both national and international policies. However, according to estimates by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), in the United States alone, from the mid-1980s to the mid-2000s, the share of college graduates participating in at least one internship rose from less than 10 percent to over 80 percent.⁶

Particularly following the global economic downturn in 2008, competitive job availability has had the greatest effect on young people who struggle to enter the workforce without engaging in some form of internship prior.⁷ The sharp decline in job opportunities at the time of the recession has led to greater competition for entry-level jobs, meaning that firms are now able to receive highly skilled workers willing to boost their professional profile by taking low-paid, insecure work, such as internships.⁸ Conversely, holding a degree is no longer a sufficient qualification to enter the labour market, as having work experience such as an internship appears now to be essential for

¹ International Labour Organization (2013).

² ILO Youth Employment (2013).

³ O’Higgins (2017).

⁴ EU Council (2014).

⁵ Howe (2014); Haire and Oloffson (2009).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Greenhouse (2012).

⁸ Roberts (2017).

a graduate's career.⁹ Unlike a few decades ago, entry-level vacancies (and increasingly even internship openings) almost always require previous work experience. The solution, for those who can afford it, is to be forced to go through unpaid or underpaid work. For those who cannot afford it, the solution is more often than not settling for less than desirable occupations.

With most economies slowly recovering from the economic recession, the upward trend in internships does not seem to cease. What may have initially seemed a cyclical phenomenon has now become a permanent feature of the youth labour market. Moreover, the explosion of internships is no longer limited to the developed world but on the rise also in developing countries. As such, it can no longer be downplayed as a “fringe” or “localized” phenomenon. It is estimated that 1.5 million internships are filled in the United States alone each year,¹⁰ while similar estimates from the United Kingdom suggest some 100,000 internships per year¹¹ (the figure is likely to have risen since then). In some cases, the number of internships advertised has even outnumbered the number of job vacancies, suggesting considerable structural imbalances both in the labour market and in the human resources of the receiving firms.¹²

As the nature of the labour market is rapidly changing, the legality, benefits and fairness of internships are frequently coming under scrutiny.¹³ By shirking clear definitions and expectations of an internship, there is a troubling risk of abuses.¹⁴ In most jurisdictions, in fact, interns are not entitled even to minimal labour law protection, creating a situation of legal – and personal – uncertainty as internships may become a loophole for firms to employ unprotected – and often unpaid – workers. It follows that interns may easily suffer exploitation, abuse or harassment, as in most cases they are not legally protected as employees.¹⁵

Numerous studies suggest that interns are often required to perform menial under-skilled tasks, with little or no learning component. The UN 2016 World Youth Report stated that “Increasing numbers of companies and organizations are offering, often full-time and unpaid internships for recent graduates. In such incidents, the internship is not necessarily linked to specific educational outcomes, and in many cases the work of the young intern is replacing that of regular staff.”¹⁶

In the United States in order to offer unpaid internships the program must be purely educational, interns must not replace staff and the work of interns must not provide immediate advantage to the employer. There have been a growing number of legal cases where programs have failed these requirements.¹⁷

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Perlin (2012).

¹¹ Docherty, Fernandez and Sileryte (2015).

¹² Roberts (2017).

¹³ Dylan (2013); Zillman (2015); Banks (2017)

¹⁴ Crain (2016).

¹⁵ The Economist (2014).

¹⁶ United Nations (2016a).

¹⁷ Mazurak SA. The Unpaid Intern: Liability for the Uninformed Employer. ABA Journal of Labor & Employment Law. 2013;29(1):101; Bergman GS. Unpaid internships: A tale of legal dissonance. Rutgers JL & Pub Pol'y. 2013;11:551



This is in direct contradiction to Article 23.2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, according to which 'Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work'.¹⁸

Compared to both temporary work and apprenticeships, traineeships/internships seem to be the arrangements that are most at risk of pushing young people into persistent precariousness rather than supporting their entry into decent work.¹⁹

The worrying trend of unpaid internships

Perhaps one of the most worrying trends about the rise of internships is the corresponding rise in unpaid ones. The UK's Chartered Institute of Personal Development (CIPD) estimated that more than one in five employers planned to hire interns between April and Sept 2010. However, only half of these placements were offered with payment at or above the level of the national minimum wage.²⁰

A frequent critique on unpaid or underpaid intern opportunities is that they discriminate against those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and directly contribute to deepening social inequalities.²¹ According to a 2009 government report in Britain, many internships, especially when unpaid, "are accessible only to some, whereas they should be open to all who have the aptitude. Currently employers are missing out on talented people – and talented people are missing opportunities to progress. There are negative consequences for social mobility and for fair access to the professions".²²

Unpaid internships tend to be more frequent in some of the most competitive economic sectors, such as politics, media, banking, law and fashion. As a consequence, these industries and professions "continue to be dominated by people from particular backgrounds, perpetuating inequality and dampening opportunities for social mobility".²³

If internships are to serve the purpose of addressing youth unemployment then they need to benefit the many, not just those who can afford to work for free. If not because this represents an obvious contradiction with any sense of equal opportunity, at least because they simply miss the target. In fact, unpaid internships are more often than not taken by those who would manage to land on a fairly good job anyway and prevent disadvantaged youth from gaining professional acumen and improve their employability. In order to promote a culture of equal employment and diversity, employers of unpaid and underpaid internships must provide these youths with adequate funding.

As internships are a de-facto gateway to future professional employment, it is vital to ensure they are accessible on an equal opportunity basis, both from a social justice perspective and to ensure

¹⁸ United Nations (1948).

¹⁹ O'Higgins (2017).

²⁰ CIPD (2010)

²¹ The Economist (2014).

²² Milburn (2005).

²³ Institute for Public Policy Research (2010).



employers are accessing the full range of talent available to them.²⁴ Far from fulfilling their crucial labour market function of being a foot in the door for youth of all backgrounds, unpaid internships represent instead a barrier to those who lack the connections to get them or the finances to pay for them “The current trend of unpaid internships is a demoralizing and self-perpetuating cycle that entrenches unfairness and inequality. It is exploiting the extreme difficulties faced by – and the subsequent desperation of – young graduates”,²⁵ forcing them to pay the price for the economic, legal (and ethical) deficits of the organizations that decide to employ them.

At the same time, unpaid internships tend to be more often than paid ones rather casually, or informally arranged. As the analysis of the 2017 Global Internship survey confirms, recruitment tends to be less transparent, they are less likely to have an actual learning plan, appropriate supervision and a sufficient supporting structure. The risk is that - in order to contain costs - unpaid internships are offered to fill staff positions made redundant, with little or no opportunity for the scheme to actually fulfil its role to facilitate school-to-work transition. The risk for (unpaid) internships to be a dead end is especially felt by candidates from less privileged backgrounds, for whom such placements represent a considerable investment which they may not be able to afford more than once. As explained in the 2016 UN World Youth Report,

“Today, it is not uncommon for young people to undertake numerous back-to-back unpaid or lowpaid internships as they struggle to gain a foothold on the career ladder. Far from better preparing young people for economic life, unpaid internships have the potential to leave youth in an economically more vulnerable position than they would be in had they never undertaken the internship in the first place.”²⁶

Confirming this worrying trend, in 2016 the NACE Foundation released a report on unpaid internships that found they had an overall negative effect on employment outcomes.²⁷ This finding has been confirmed in other subsequent studies.

Unfortunately, these concerns are not novel – interns, critics and advocates have raised them for many years. The ongoing lack of transparency, scarce monitoring and evaluation of internships has led to a pervasive inertia in addressing these issues, leaving the legitimacy of internships and



UN internships: role model or worst practice?

“The UN system has often served as a role model and has had a significant influence on governments, civil society and private entities. Is this also the case for internships?”
- ILO Youth Employment Presentation, 2013

²⁴ IPPR, 2017

²⁵ Rainford (2010).

²⁶ United Nations (2016a).

²⁷ Crain (2016).

The original UN Internship Program, dating back to 1958, provided stipends and travel allowances to a select number of young people who came from across the world to learn about the organisation and engage in its activities. However, subsequent administrations chose to change the policy, with interns eventually being placed, with the Secretary General’s report of 1996,²⁸ into the category of *Gratis Personnel* “Type I”. This category was not created with interns in mind, but rather for associate experts and other forms of seconded personnel, financed by their sponsoring governments. Nevertheless, with time interns ended up representing more than 85% of the “type I” *gratis* personnel.

Whilst private companies and NGOs must adhere to national employment laws, the UN and other international organizations are exempt. This has left it largely to organizations themselves to regulate how internships are governed. Contrary to popular belief, propagated by UN spokespersons themselves,²⁹ there is no UN General Assembly resolution prohibiting the the administration to provide financial assistance to interns. On the contrary, these matters are regulated by an internal administrative instruction (currently Administrative Instruction ST/AI/2014/1).

The use of interns within the UN has significantly outpaced the wider labour market trend, with 1057 interns as at 2003 doubling to over 2200 in 2015.³⁰ This growth is correlated with a marked decline in P1 positions and, between 2007 and 2009, as well as since 2012, also in P2 positions, suggesting that more an more (paid) entry-level positions are being replaced by (unpaid) internships.

year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
interns	1516	1675	2219*	2219*	2211*	2211*	2009*	2009*	2267*	2267*
P1	43	52	55	47	53	26	29	25	18	21
P2	1069	1288	1308	1277	1737	1614	1456	1400	1355	1372

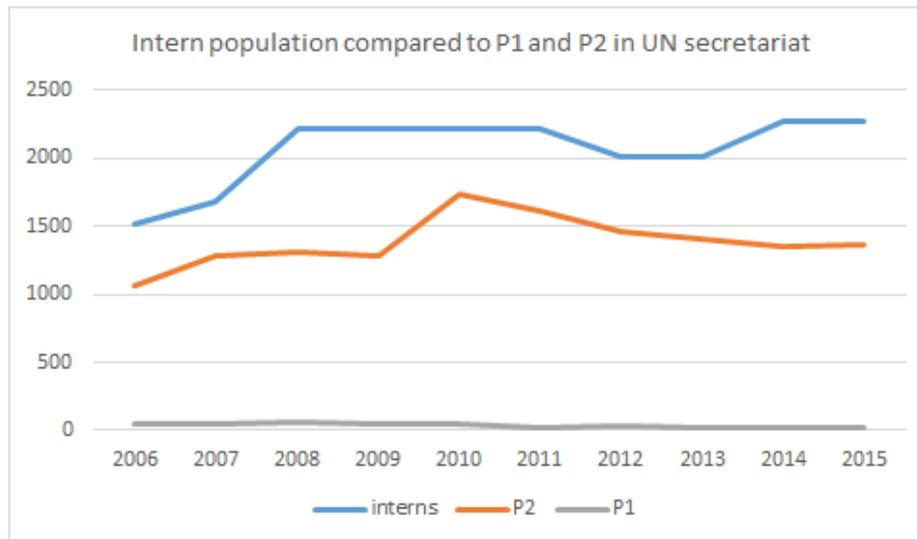
* As of 2008 data are available only by biennium. The yearly figures reported here are half of the biennial ones.



²⁸ See Report of the Secretary-General 1996 A.51/688 and successive documents.

²⁹ See for instance the declaration by Ahmed Fawzi, former UN spokesperson, reported in: Taylor A, “Why the United Nations doesn’t pay its interns,” *Washington Post*, 14 August 2015. Web link: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/08/14/why-the-united-nations-doesnt-pay-its-interns/?utm_term=.a77814e74a53

³⁰ Information are drawn from the annual (for staff) and biennial (for interns) Reports of the Secretary General on the Composition of the Secretariat. For 2015 data on interns see: United Nations. *Composition of the Secretariat: gratis personnel, retired staff and consultants and individual contractors: Report of the Secretary-General*. Geneva, 2016.



As further analysed in Chapter 3, this rapid increase also demonstrates the changing purpose of the internship programme. In the context of a zero-growth budget, the UN increasingly chooses to rely on this type of unremunerated personnel to discharge its core functions. At the same time, however, HR rules have failed to keep up with these changes, and as of today no system of assuring basic financial support to interns has been put into place or even officially proposed.

Although internships are not an official avenue for direct employment with an organization, it is acknowledged that the former intern cohort provides a valuable hiring source. Additionally, networking is heavily encouraged to acquire contacts for future job opportunities; thus, a lack of diversity in the intern body may also be transferred to the official workforce.³¹ If internships represent a valuable experience, which may potentially unlock access to future employment in UN organizations or elsewhere in the sector, then access to them should be solely merit-based and the applicant's financial status or willingness to put themselves in a financially vulnerable situation should have no place in the application process. This is all the more relevant for the UN system, which includes among its core values the respect of diversities and the promotion of equal opportunities. Even more compelling, article 8 of the **UN Charter** clearly states that "the United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs".³²

The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, at article 23.2, mentions that "Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work", while the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**, under article 7, recognizes "the right of everyone to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work which ensure, in particular: (a) Remuneration which provides all workers, as a minimum, with: (i) Fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value without distinction of any kind, ... with equal pay for equal work; (ii) A decent living for themselves and their families in accordance with the provisions of the

³¹ Jarvis and Moodle (2015).

³² United Nations (1945).



recognized as employees nevertheless represent a category of workers, has been sanctioned by the General Comment No. 23 (2016) of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which provided the following authoritative interpretations of the article:

“An excessive use of unpaid internships and training programmes, as well as of short term and fixed term contracts that negatively affect their job security, career prospects and social security benefits is not in line with the right to just and favourable conditions of work.”³³

The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable development** contains a clear commitment to both reduced inequalities (SDG 10) and decent working conditions (SDG 8), and more specifically to the following relevant targets:

- The promotion of social, economic and political inclusion irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status (target 10.2);
- Equal opportunity and the reduction of inequalities of outcome, including the elimination of discriminatory laws, policies and practices and the promotion of appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard (target 10.3);
- The adoption of policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies to progressively achieve greater equality (target 10.4);
- Enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions (target 10.6).
- Decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value (target 8.5).

The Global Interns’ Survey served to provide empirical evidence of this, among other things. It became apparent that the vast majority of respondents participated in unpaid internships with no assistance in travel, visa procedures, accommodation, food or healthcare coverage. This implies that those unable to access the necessary resources to do afford such experience are automatically excluded and discriminated against.

It has to be noted that a number of international organizations have committed to financially support their interns, including some UN agencies³⁴ and NGOs³⁵. Other organizations have seen only small concessions as a result of intern self-advocacy, such as cafeteria discounts or bicycle-sharing.³⁶ Yet the improvements to date remain insufficient and the discriminatory element of unpaid internships remain a major concern.

³³ United Nations Economic and Social Council (2016).

³⁴ Fair Internship Initiative (2017).

³⁵ We Pay Our Interns (2017).

³⁶ Jarvis and Moodle (2015).





METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

Survey Design

As with the 2016 Global Internship Survey, the methodology and questionnaire for the survey were designed in consultation with a number of stakeholders. A first consultation took place in June 2017, when the Fair Internship Initiative, along with the Geneva Internship Association (GIA), hosted an “Intern Board Congress”. This represents an opportunity to bi-annually convene the different representatives of interns’ organizations to share concerns, ideas, and collaborate. From this Congress, FII was able to learn what data the intern boards are interested in and formed a joint working group to elaborate the questionnaire.

The first draft was shared for comments and inputs with other branches of the Fair Internship Initiative and other intern representatives, as well as with the organizations member of the Global Intern Coalition. After a month of consultations due to the broader scope of the survey, it was launched on the 1st of August, a time when most interns are hired and many are finishing their summer internships to return to university. The survey was closed on the 6th of October.

The survey consisted of 51 multiple-choice questions - 7 of which with the possibility for the respondent to write in a custom answer. In some cases, statements were provided to which the respondents could choose from a Likert-type scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). Three open-ended qualitative questions were also asked.

Structure of the survey

The structure of the survey can be divided into four parts. The first section contains general information about the internship and the steps undertaken before on-boarding. This includes the number of internships undertaken beforehand by respondents, the location and name of the organisation, the length of the internship, as well as questions on the recruitment process. This section also contains information on the conditions stipulated in the internship agreement. For instance, whether or not an intern is offered a stipend, whether it includes some form of protection from harassment, leave days, sick leave, health insurance, and other forms of social protection that should be universally available to all working people.

The second section explored the conditions of the internship. It acquired information on hours of work and the nature of the interns’ tasks. As the responsibilities of interns vary across organisations, field stations, and teams, this section provided a few options where respondents can categorise the kind of tasks they were required to perform. It allowed respondents to rank their internships according to whether they perceived as being more of working experience or a valued by team members, as well as on the level of support provided by the supervisor, this

section explicitly asked respondents to rank these elements. In addition, respondents were asked about how their internship experience could be improved.

In the third section, information on the financing of the internship are collected (living expenses on housing, food, transport, and relocation costs). As most the UN organisations do not offer any financial support, this section aimed to quantify the “cost of doing an internship” and to clarify to which extent undertaking UN internships would cause financial hardships to young people and their families. It acquired information on the share of respondents who were financially independent of their internship, or with financial support from their governments or their educational institution. The survey also asked if the respondent had health insurance that could cover her basic needs. Furthermore, the source of financial support was asked to understand the financial situation of the respondent. For instance, whether a second job, loan, and family support were required during the span of one’s internship.

In the last section, it collected information on the basic demography of the respondents. As the United Nations and most international organisations strive for equal representation of member states, this section asked about the nationality of respondents. Their level of education, country where their degrees were obtained, as well as their parents’ highest level education level were asked. The latter information was asked because it could be indicative of their relative socioeconomic status in their country of residence. Finally, the age category and gender of respondents were collected.

Dissemination

The survey was disseminated online through social media (Facebook, Twitter), shared via mailing lists and other dissemination networks by individual intern groups (Intern Boards, intern associations, student and professional unions, etc.) around the world with regular reminders until closure.

Analysis

The current report was compiled on the basis of survey evidence extracted from the UN subset of the survey - counting both former and current interns - which comprises a total of 471, 118 of which from a separate survey carried out by UNHCR interns with a partially comparable methodology. It comprises 27 duty stations, with Geneva and New York being the most represented (as most UN organizations are headquartered in these two cities).

To test the hypothesis that the provision of financial support to interns has a considerable impact on both the composition of the intern population and on the quality and experience of the internships, data have been cross tabulated with a variable indicating the level of economic support provided. Such variable comprises three categories: paid, underpaid and unpaid. Internships are classified as unpaid if the amount received by the employing organization equals to zero. It was however necessary to differentiate between paid internships that offer sufficient financial support to cover all basic living costs and those who offer some compensation but insufficient to cover living costs. To do so, specific thresholds were elaborated for each duty station



using the following methodology: 1. The post-adjustment multiplier³⁷ for each duty station was applied to P1 (grade 1) posts. 2. The annual amount (post adjustment without base salary) was divided by 12 to obtain a monthly amount. 3. The amount was reduced by 47% (the percentage was decided using Geneva as a benchmark, whereby the amount would have equalled to ILO intern stipends - reduced by 15% in order to maintain the threshold as conservative as possible). All internships where the stipend reported by the survey responders were equal or superior to this amount were considered as “paid”, the others that were more than zero but less than the set amount were considered as “underpaid”.

The text of the report also avails itself of with anecdotal evidences collected over the last 3 years by the Fair Internship Initiative, as well as with normative analyses performed by legal experts who kindly devoted their time to this research on a pro bono basis.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations to the methodology and analysis of the survey which need to be acknowledged. The survey itself was only made available in English, which limited the pool of respondents to those who have a working knowledge of the language. However, as English is the main working language of the vast majority of UN duty stations, it is reasonable to assume that this limitation is rather marginal.

Although the software used to collect responses could verify whether a computer’s IP address had already undertaken the survey and consequently block the attempt to do so again, there is no way to ensure that a single person may have responded multiple times using different machines with different IP addresses. This eventuality, however, is assumed to be rather low, as there is no immediate reward in compiling the survey more than once.

Sampling method could not be randomized as the survey was disseminated through social networks and other contacts by the Fair Internship Initiative and other organizations participating in the data collection. Accordingly, answers are limited to those who voluntarily took the time to do the survey (voluntary response bias).

Sample size of the 3 groups in which respondents have been divided for most of the analysis’ purpose (paid, underpaid and unpaid) are very different, as unpaid internships in the UN system are far more common than paid ones. This means that inferences made on comparisons always must be considered at the net of very different sample sizes.

Moreover, coverage is not necessarily proportional to the number of interns in given duty stations, as survey distribution networks were unevenly effective among different countries. Nevertheless, Geneva and New York account for most responders, which reflects to some extent the geography of interns’ population.

³⁷ Post adjustments are multipliers applied to UN base salaries which express cost-of-living relativities between each duty station of the United Nations common system and New York. It is elaborated and regularly updated by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and are used to determine the amount of the salary of UN staff in the Professional and higher categories: http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/salaries_allowances/salary.htm#pa



There is furthermore no perfect proportionality in the sample with respect to the distribution of interns per organization. While the dissemination of the questionnaire has been particularly effective in some organizations (ILO, UNHCR, OHCHR, UNDP having the strongest weight), other appear to be far less represented (for instance WFP, UNECE, WIPO and UNOPS).

Finally, the respondents were both former or current interns with no limitation on when they ended their internship. Although data were collected to identify current and former interns, as well as the number of years elapsed since the completion of the internship, it was decided not to filter out former interns in order not to excessively reduce the sample size of the analysis. This decision was taken in consideration of the fact that UN internship policies - with only some exceptions, have not significantly changed in the past decade.



SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

1. GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY

According to the Charter of the United Nations, “Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible.”³⁸ In practice, however, geographic imbalances persist in the organization’s staff, an issue which is often a source of strife among member states and the United Nations’ Management. The Group 77 (a coalition of developing countries within the UN’s General Assembly) has on multiple occasions raised within the 5th Committee of the UN’s General Assembly the necessity to increase diversity among UN staff.³⁹ So far, little attention has been devoted to the importance of ensuring diverse representation among interns. This is all the more surprising, especially considering their role as a way to “get a foot in the door” of the organization, which - therefore - has an indirect effect on the diversity of staff itself.

This chapter aims at illustrating the effects of unpaid internships on the geographic diversity of the interns’ population, testing the hypothesis that paid internships are likely to deliver a more geographically diverse workforce than unpaid ones.

Interns’ nationality and country’s level of development

An analysis of the nationality of UN interns and former interns who completed the survey shows that respondents come from 68 different countries spread across all continents. Nevertheless, countries of nationality seem to show a similar level of (high) development.

The United States of America, France and Germany are the three most represented countries in the survey, with 33, 26 and 19 respondents respectively. Some countries are not represented at all, most of which are located in Africa. The absence of respondents from countries such as Mexico and Poland, which are both important in terms of population size and presence in international organisation, is more surprising. Even more so, is the absence of respondents from Thailand, where the United Nations’ third largest complex and a main office is located.⁴⁰ Finally, emerging economies such as China (17), India (14) and Brazil (14) are quite well represented in the sample.

³⁸ United Nations (1945)

³⁹ See for instance: United Nations Meetings Coverage, “Gender Equality, Geographic Diversity among Workforce Key to United Nations Credibility, Fifth Committee Hears in Debate on Human Resource Management”, 28 October 2016 (GA/AB/4211). Web link: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/gaab4211.doc.htm>; “Concern over Unequal Geographical Representation, Contract Terms Aired as Budget Committee Discusses Human Resources Management”, 21 October 2013 (GA/AB/4078), Web link: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2013/gaab4078.doc.htm>

⁴⁰ see <http://www.un.or.th/the-un-building/>



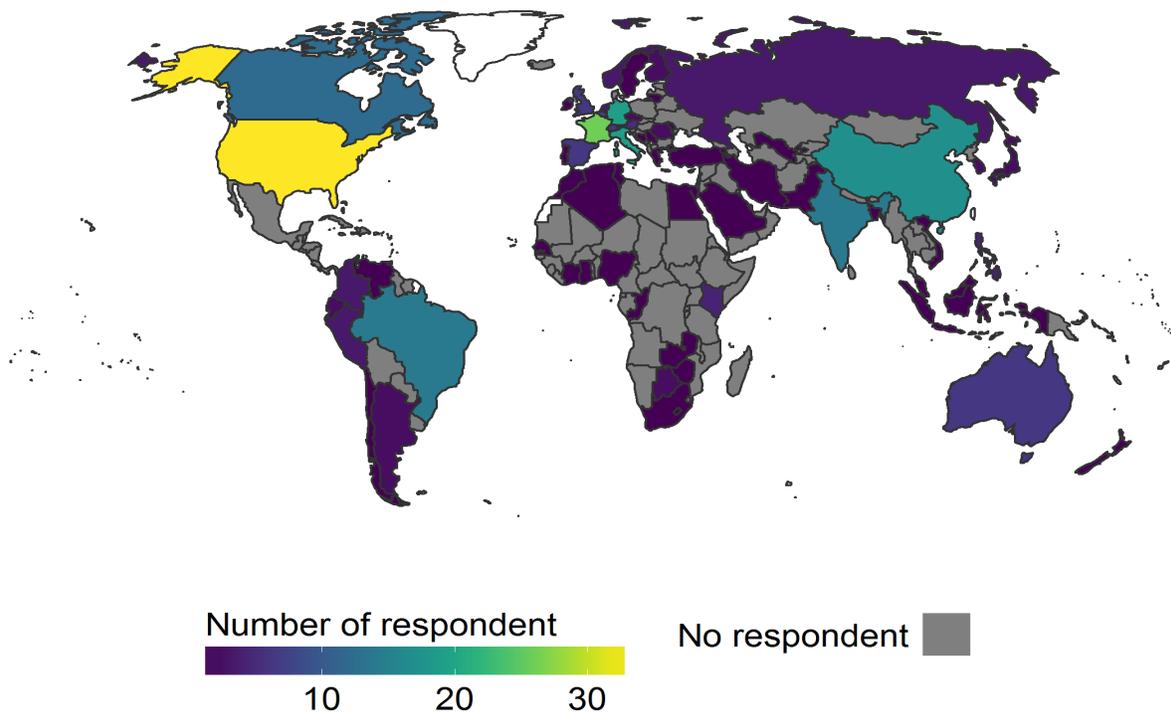


Figure 1: Number of respondents per country of nationality

This distribution mirrors the geographic distribution of regular staff in international organizations as reported by the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)⁴¹. This suggests that concerns highlighted on the diversity of UN staff should be extended to interns as well.

Below, Figure 2 shows which countries have a greater proportion of interns than regular staff. By comparing the proportion of interns to the proportion of international organization regular staff per country we can easily see that the geographic imbalance is even worse when it comes to the intern population. Developing countries with a history of providing staff to international organisation such as Kenya, Nigeria, the Philippines or Lebanon have a smaller proportion of interns than they have of regular staff.

⁴¹ Human Resources by Nationality (2015).



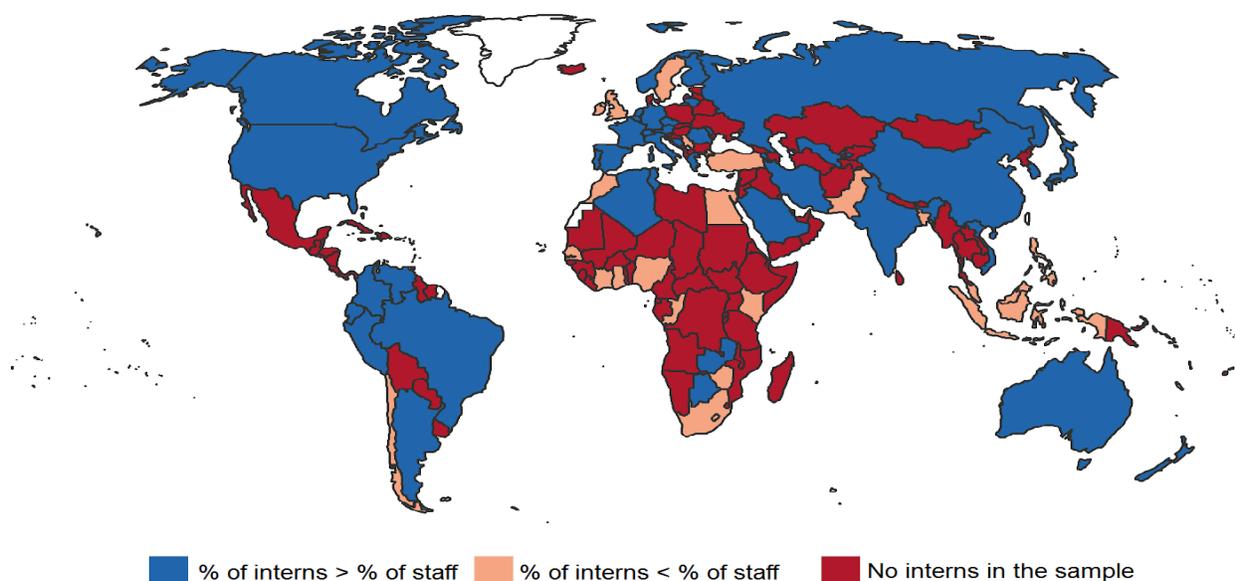


Figure 2 : Comparison of the proportion of interns as compared to the proportion of international organization regular staff per country

Dividing respondents between their respective continents further reinforces the observation that European countries are considerably more represented in the sample. Conversely, African countries, with interns accounting for only 6% of the number of respondents, is clearly underrepresented. The Americas and Oceania have all a significant number of respondents given their demographic weights.

Continent	Respondents
Africa	19
Americas	87
Asia	52
Europe	146
Oceania	7

Table 1 : number of respondents per continent

However, this does not mean all countries in Europe and the Americas are equally represented in the survey. There is a considerable imbalance in favor of high income OECD countries⁴² accounting for 64% of the number of respondents. Dividing the respondents using the World Bank



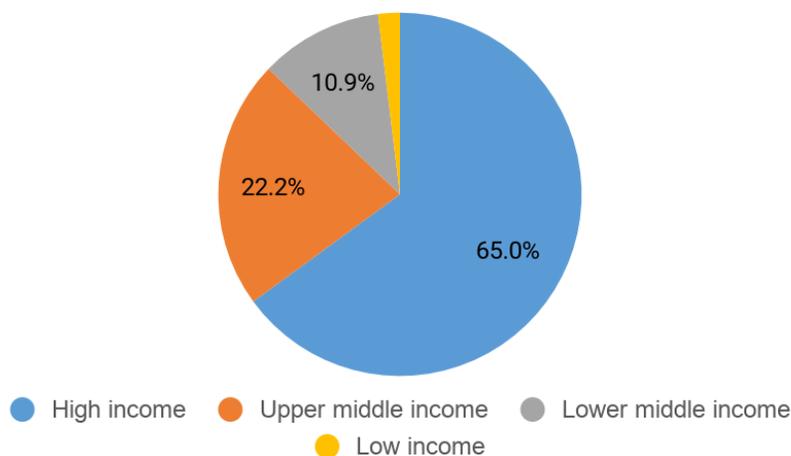
⁴² Countries that are both high income and members of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development according to the World Bank. See: <http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/country-and-lending-groups>

classification, non-high-income countries - which make up 80% of the world's population - constitute only 34% of respondents.

Income level of country of nationality	Number of respondents	Proportion of respondents	Proportion of World Population ⁴³
High income	202	65%	17%
Upper middle income	69	22%	34%
Lower middle income	34	11%	35%
Low income	6	1%	11%

Table 2 : Number of respondent per country income-group (World Bank classification)

UN interns by nationality income group



Impact of paid internship on geographic distribution

Overall, only 32,5% of interns are paid, although this proportion varies greatly among the region of origin of the intern. As Table 7 shows, paid internships are more widespread for people coming from Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and South Asia. Conversely, except for interns coming from Middle East and North Africa (which are underrepresented in the survey), paid internships are less frequent for people coming from East Asia, North America and Europe and Central Asia. As such, it might be concluded that paid internships have a rebalancing effect on the distribution of interns in favour of those coming from underrepresented countries.

⁴³ Countries in the world by population (2018) worldometers, available at: <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-country/>



Region	Paid	Observations
East Asia & Pacific	15,79%	38
Europe & Central Asia	22,97%	148
Latin America & Caribbean	44,12%	34
Middle East & North Africa	0,00%	10
North America	16,98%	53
South Asia	35,71%	14
Sub-Saharan Africa	42,86%	14

Table 7 : Proportion of paid interns per country of origin

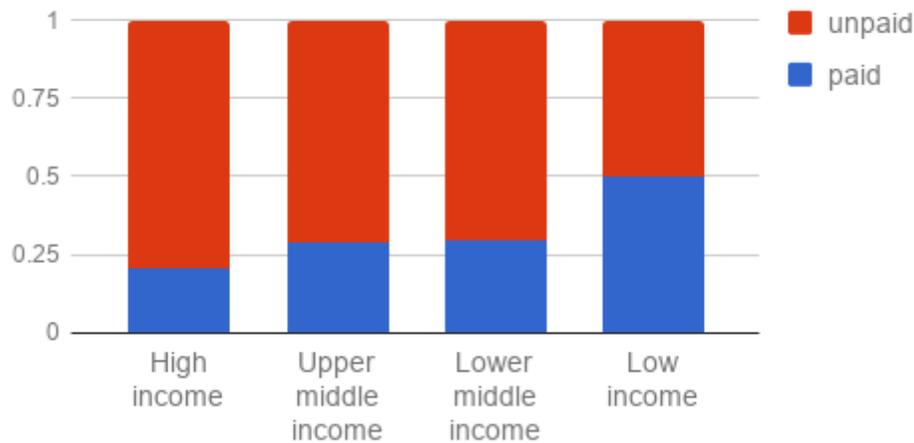
Table 8 further reinforce this observation as it reveals that interns coming from low income countries are the first beneficiaries of paid internship. Half of interns coming from these countries are paid. Given the high proportion of paid interns among lower income countries it might be expected that these interns would not be able to participate to the internship program without this financial support.

Country income group	Paid	Number of observation
High income	20,79%	202
Upper middle income	28,99%	69
Lower middle income	29,41%	34
Low income	50,00%	6

Table 8 : Proportion of paid interns according to the income-level of the country of origin



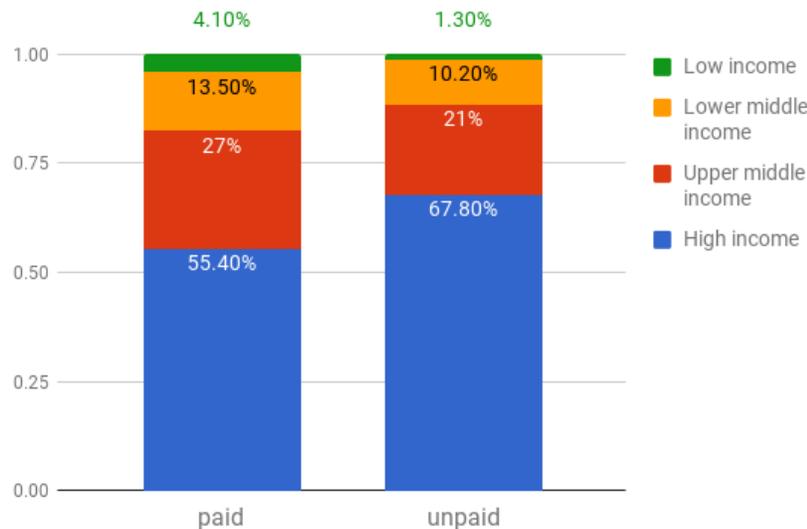
Distribution of UN interns by income level of country of nationality (paid vs. unpaid)



“I know many highly qualified people in my country for whom [this internship] would not have been an option.”

Reversing the analysis, we observe that paid interns are much more geographically diverse (in terms of country of nationality’s income group) than unpaid ones. Although interns from high-income countries remain the majority, among paid interns this amounts to 55.4%, while among unpaid ones to 67.8%. Such overwhelming majority of interns from affluent countries “crowds out” other groups, which are consistently less represented than in paid internships, as per below graph:

UN interns by nationality income group (paid v. unpaid)



Internship Duty Stations

A reason why so many interns are coming from high-income OECD countries could be that the majority of available UN internships are located in Europe or in the United States of America. The absence of any financial support to cover relocation and living costs favours the recruitment of people who already find themselves in the country or region where the internship takes place.

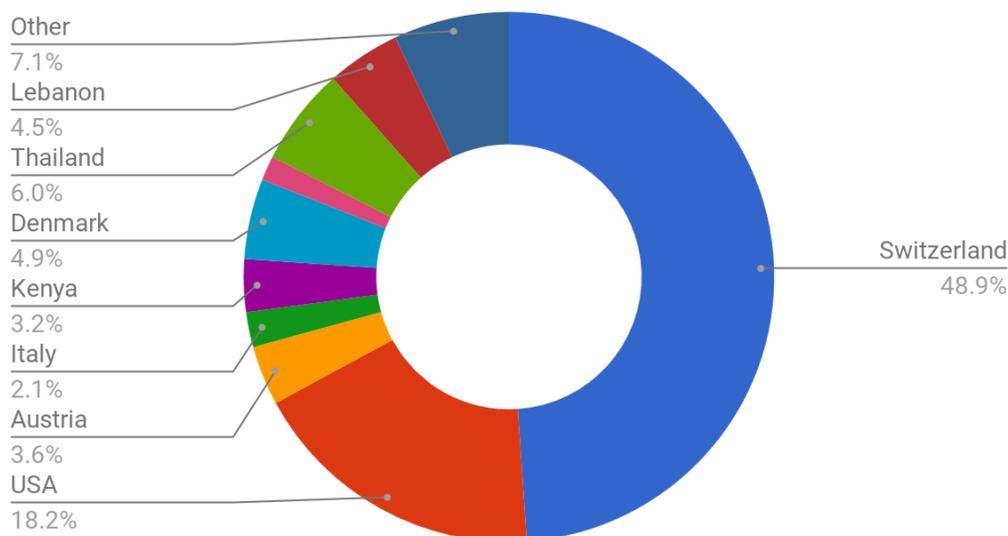


Moreover, hiring interns locally allows employers to fill vacancies at a very short notice, while candidates located elsewhere would understandably need additional time to relocate. Local hiring also contributes to the lack of geographic diversity among UN interns, as it appears from Table 3.

Region where the internship takes place	Number of respondents
Europe	298
North America	84
Asia	34
MENA (Middle East & North Africa)	22
Africa (Eastern, Middle, Southern, Western)	18
Latin America (Caribbean & South America)	9
Oceania/Australia	2

Table 3 : Number of respondents according to the country where the internship takes place

Distribution of respondents by duty station of the internship



As it appears, Switzerland is the most represented duty station with 49% of respondents having done their internship there, followed by the United States with 17%, these two countries being where the UN has its two of its main offices. In terms of statistical significance, it has to be noted that the survey sample over-represents UN interns in Geneva and under-represents interns in New York. Other important internship locations are Thailand (28), Denmark (23), Lebanon (21),



There is therefore a strong correlation between the geographic distribution of the internships and the region of origin of the intern, which can be explained to a good extent by the lack of financial support for most internships offered in the UN system.

Cost of relocations

Among the respondents, 60% had to move to another country in order to pursue the internship. Relocating can cause additional expenditures, such as temporary accommodation, visa fees, flight tickets, etc. Respondents estimate that they spend an average of US\$750.80 on relocation costs alone. These costs vary among countries where the internship is based. In addition, internships often take place in expensive cities in term of cost of living. The average relocation costs for countries that received more than 10 responses are presented in Table 4, these results are compared with the cost of living ranking as reported by Numbeo.

Country	Mean relocation costs in US\$	Cost of living rank ⁴⁴
Italy	1678	21th
United States	1002	25th
Switzerland	717	2nd
Thailand	672	60th
Austria	622	20th
Lebanon	590	37th
Kenya	558	87th
Denmark	446	7th

Table 4: Relocation cost per country where the internship takes place compared to the cost of living per country

These numbers reveal that, besides taking place in countries where the cost of living is the highest, most internships also require high relocation costs. Kenya and Thailand however, appear as the rare places where both relocation and living costs are relatively low.

Immigration requirements

For some interns, relocation also implies applying for a work permit. Here too, there are important discrepancies among countries where the internship takes place. For instance, only 16% of the

⁴⁴ Cost of Living Index for Country (2018) Numbeo, available at https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/rankings_by_country.jsp it should be noted that data in Numbeo are crowd-sourced and that their reliability is sometimes challenged.



interns who worked in Austria needed a work permit while this proportion raises to 66% for those who worked in Thailand.

Country where the internship is based	Percent of interns who needed a work permit
Thailand	66,6%
Lebanon	50,0%
Italy	44,4%
United States	41,6%
Switzerland	41,3%
Kenya	40,0%
Denmark	20,0%
Austria	16,6%

Table 5 : Proportion of interns who need a work permit according to the country where the internship takes place

Of course, these figures need to be read in conjunction with the data on interns' nationality presented above. Table 6 presents an overview by regions of origin:

Region of origin	Percentage of interns who needed a work permit
East Asia & Pacific	54,0%
Europe & Central Asia	21,3%
Latin America & Caribbean	55,8%
Middle East & North Africa	44,4%
North America	38,4%
South Asia	78,5%
Sub-Saharan Africa	38,4%

Table 6: Proportion of interns who need a work permit according to their country of origin

Interns coming from both South Asia and Asia-Pacific are those that are most often required to apply for a work permit, while only about a quarter of European, north Americans and sub-saharan Africans needed such immigration document for their work. This is possibly another factor undermining the representativeness of some countries.



“I used my savings to come to Geneva, and will probably get unemployed without any social insurance. Also, it is quite difficult to invest in a career in International Organisations coming from developing countries. Not only money, but visa requirements hinder the opportunity of more equal opportunities. The recent reduction of the time that an intern can stay in Switzerland after the internship (from 2 months to 2 weeks) is a clear reflection of such inequalities.”

Conclusions

There are several obstacles to UN interns’ geographic diversity: most internships take place in countries where the cost of living is high (Geneva and New York are among the most expensive cities in the world), especially for people from lower-income countries. Moreover, prospective applicants from these countries often face stricter immigration requirements. As such, although the UN is hosting interns from all continents, only those from developed or newly developed countries are in fact represented. The only factor that appears to enhance the representativeness of people from less developed countries is paid internships.

For most of the above factors, the landscape will not change much in the future: immigration requirements are expected to keep being restrictive for nationals of developing countries and international organizations will continue to be mainly based in some of the most expensive cities at least for the next decade. Notwithstanding, improving the financial support provided to interns might well be a realistic and quick way to help nationals from southern countries to access internships in international organizations.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ United Nations (1996), p. 17, par. 52.



2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISTRIBUTION

Costs of living and availability of adequate financial resources are two deciding factors for a young graduate to commit to an internship at an international organization. Taking on an unpaid or underpaid internship could impose significant financial burdens to those coming from underprivileged socio-economic backgrounds. Such costs can be absolutely prohibitive for a considerable number of people - notably those from lower and low-middle class, as well as those from developing countries. It is impossible to quantify the “non-interns”, namely the “silent mass” of young people would not even consider applying due to their and their family’s inability to sustain the considerable costs associated with a UN internship. Nevertheless, the present chapter attempts to assess the effect of unpaid internships on socio-economic diversity of UN interns, reviewing the claim that paid internships increase accessibility of internship opportunities for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Internship stipends

Only a few UN organizations provide financial support to their interns through some form of stipend. A short overview is provided below:

Organization ⁴⁶	Monthly amount	Notes
ILO	CHF 2,200	Amount for HQ, in field offices it varies
UNOPS	10-15% of DSA ⁴⁷ x 30	Only if intern is not national/resident
WIPO	CHF 500 - 2,000	Depending on educational level
WTO	CHF 1,800	Daily amount of CHF 60
WFP	10% DSA X 30 (max USD 1,000)	The amount is tied to the DSA but is capped.
FAO	USD 700	Programme under review, may be abolished
UNITAR	CHF 700	
IOM	CHF 650 - 1,800	Depending on education and country of origin
UNICEF	It varies, generally low	Depending on funds and duty station

⁴⁶ A full list can be accessed at: <http://fairinternshipinitiative.org>

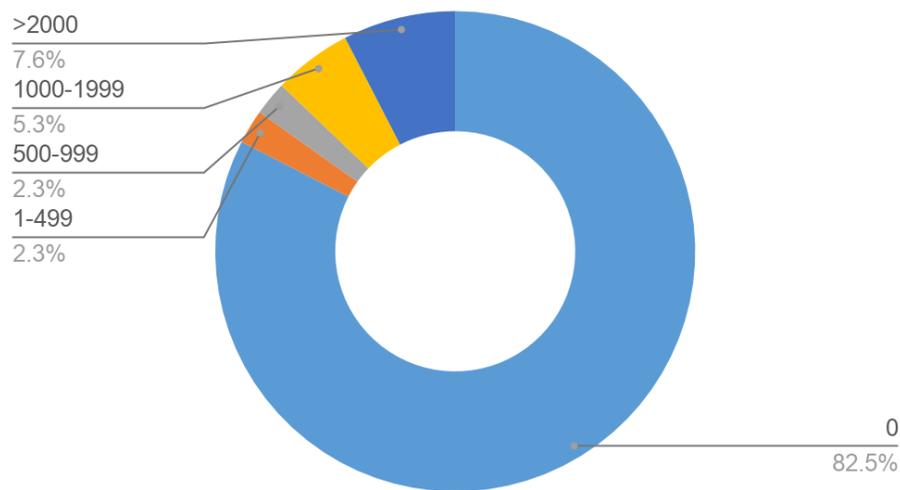
⁴⁷ Daily subsistence allowance



The survey results show that 83% of the interns have received no financial support at all from their host organizations. The rest received some form of stipend, ranging widely from US\$75 to US\$4,200 per month (in one single case).

83% of the UN interns have received no financial support at all from their host organization

How much did you receive from the hosting organization? (US\$ per month)



External finances

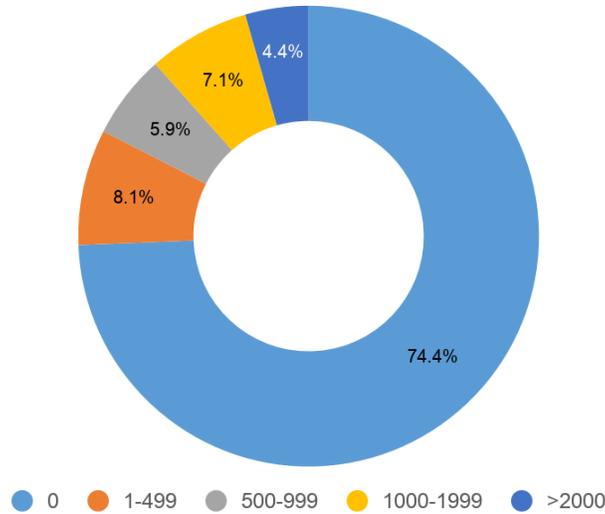
Especially when the host organization does not provide any financial aid, or when the stipend is insufficient to cover living costs, interns are forced to seek financial assistance from external institutions such as universities, governments, and scholarship schemes. The alleged ubiquity of external sponsoring schemes is often cited by official UN sources as a “mitigating factor” vis-a-vis the discriminatory effect of its unpaid internships scheme.⁴⁸ However, contrary to this commonly held belief, the percentage of interns who are able to access second or third party financing is only 24.78% of total surveyed interns. The rest are left entirely on their own.

Contrary to a common belief, only 24.78% of UN interns are able to access external sources of finance.

⁴⁸ See for instance former UN secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s declaration at the Graduate Institute of International Studies of Geneva on 3 October 2016: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w39ubL7polc>

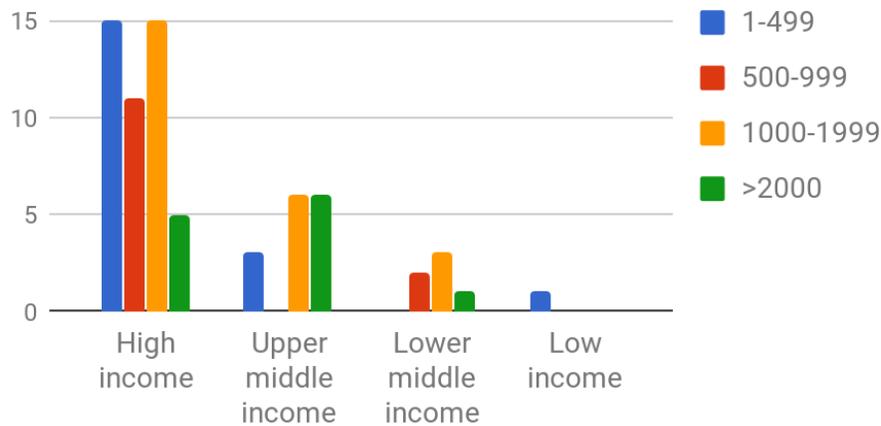


How much did you receive from an external sponsor? (US\$ per month)



Moreover, external sources of finance seem to be available mainly for interns from high-income countries, as it is usually in those countries that universities, governments, foundations, etc. possess sufficient resources to finance such schemes. It follows that - even when external sources of funds are relied upon, as recommended by official UN sources - they tend to reinforce rather than mitigate geographic disparities.

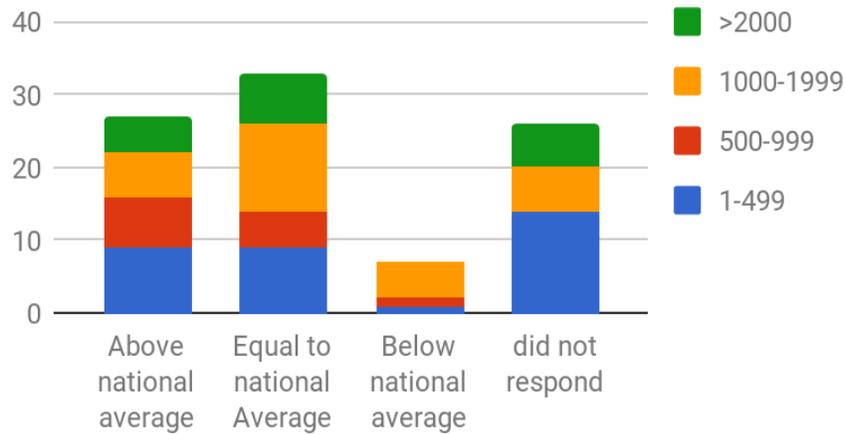
External sponsor financing by income of country of nationality (absolute numbers)



A similar effect can be observed in terms of accessibility of external sources of finance by potential applicants from low-income families. Absolute numbers show that interns coming from a household with below-than-average income are considerably less likely to obtain external financing sources (7 respondents versus 27 from above-than-average income households and 33 average income households).

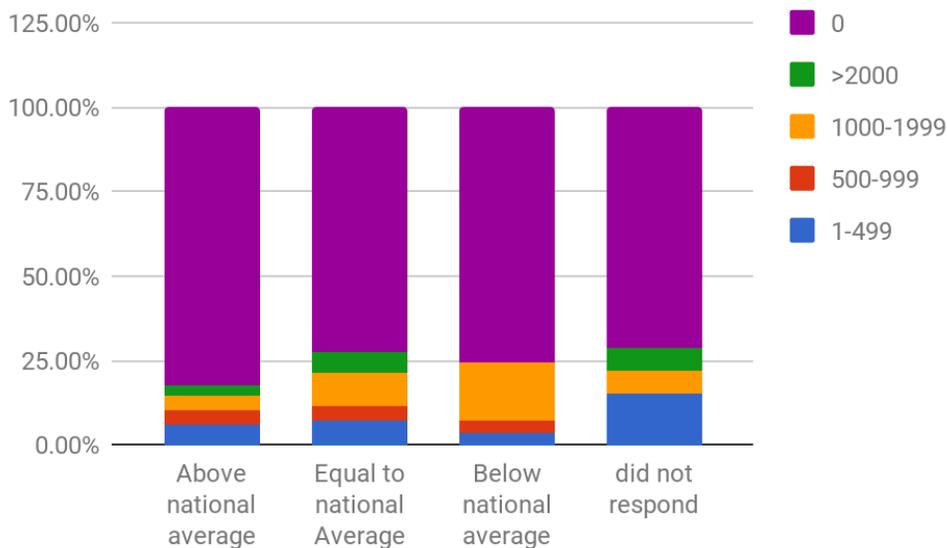


External sponsor financing by family relative income
(absolute number of respondents)



When accounting for the relatively smaller size of interns from below-than-average households (by converting absolute numbers in percentages of each income group), two things become apparent: first, there is no differentiation in the likelihood of an individual coming from a below-average income household to receive external funding than an individual coming from an equal-to-national-average income household; second, candidates from below-average income households are much more dependent than any other income group on the amount of the support received, showing that most of them need to receive at least US\$ 1,000 (although exact amounts depend from duty station) in order to be able to be UN interns. Amounts received by other income groups are more heterogeneous, as it is safe to assume that those from higher economic status are able to integrate the smaller external finances with own of family's existing assets.

External sponsor financing by family relative income (% for each income group)



Family Background

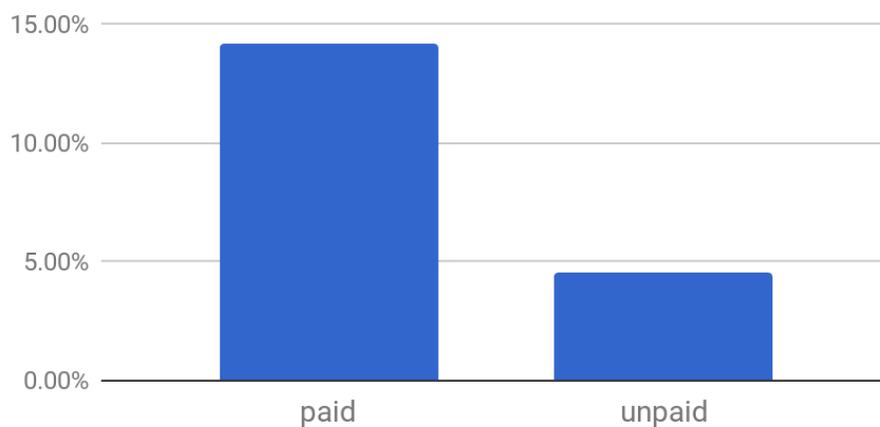
Even in cases where interns are paid, stipends are unlikely to cover interns' costs of living. In fact, as high as two thirds (64.03%) of the surveyed interns earn less than they spend during their time as an intern, meaning that they have been forced to resort to other means of financing over the duration of their internships. These external means of financing include savings (for those who have worked prior to interning) loans (for those whose credit and/or family's credit are sufficiently high), second jobs taken in tandem with their internship to support daily costs (often in the informal economy due to visa restrictions), and, most commonly, family contributions.

Lack of financial support can impose significant barriers for those coming from underprivileged family backgrounds to enter a career in international organizations. To gauge the survey respondents' family backgrounds, we use a number of proxies:

1. Self-declared income of parents/household as above, equal to or below national average
2. Educational level of parents.
3. Question on whether they would have been able to afford the internships without family support.

The first proxy, although somewhat unreliable due to its subjectivity and the high number of people who did not respond,⁴⁹ shows a distinct difference between paid and unpaid internships in terms of representativeness of interns who declare their parents' income as "below national average". Quite dramatically, the participation of economically less privileged people in unpaid UN internships is 3.5 times lower than in paid ones (respectively 4.5% and 14.1% of total number of interns).

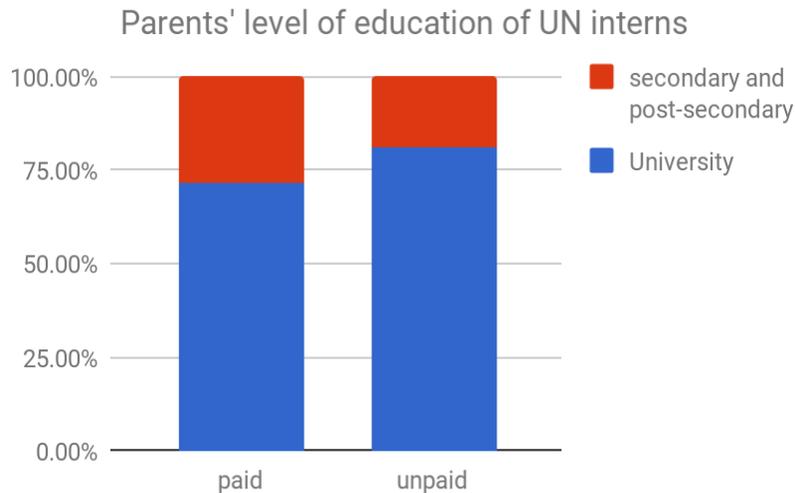
Percentage of UN interns who describe their parents' level of income as "below national average"



The second proxy assumes that the higher the parents' education levels, the more well-off the families are likely to be in order to support their children to undertake unpaid or under-paid internships. Survey results show a disproportionate distribution of the education levels of parents: university degree holders (undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate) take up 71.2% while

⁴⁹ 166 out of 470 did not respond

parents who received secondary and/or post-secondary education are only 18.5%. The proportion is even more skewed for unpaid UN internships, where 75% of participants come well-educated families, while paid interns have university-educated parents in 60% of cases.



As per the third proxy, allegedly the most reliable one, 76.4% of all respondents have indicated that they would not be able to pursue the internship without financial support from families; 30.10% have taken on a second job to finance their stay for internships.

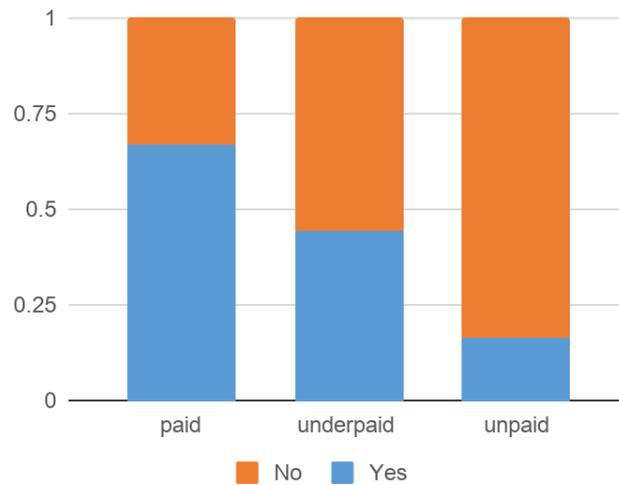
76.4% would not be able to pursue the internship without financial support from families

Once broken down by the amount of economic support provided to interns by the UN organization they work for, the picture is clear: while only 16.5% of unpaid interns would have been able to afford the internship without family's economic support, this same figure is more than 4 times higher for paid interns, 68.4% of which received sufficient funds to be economically independent from their families. Low-paid internships are somewhere in-between, with 43.2% who could have afforded the internship without family support.

This finding is extremely important. If we take economic dependency from family as a proxy value to assess the economic status of the intern's household (whereby wealthier families are more likely to be able to support interns than poorer ones), then the analysis empirically shows that paid internships do have a considerably positive effect on socio-economic diversity, allowing young people to participate in UN internships even when their family would not necessarily be able to financially support them.



Would you be able to do this internship without financial support from your family?



“my family are wealthy enough to support me”

“I am privileged enough to be able to have my family pay for me to be here. It is a privileged person's internship and it's not fair.”

“I am lucky enough that my parents can support me without any problems”

Financial difficulties caused by unpaid UN internships

As high as 47.5% of the respondents have reported that their internships have either caused financial difficulties or affected their living conditions. Taking on internships at international organizations has undermined the financial security for more than every 2 out of 5 interns.

“My parents are approaching retirement but had to work extra hours to support me. My family struggles financially.”

“My parent (a single mother) had to cut down on buying basic living commodities just to offer support for the first few months.”

“I took out a loan [to do this internship]. The internship has created conflicts with members of my family, because of money.”

“I took one year off between a bachelors and my masters to work two full-time jobs (one in an HR office and another bartending) in order to make the money necessary for the second unpaid internship. Otherwise, FAFSA⁵⁰ granted me a loan for the masters program, which beyond tuition allowed me 1k per month expenditures during my studies plus the first internship.”



⁵⁰ US Federal Student Aid

26.6% of interns need to take a second job during weekends or in the evening to cover their expenses during a UN internship, often in the informal economy and in violation of host country's immigration rules.

"Working on the weekends is mandatory otherwise you won't make it"

"I had no sleep because I was either interning or working to cover my expenses, so I was working about 80-100 hours a week one paid and the other non-paid"

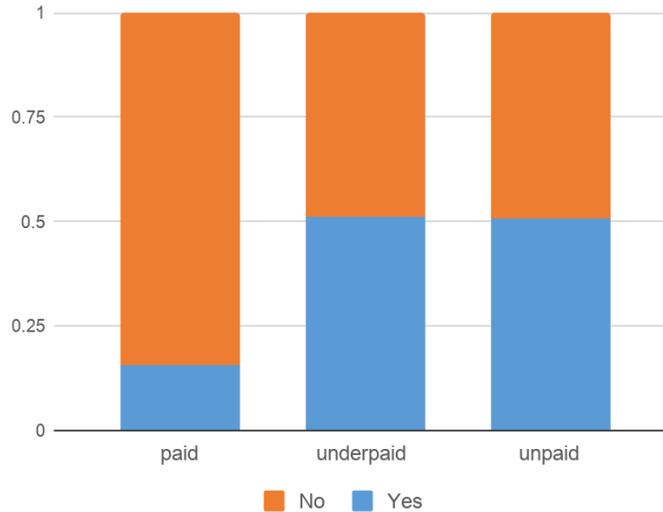
Once again, segregation of values by the financial treatment of interns by the UN organization they work for shows a distinct trend: as common sense would suggest, paid internships are much less likely to cause financial distress to interns and their families, with only 15.8% of paid interns reporting financial difficulties due to their internship. However, most interestingly, both unpaid and under-paid internships cause financial distress to roughly half of the interns. Such finding confirms that under-paid internships (namely when the financial support provided is not sufficient to cover basic living expenses) do not necessarily alleviate financial pressure on interns and their families. In fact, the effect of insufficiently small stipends seems to be null on the amount of financial insecurity caused by the internship. On the contrary, the risk of providing an insufficiently small of an amount to interns (as in the case of most UN organizations with the exceptions of ILO, WIPO and a few others), is that it may have instead a regressive effect: in other words, it would simply provide a contribution to those interns who would in any case be able to afford the experience regardless of the stipend, while those with insufficient financial means - even with the partial support received - would still be unable to take a UN internship, as a considerable part of their expenses would still remain uncovered.

50.6% of unpaid interns and 15.8% of paid interns report financial difficulties due to their UN internship

"I'm living in Paris where flat[s] are very expensive (comparing to the rest of France). If my parents weren't financially supporting me, I wouldn't be able to have any activities apart from basic living cost. I'm very grateful I [was] born in a family that is able to do so, but it's absolutely unfair to those students who don't. I also think it's unfair that even working 40 hours a week for 6 months, I still can't pay for all expenses of my life. This is hidden work anyway and I don't believe that internship is always 'a chance' as we're supposed to think."



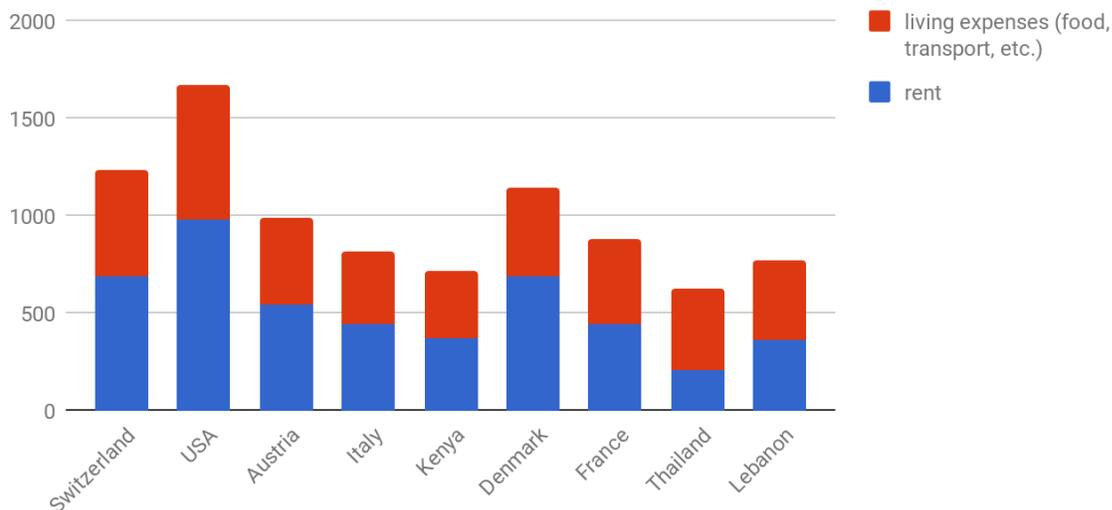
Does/ did your internship cause you, or those supporting you, any financial difficulties or affect your/their living conditions?



Living costs

Survey results show that for those who do not receive any form of stipend, private contributions to afford doing internships may go up to US\$ 907.84 per month on a global average. In two of the most popular internship locations, Switzerland and the US, where the UN is headquartered, respective averages rise up to US\$ 1,300 and US\$ 1,670 per month. This can be an imposing financial burden for young professionals with little or no financial resources of their own.

Money spent per month (in US\$) on basic living expenses



As expected, Switzerland (Geneva) and the United States (New York) are the most expensive locations, as well as those hosting the largest number of interns. Denmark (Copenhagen) follows with an average living cost of US\$ 1,150 per month. Perhaps unsurprisingly, rent costs



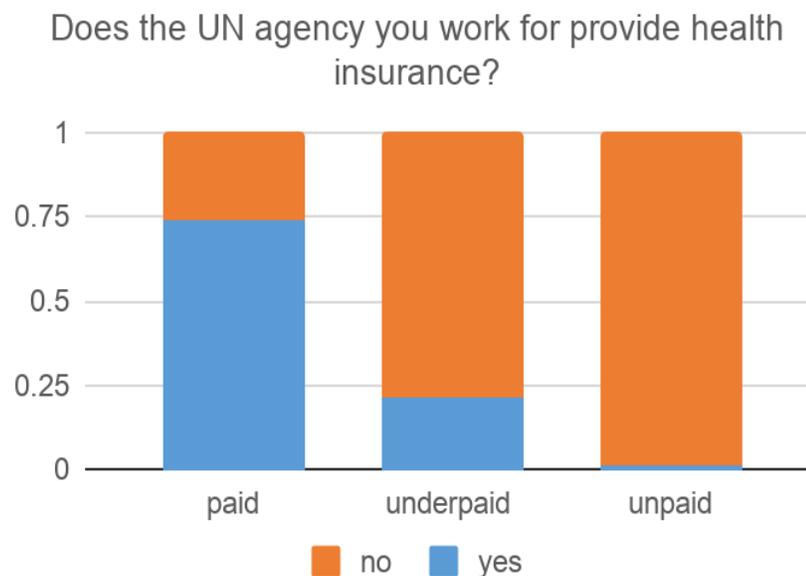
represent in all cases apart from Thailand (Bangkok) and Lebanon (Beirut) the largest share of the costs that interns have to bear.

“I had to come and live in Paris for this internship. I had a few friends but I could not stay too long in their apartment. I had to find precarious housing and to live with strangers sometimes ill-intentioned but with my salary I had no choice.”

Healthcare

In addition to the lack of sufficient financial support to interns, host organizations also show a general lack of willingness to protect interns' welfare, exemplified by the fact that only 12.3% of the interns receive financial contributions from employers to cover health insurance costs. Lack of health coverage, especially in locations such as Switzerland and the United States where costs can be considerably high, clearly affects interns' well-being and further increases their financial as well as health risks.

“[I had] no money for health insurance or to save for emergency, [which] caused high levels of stress and anxiety.”



Paid internships, however, besides providing a living stipend, are also much more likely to contribute to intern's health insurance costs. This is notably the case of ILO, which foresees a specific contribution on top of the interns' stipend to partially cover health insurance. Unpaid ones, on the other hand, never provide any support for insurance against accidents, illness or injuries, which has to be borne entirely by the intern. Somewhat paradoxically, this is also the case of the World Health Organization, which actively campaigns for universal health coverage, while it provides no support whatsoever to cover health insurance to its interns and volunteers.

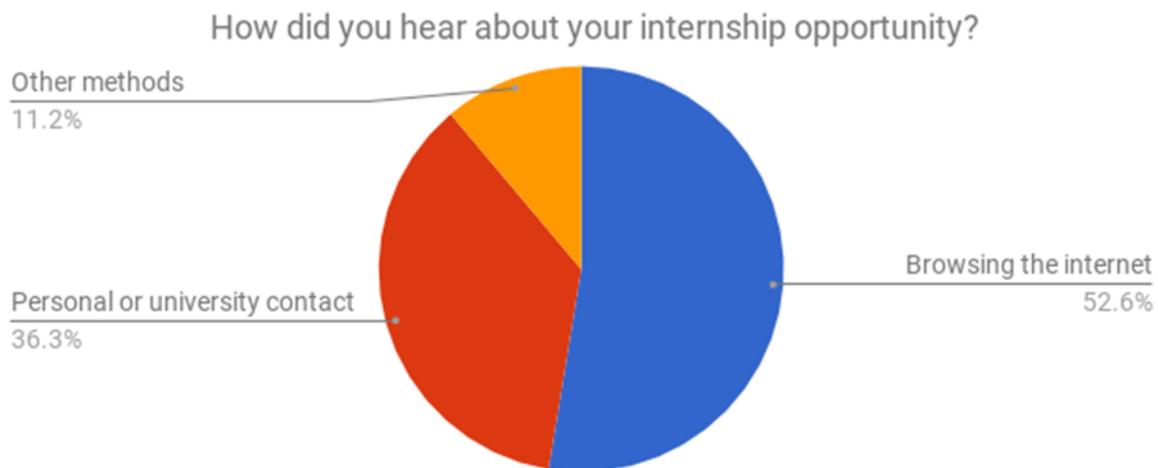


3. THE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

In the absence of detailed UN-wide regulations and consistent accountability mechanisms, internships experiences can differ widely depending on multiple factors. These include, but are not limited to the accessibility of the internship; the type of organisation in which the internship is being conducted; the intern supervisor's expectations and attitude; and the availability of training and support for interns. The survey highlighted a wide range of intern experiences at all stages of the internship from the application, preparation and induction stages, through to expectations and responsibilities during the internship.

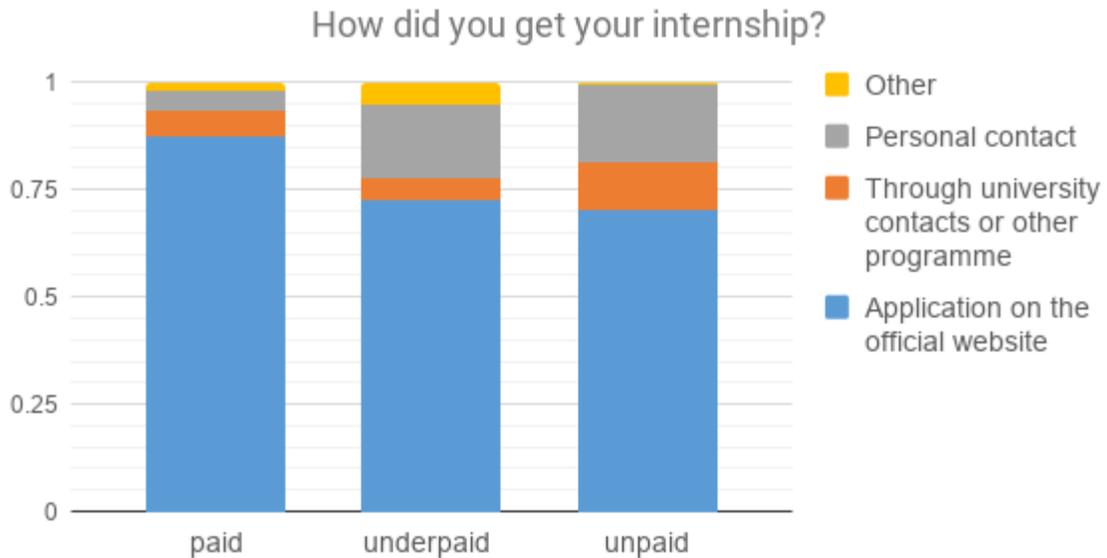
Route to internship

From the survey respondents, the most common method for hearing about their internship opportunity was through browsing the internet (52.6%). Personal contacts (knowing someone who had done the internship before, knowing other students from their university and from having relatives who work in international environments) were used by 36.3% of respondents. However, these were not the only routes to the internship. 11.2% of respondents heard about the opportunity through "other" methods, which were most commonly through networking at a conference or job fair; through a recommendation from a professor; through a university programme and/or website; or through contacting the agency directly (including contacting the desired team within the organisation).



Despite the wide variety of methods of advertising of internship opportunities, the majority of successful internship applications occurred through an official website application (61.7%). Less transparent methods remain however highly popular, such as personal contacts (18.9%) or university contacts (13.9%). However, when looking more closely at paid compared to unpaid positions, only 14.5% of the paid internships were found through unofficial pathways compared to a staggering 30% of unpaid internships which were found externally of the official organisation's website (largely through informal personal contacts). Unpaid internships, mostly due to their

poorer governance, are therefore considerably more likely to be subject to informal arrangements and favouritism.

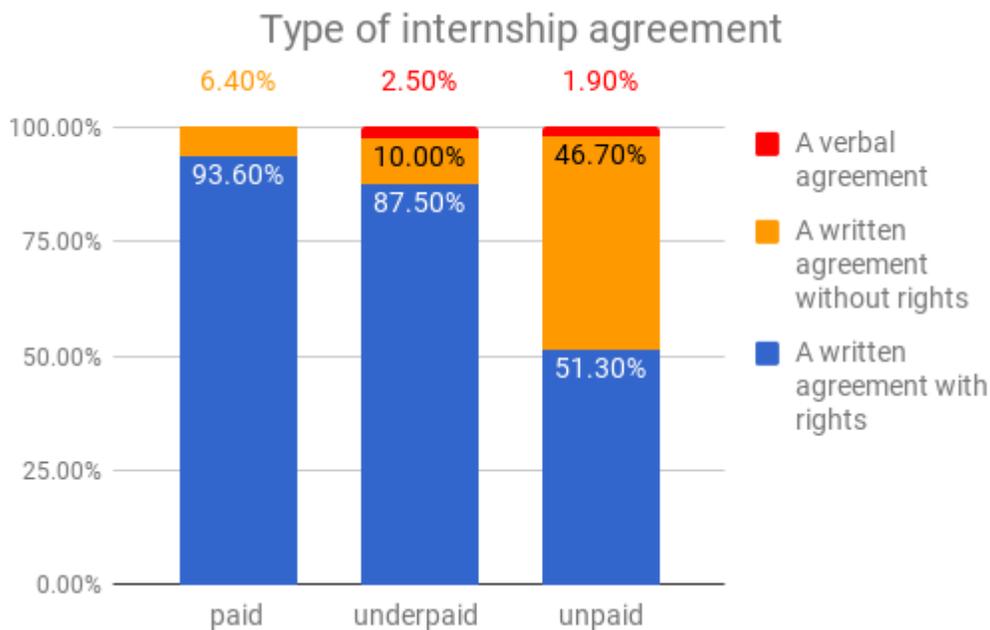


Internship agreements

A formalized agreement in written form with clear provisions on rights and entitlement (including leave days, sick leave, insurance, remuneration when present, etc.) is fundamental for a transparent working relation and the protection of the fundamental rights of young people. The survey data show that a written agreement was provided in most cases (only 1.7% - all from underpaid or unpaid internship schemes – claim to only have concluded a “verbal agreement”). However, a surprising 37.1% of respondents stated that despite the agreement being written, it did not contain any indication on their rights and entitlements (including leave days, sick leave, insurance, protection from harassment, access to justice, etc.). This is radically more dramatic for unpaid interns, who report the lack of any formalization of their rights and entitlements in nearly half of the cases. The real percentage is likely to be even higher, as the template for all internships at the UN secretariat provided in administrative instruction ST/AI/2014/1⁵¹ only states what interns are *not* entitled to, while remaining silent on any entitlements, rights and guarantees. This regulatory vacuum exposes interns to any sort of potential arbitrary treatment. A number of abuses have been documented by the Fair Internship Initiatives, such as the negation of the right to take leave or sick days. Documented cases include UNAKRT as well as WHO. In the latter, unpaid interns are not allowed days off, and even when these are exceptionally granted, they are required to work overtime to recover the lost hours.

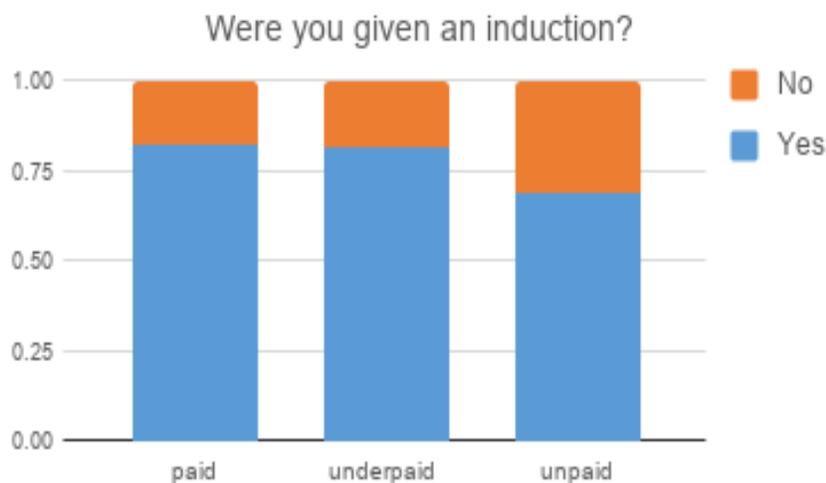
41 *48.7% of unpaid interns have no clear rights or entitlements in their internship agreement.*

⁵¹ United Nations Secretariat (2014).



Induction process

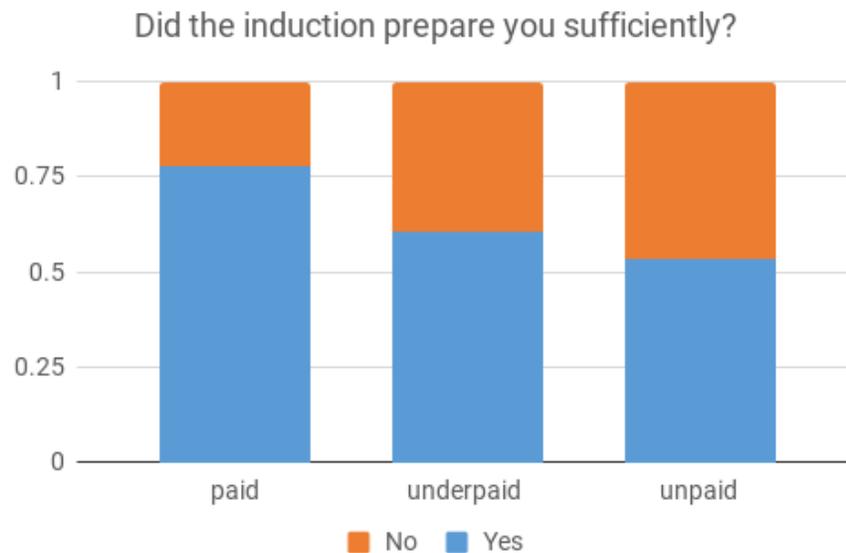
In its 2009 review of the internship programme of the United Nations system, the UN Joint Inspection Unit highlighted that “an orientation programme should be organized upon arrival to provide interns with the relevant administrative information to successfully and efficiently integrate them into the organization.”⁵² Nevertheless, as of 2017 only 70.5% of respondents had an induction at the start of their internship. Such figure is quite divergent between paying institutions and non-paying ones. While 82.2% of paid interns received an induction, only 68.7% of unpaid ones did. Moreover, it is noteworthy to mention that in the majority of cases the induction was self-organized by intern groups, rather than provided by the hosting institution.



Among those who did have an induction only 56.6% believed this induction suitably prepared them for their internship. The remaining respondents did not feel sufficiently prepared for their

⁵² United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (2009).

internship, due to the absence of, or an ineffective, induction process. Stark differences exist, once again, between paying and not paying UN institutions, whereby paying ones provide an induction twice as effective as the one offered by non-paying ones. A possible explanation for such differences is the more highly formalized and structured nature of the internship programme at paying UN organizations, while the non-financial nature of all the others makes the whole process and organization more informal and less supervised.



Internship expectations and duties

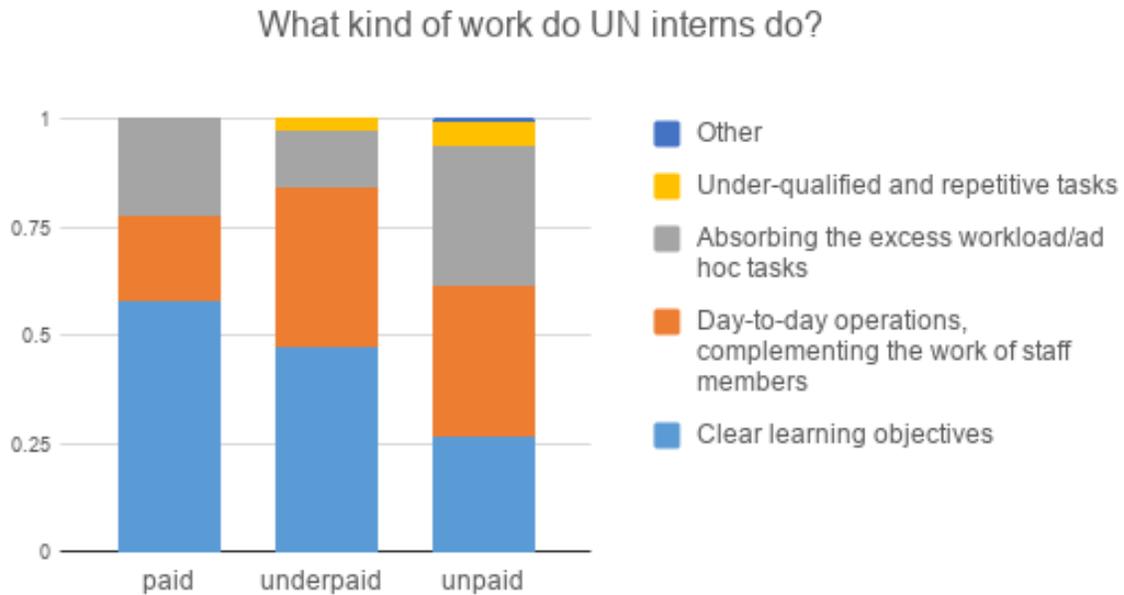
Partially because of the lack of a clear learning programme, and partially due to insufficient organization by the hosting department, the expectations of an internship are often unclear. Only 33% of respondents had clear objectives to be achieved by the end of their internship. The remaining respondents either contributed to the day-to-day operations and complemented the work of staff members (32.8%), absorbed excess workload tasks from their team (29%), or completed repetitive and unqualified tasks such as print jobs and coffee runs (4.4%).

67% did not have clear objectives to be achieved by the end of their internship.

Many respondents did not feel they had opportunities to learn or develop skills, or that they had a learning experience but rather provided additional support from their team, in a consultancy or full-time staff type role, without the appropriate salary or rights and entitlements. This evidence strongly contrasts with the stated objective of UN internships, namely to be only a “learning experience”. This is especially relevant, as the purely “learning” nature of the programme is brought as one of the main justifications as to why most UN institutions provide no financial support to interns.

The situation seems to be clearly worse for unpaid interns than for paid ones. While the former group reports to have clear learning objectives in 57.8% of cases, the latter is of the same opinion only in 26.6% of cases, with underpaid interns being somewhere in the middle (47.4%). Moreover,

unpaid interns are considerably more likely to perform under-qualified and repetitive tasks (5%) than paid ones (0%).

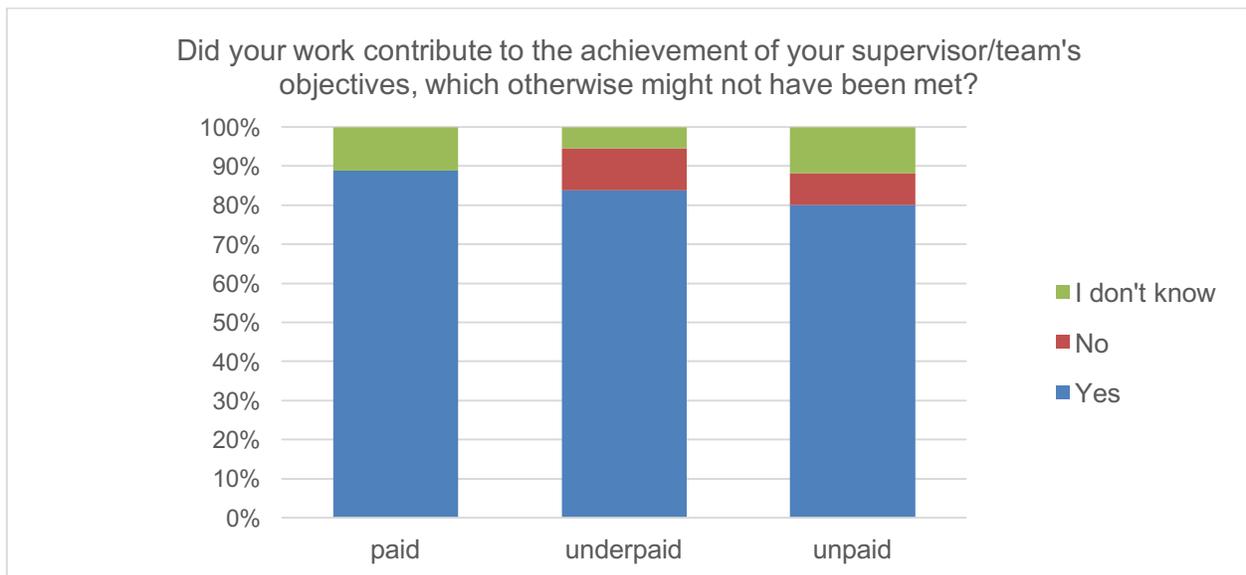


“The internship was not intern-oriented, and was not focused [on] acquir[ing] new skills, despite in the call for application it stated something different.”

*“I was **doing the work equal to consultancy tasks** which is great since I could put great accomplishments on my CV. Still, I consider this not to be appropriate for unpaid work.”*

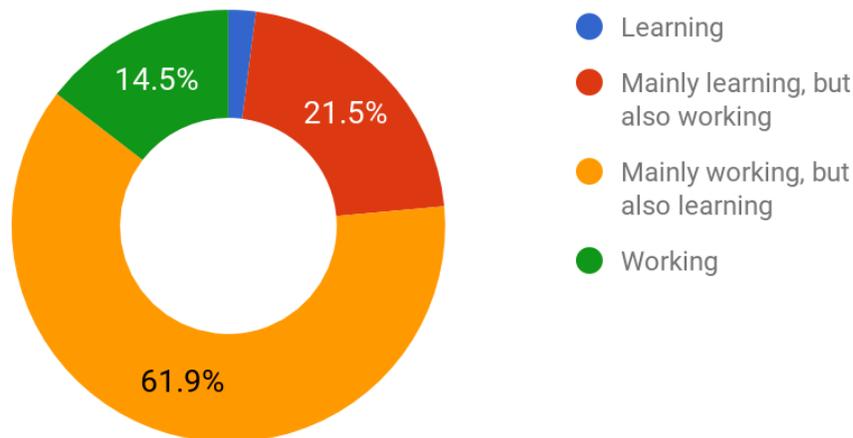
In contrast to the idea that internships represent merely a “learning experience”, empirical evidence shows that in the majority of cases the difference in contributions to the work of the team between interns and other staff members seems to exist only on paper. In fact, respondents overwhelmingly (81%) state that they contributed to their overall team’s objectives that might otherwise not have been met, suggesting that interns in the UN do indeed discharge core functions rather than merely engage in a “learning experience”. UN organization that pay interns a living allowance are marginally more likely to have them performing key tasks, while underpaid and unpaid interns respectively present 10.5% and 8.1% likelihood of having no key role in the team.





The survey analyses interns' experiences whilst also differentiating between the terms 'learning' and 'working' experiences. 'Learning' is defined as gaining new skills, expertise, and greater knowledge relevant to the field of work. A 'working' experience defines the use of existing skills and expertise to contribute to the work of the organization that can be delivered by staff members. 76.5% of respondents felt they were working (with 61.9% mainly working with a little bit of learning, while the remaining 14.5% were working only); less than one quarter (21.5%) felt they were "mainly learning while also working", while a mere 2% felt they were learning only. This claim seems to be confirmed by the negative correlation between the rapid and robust increase in the number of unpaid interns in the past decade and the decrease in junior positions⁵³.

A learning or a working experience?



"Have represented the organization alone at meetings all around Geneva assemblies and committee meetings alone. Very high level of trust in my

⁵³ See introduction, paragraph on UN interns

abilities, and am not treated like an intern, as such - more of a team member who happens to get paid a lot less."

*"No staff is present, **only interns doing the tasks**"*

*"I sat in several meetings where we would be discussing upcoming work, and a paid staff member would say something along the lines of "we've got all the inputs to get started on [task], but that's on hold because my intern doesn't start until October" suggesting that key **work streams are dependent on intern labour.**"*

*"Work is relevant and challenging, sometimes we are **treated like staff in terms of obligations but not rights and entitlement to respect.**"*

Working hours

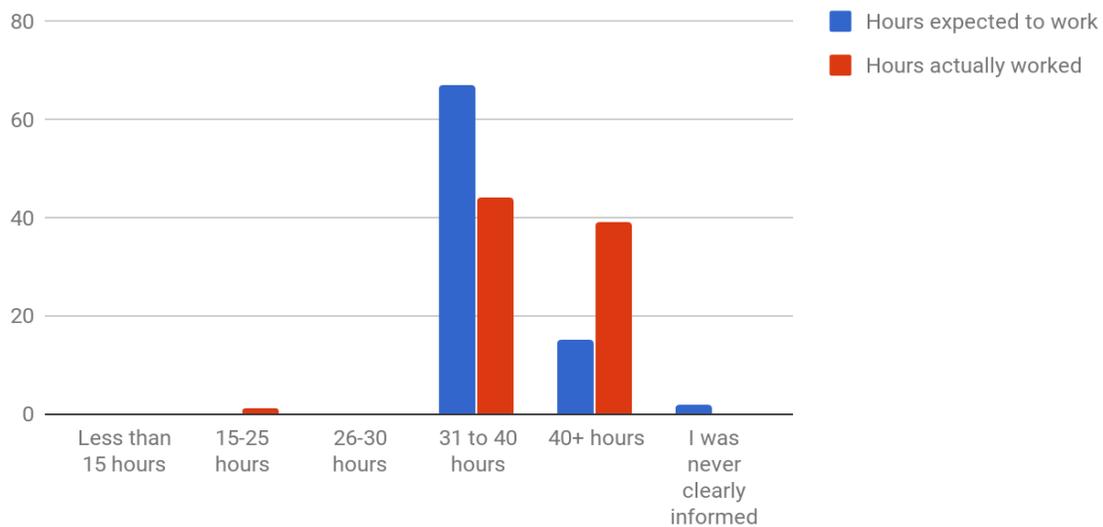
The length of internships ranged from less than 2 months to more than 6 months, with the majority of internships lasting between 3 and 6 months (63.1%). 79.2% of respondents stated they were expected to work 31-40 hours per week, with only 60.7% of all respondents actually working that many hours. 34% often worked more than 40 hours a week, while a small minority (5%) worked less than 31 hours per week.

*"I often had **to stay late to cover the work of paid staff members** because my department could not afford to pay them for overtime. During these instances, I wasn't requested to stay past my official working hours but just expected or told."*

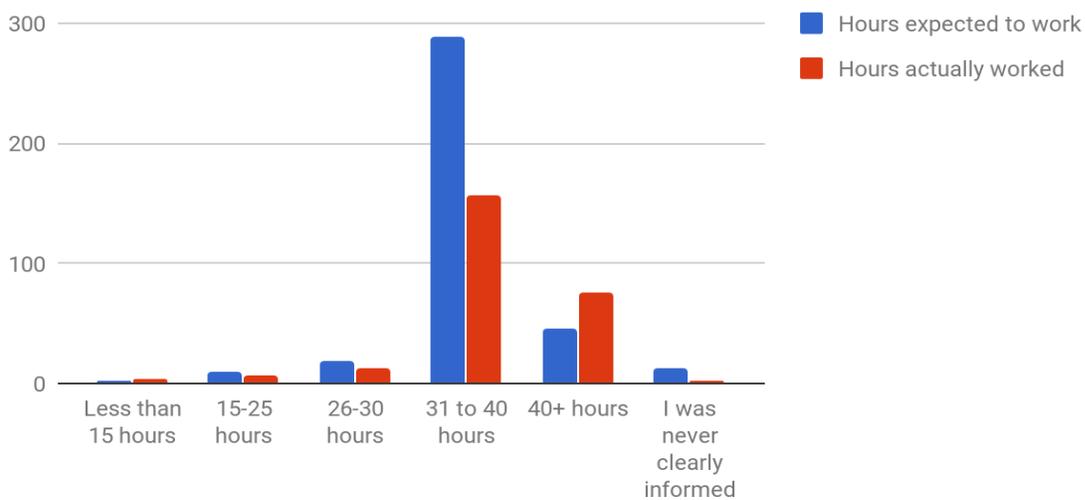
Delving deeper into these numbers, of those who worked as a paid intern, 52.4% answered that they actually worked 31-40 hours a week and 46.4% actually worked 40+ hours a week. Understandably, the answers differ from those who did unpaid internships. 29.7% worked 40+ hours while 61.3% worked 31-40 hours a week. It is interesting to note that of those who did unpaid internships, 0.8% were never clearly informed on how many hours they should spend at their internship. Paid interns seem, on average, to work overtime more often (23%) than unpaid ones (15%), but less often than under-paid ones (30%).



How many hours paid interns are expected to work versus hours actually worked.



How many hours unpaid interns are expected to work versus hours actually worked.



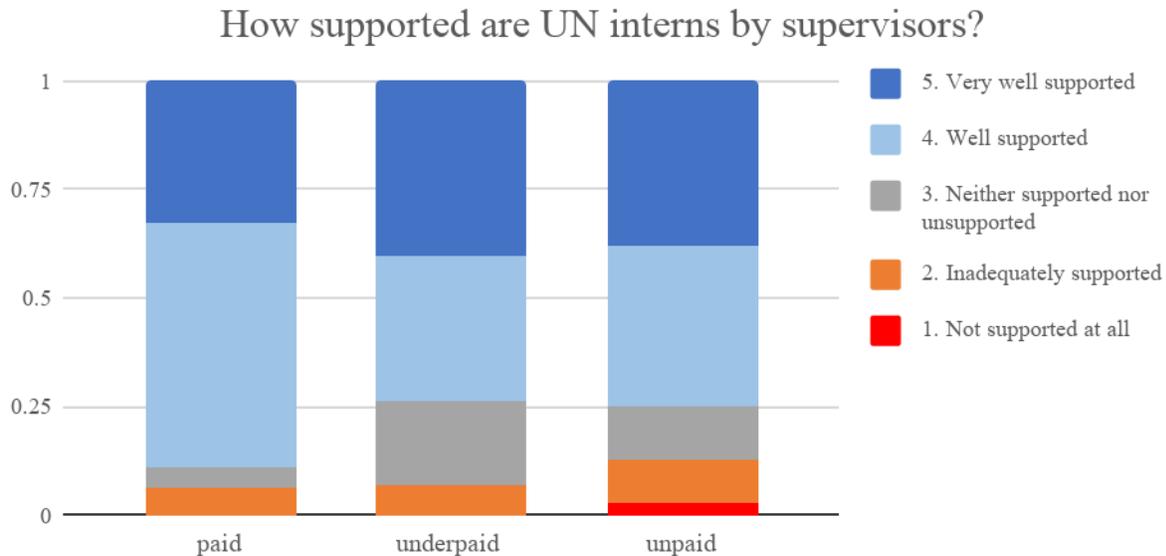
*“There **wasn't enough desk space**, so interns were asked to rotate a lot and **interns with different supervisors were treated very differently**. Some had to pull all-nighters, some were very considerate and could take days off when they felt like it.”*



Supervision and feedback

The internship experience is largely determined by the attitude, guidance and support provided by the supervisor, and their willingness to prioritise your work and overall goals. Only 66.98% of all respondents felt very well or well supported by their supervisor during their internship.

33.02% did not feel adequately supported by their supervisor.



Respondents had a very wide range of experiences from fully supportive supervisors who prioritised feedback and mentorship, to those who were unclear of who their direct supervisor(s) was or whose supervisor was absent from the office for the entire duration of their internship. Those who did unpaid internships were more twice more likely to feel inadequately supported or entirely unsupported by their supervisor.

“I was lucky to work with a supervisor who very much was focused on training her intern(s). I noticed early that this was not the case for every intern at the organization.”

“The director of my team did not even now I work being unpaid. Sad.”

Many felt their supervisor did not have a clear idea of how to teach and support an intern, with many supervisors “too busy” with their own work to be capable of supervising an intern.

“I only met my boss once in the 6 months I was there. She never bothered to even ask my name or shake my hand.”

A large majority were trusted with work which contributed to the teams' objectives, however felt they were not sufficiently invested in their learning or training regarding their future career, but rather treated as regular staff members without the appropriate respect, salary or career progression.

"I felt valued because I did work for them, but did not feel like I was being encouraged to grow."

"I often had nothing specific to do and was mostly left to occupy myself, thus I did not feel very useful and did not learn nearly as much as I hoped I would."

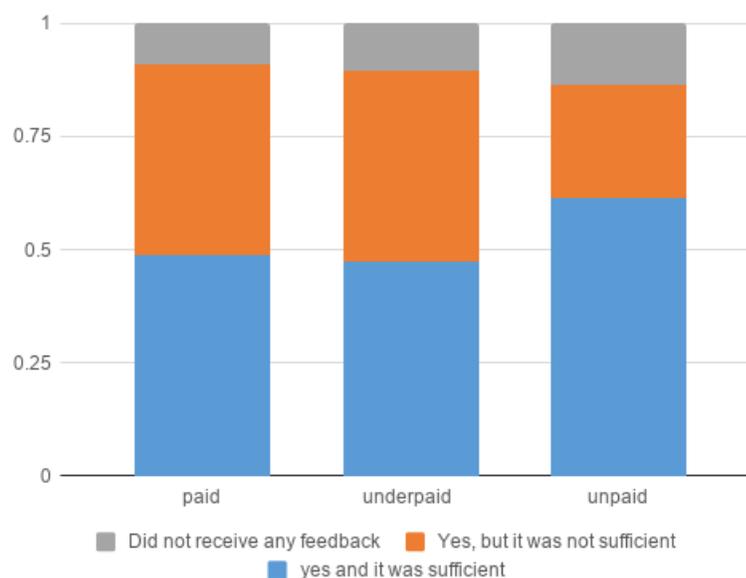
"I often had to stay late to cover the work of paid staff members because my department could not afford to pay them for overtime. During these instances, I wasn't requested to stay past my official working hours but just expected or told."

Overall, there were also wide disparities in the feedback provided and training available to interns, with many lacking clear training or learning objectives. 48.7% did not receive any or sufficient feedback during their internship. Majority of respondents (78.9%) had less than 10 hours of training time available to them during their internship, with 1/3 of all participants only having 2 hours or less.

"There was no sense of training, progress, or improvement whatsoever. I spent the vast majority of the time copying and pasting links onto a Word document."

"I am quite fortunate to have a supervisor who is aware of the unfairness of internships in UN and how non-remuneration favors the privileged. She gives me tasks that will be strategic for my CV and future career path/plan. This is not the usual case with my peers who have experienced internships in Geneva."

Did you receive feedback?



Access to justice

As interns are non-staff personnel, they have limited access to the system of administration of justice. The General Assembly, in its resolution 63/253 of 24 December 2008, decided that “interns, type II gratis personnel and volunteers (other than United Nations Volunteers) shall have the possibility of requesting an appropriate management evaluation but shall not have access to the United Nations Dispute Tribunal or to the United Nations Appeals Tribunal”.⁵⁴ Formally, interns do not have access to the services of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman. They may however address disputes through direct negotiations with the United Nations and may file complaints of discrimination, harassment and abuse of authority against staff members.⁵⁵

The survey’s open ended questions show that this represents an important cause of distress and may give rise to cases of abuses that remain completely unreported due to the intern’s vulnerable position in the organizations’ hierarchy. Among the abuses reported, there are also cases of sexual harassment.

“A few staff members made advances of an unprofessional nature toward me (indecent proposals) and there was no mechanism for me to report them through. this caused me great distress, and to this day I am not sure how to address this without finding myself in a “my word against theirs” situation, in which I am guaranteed to not be taken seriously, as they outrank me in the organisation.”

Interns are included in the scope of the whistle-blower protection policy of the UN Secretariat.⁵⁶ However, in absence of any access to formal justice, it is unclear to which extent and how eventual retaliations by staff members could be identified, investigated and redressed.

⁵⁴ United Nations General Assembly (2009), OP 7

⁵⁵ United Nations General Assembly (2012)

⁵⁶ United Nations (2017)



Conclusions

Data confirm that interns have a fundamentally operative role in UN organizations, raising doubts as to whether their function is actually just to experience a learning process or whether to replace paid entry-level positions.

With the only exception of overtime working hours, unpaid internships consistently score worse than paid ones across all areas analysed, most notably in induction processes, supervision, meaningfulness of the tasks performed. This finding suggests the existence of an unobserved variable related to the provision of a living stipend to UN interns. It can be argued that such a hidden variable impacts the overall organizational, administrative and institutional approach for the internship programme that differentiates organizations offering paid internships than those offering unpaid internships. When organizations assign resources and establish clear and transparent processes to internships, the intern's ease of on-boarding, financial well-being, professional skill development and diversity in the workforce is dramatically improved.



4. INTERNSHIPS' EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

High expectations of acquiring relevant learning experience, training and guidance for further career paths have subsequently pushed young people into low- or unpaid placements. Originally perceived as a means for young people to explore possible career options without committing to a given profession, the main reason for taking internships today have been found to be acquiring industry specific experiences and skills as well as making contacts and developing skills to improve chances of securing paid employment.⁵⁷ Getting a foot in the door to secure a smooth transition from an internship to a paid position has become an essential motive for taking on a placement. Expectations are high when taking on an internship at the UN as the prestige and multitude of partnered organizations give the intern the opportunity to bolster their resume and network with a pool of employers previously unavailable. Once in the position, many interns doggedly pursue paid contract within the organization. Consequently, prospective interns see training, meaningful tasks and a clear trajectory as the essential elements of a worthwhile internship. However, they are also willing to contribute an exceeding amount of time and effort to their supervisor's work, often regardless of payment.

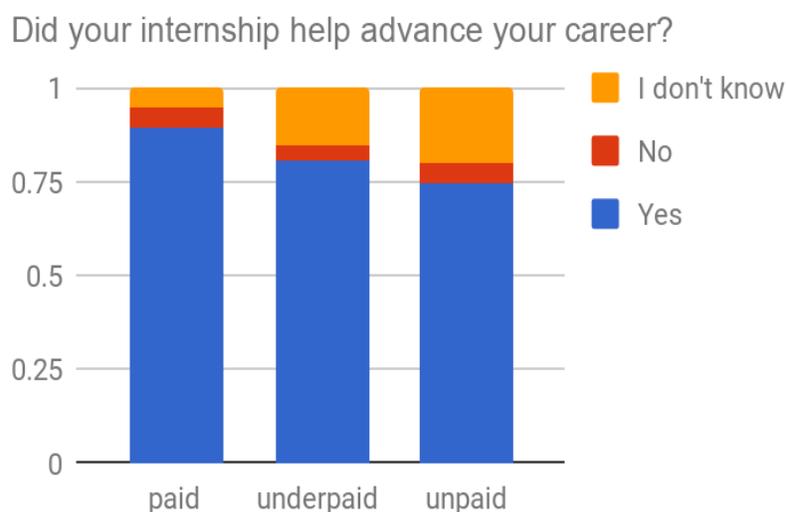
The following chapter explores the impact of UN internships on intern's careers, their further employment history as well as the experiences gained by individuals surveyed. In this it will consider differences in outcome between paid, underpaid and unpaid internships.

Moving on with the career

The majority of survey responders (76.3%) stated that their Internships have indeed helped them advance their career chances, posing an advantage in the rising prevalence of internships on the market. Again, answers can be connected with the remuneration of internships, as 89.5% of paid interns answered positively to the question, whereas just 74.3% of unpaid interns did so. Additionally, unpaid internships often do not gain the same recognition on the job market as full-fledged work experiences, even if the skills gained would be akin to paid internships.

⁵⁷ Roberts (2017).





Experiences differed greatly in this regard, ranging from disappointment to a fast-tracked career:

“Only one of my 3 internships gave me a paid contract, and it was only for 1 month.”

“The experience on the CV helped indirectly but no outright jobs.”

“After three months of internship, I was absorbed into the organization because of my good performance as an intern.”

Therefore, a single internship rarely suffices to achieve a paid work contract. 45,5 % of survey takers point out to have at least two or three internships on their CV, 16,97% report to have taken on even more than three. Taking on several internships inside the UN system has become common practice. Of the numerous internships acquired by survey takers, only 23,4% were marked as paid, 76,6% of survey respondents completed at least one or more unpaid posts, absorbing the cost and risk of being hired thereafter.

Work contracts after the internship

As mentioned in the introduction of this report, a very restrictive practice has been implemented within the UN, a regulation which “stipulates that interns are not eligible to apply for, or be appointed to, positions at the professional level for a period of [two to] six months following the end of their internship.”⁵⁸ Some specialized agencies, however, do not require such contract break and allow interns to compete on an equal basis for staff positions upon their internships’ end.⁵⁹

The 2009 Joint Inspection Unit’s Report on Internships at the United Nations has recommended that there should be no restriction to applying for employment at UN agencies immediately thereafter.⁶⁰ With such processes the UN organizations curtail the objective of employment

⁵⁸ United Nations Secretariat (2014).

⁵⁹ ILO for instance.

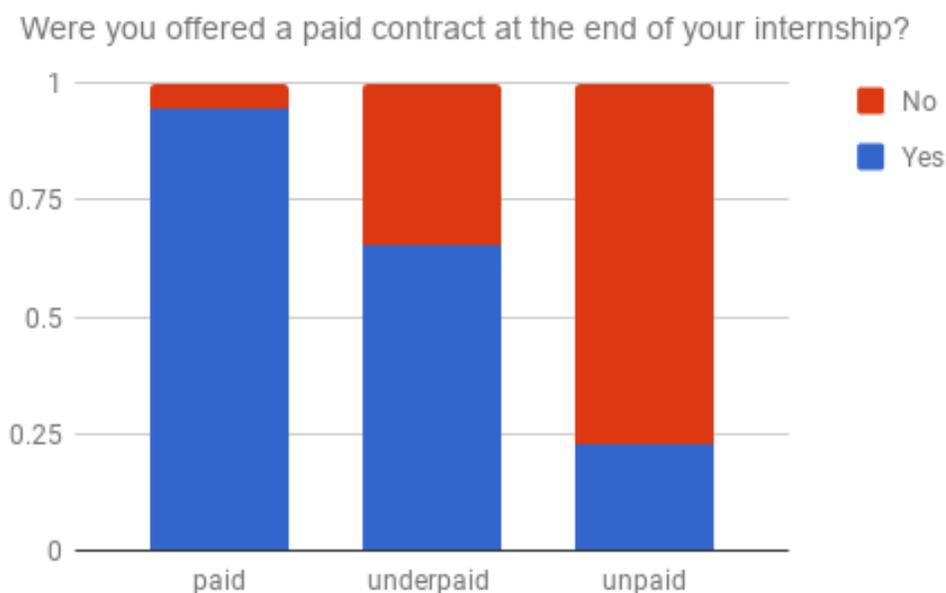
⁶⁰ United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (2009).



following an internship as it leaves the post vacant for months before the intern would be able to assume it, a disadvantage for the employer. This practice can be attributed as one factor to the high number of survey responders, 59,1%, who were not offered a paid contract after their internship.

Dividing this outcome into paid, underpaid and unpaid contracts, a grave difference emerges between them. Even though unpaid internships are often taken into account for the potential of a well-paid contracts thereafter, a study by the ILO confirms that unpaid internship programs are at higher risk to have a worse post-programme outcome than paid ones.⁶¹

Our study shows an exponential increase of employment following an internship with some form of monetary support or compensation. Only 22,8% of former unpaid interns were offered a contract thereafter, while 65.4% of former underpaid and 94.7% of former paid interns who responded to the survey received an offer. The result is partially driven by former ILO interns, who – as mentioned above – besides being paid are also not barred from being contracted as staff members after the completion of the internship.



Recognition of the work experience

When applying for a position in the organization they have previously interned, former interns face additional difficulties due to the fact that UN internships often do not gain the same recognition as full-fledged work experiences. In contrast with the fact that most interns do perform tasks that can be defined much more as “work” rather than “learning”, 24% report that their internship does not count as work experience at all. 22% claim that it counts as a fraction of work experience (e.g. half of the months effectively worked), while only 19% claim it is fully recognized by the UN organization they interned for. The high percentage (35%) of interns not aware of such practices underlines the lack of information given in work contracts and inductions. In many cases, the practice of cutting down work experience to a fraction of its actual duration induces interns to

⁶¹ O’Higgins and Pinedo (2017).

consider extended internship contracts of up to 6 months or longer. 52,8% of survey takers assumed 3-6 month internships, while only 26,5% took on 2-3 months.

Work contribution and Training

With each UN organization managing their own rules and regulations on Internships contracts, experiences of interns can vary greatly, depending on the organization, existing skills, supervisors and a range of other factors. As mentioned in the introduction, internships should be defined chiefly as training opportunities for young people to acquire supervised practical and educational experience. Ideally, an internship should mainly consist of learning and training experiences and not contribute to, or support the day-to-day activities and work of staff, which would constitute a replacement of staff/entry-level jobs.

The generally more positive employment outcomes of paid internships can perhaps be partially attributed to the nature of the work performed during the internship. As highlighted in the previous chapter, a large percentage of survey takers defined their internships as “work experience” or “mainly working but also learning experience” (76.5%), while only 23.5% thought of it as a “learning” or “mainly a learning experience.” This trend increases when observing the comparisons between paid, underpaid and unpaid internships. 82% of paid interns and an estimated 68% of underpaid interns consider their experience as “mainly working”, while a high percentage of unpaid interns use the description “working experience” (57%). These figures verify that a high number of interns do not experience their placements as a substantial training or educational practice to gain new skills, but mainly work experience with tasks very similar to entry-jobs. 14.5% described their internship as a purely “working experience”, excluding learning effects and relying solely on pre-existing skills, contributing to the work force similar to regular staff.

“I moved from intern to consultant. My responsibilities did not evolve, meaning that my work as an intern was clearly worth remuneration.”

The fact that a vast majority of internships open only to young people with a graduate-level qualification, coupled with the increase in graduates looking for work, higher skilled workers have to make the difficult decision to accept lower paid opportunities.⁶² This is relevant to job openings as well as internships, as employers find themselves in a position to choose from a pool of higher skilled applicants. There is a prevalent misconception that participants in internship programmes are young undergraduate students who have no previous involvement in the workforce. Yet the vast majority of both unpaid and paid UN interns hold post-graduate qualifications⁹ and are contributing to substantial work that may have otherwise been completed by paid staff. With these expectations, it comes as no surprise that, with increasing budget pressures, many jobs made redundant coincide with a sharp increase in the number of available internships.

Conclusion

The survey identified a range of factors that influence the experience and resulting effects of most internships: due to a lack of international standards of good practice, placements largely depend

⁶² Institute for Public Policy Research, 2017, p. 16.



on the approach of organizations by which the intern is employed, the supervisor's time and motivation, and the intern's skills. Distinguishing between "working" and "learning" experience, the survey points out the high percentage of interns with "mainly working but also learning experiences", which rise in conjunction with payment. Training provided by supervisors and learning experiences come alarmingly short and a high number of interns rely on pre-existing skills in their roles. According to survey findings, a clear link exists between internship payment and internship's employment outcomes: paid-programs show better post-program outcomes than unpaid ones. As internships have become an indispensable chapter in young professional's CVs, measures should be taken to secure structured, eligible and paid learning programs, ensuring the nature of traineeship and learning experiences in internships.



RECOMMENDATIONS

“My general opinion on internships around the world: I believe that organizations should consider interns as an asset as interns come with fresh skills and new ideas. I understand internship is a learning experience but it needs to be structured and also paid adequately.” – Survey responder

1. There is the need of an international normative framework regulating internship. The International Labour Organization should develop an international standard, defining what an internship should be and providing minimum quality criteria, including on accessibility.
2. UN organizations that wish to recruit interns have to preliminarily make sure they possess the necessary means (financial, organizational and logistic) to ensure to the person a meaningful training experience and an occasion for professional growth rather than of financial distress.
3. UN bodies must introduce a sufficiently high stipend equal or greater to 20% of the reduced DSA or based on the poverty line in the duty station, in order to effectively offer equal opportunities of access to all candidates, with no discrimination based on socio-economic status or country of origin. Organizations offering a lower stipend must gradually increase it, in order to cover basic living expenses (rent, food, transportation).
4. At least a partial contribution towards health care insurance costs must be foreseen.
5. Recruitment must be based on fair and transparent selection systems. Forbid any kind of opaque and informal arrangement.
6. UN internship contracts must include basic labour rights and entitlements of the intern, such as leave days, sick leave, access to justice, health insurance and a living allowance.
7. Internship contracts must include a realistic training plan, against which the success of the internship will be evaluated.
8. Human resources should collect detailed statistics on interns (number, country of origin, department name, supervisor name, etc.) and make summary figures publicly available, with the same level of detail as for staff members.
9. Affirmative action should be taken to improve representation of interns from non- or under-represented Member States.
10. Human resources departments, if necessary in collaboration with interns' organizations, must ensure that all interns receive a proper induction upon on-boarding.
11. Supervisors must be trained on their responsibilities vis-a-vis interns, compulsory feedback cycles and evaluations must be established, under the supervision of and with appropriate follow up by human resources departments.
12. As internships are meant to be a “learning experience”, access to training and learning opportunities must be guaranteed to all interns.
13. Abolish the six-month hiring freeze after the end of the internship, in order to ensure that internships fulfil their role as facilitators of the school-to-work transition.



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APPENDIX

Open-ended questions

Please share any noteworthy experiences or issues that arose during your internship

The internship is great. There should be, however, more interaction with the human resources. I see that HR handovers everything to the board and the departments, but they could also play a role in developing the capacities of interns.

I was supported in learning French, 20h were paid as I would be working, although I had to pay the fee before. I appreciated this support very much.

Among the funny things I did, I have been asked to shortlist CVs for future interns recruitment (Note: I'm not a HR person)

Confronted supervisor B. Supervisor B had an internship with purely administrative tasks in the past, and used this to justify me not having substantive work. Some supervisors internalise the bad working conditions from past internships and project that onto their interns, while others might not.

Officially interns do not have days off

Lots of unprofessional and childish instances and patterns of events amongst staff members could be observed (i.e. gossiping, arguing in front of interviewees, hypocrisy and backstabbing) through silent observation

Being formed during six months and then no direct future opportunities

A few staff members made advances of an unprofessional nature toward me (indecent proposals) and there was no mechanism for me to report them through. This caused me great distress, and to this day I am not sure how to address this without finding myself in a "my word against theirs" situation, in which I am guaranteed to not be taken seriously, as they outrank me in the organisation.

too much delegation of certain task

I know for a fact that most UN organizations accept applicants for internship even after they have graduated (up to 1 year after graduation). A staff from HR tried to bar my acceptance because I have graduated stating that [UN organization name] has an internal policy that they only accept enrolled students. My supervisor fought for my acceptance and got my contract signed only because the complaining staff was on leave.

I'm not allowed to apply for a full time position after 6 months once the internship is finished

Unfortunately, my experience is not very positive as I faced a lot of issues and even terminated the internship earlier than planned.

Among the issues:

- Before joining, I explained that as a MAS student I need to produce a report of 40 pages on the tasks that I will be doing and link it with governance issues (sort of academic research linking my job and studies).

I was only given the job of organizing training, preparing PPT presentations, arranging visa letters and asking dietary requirements for the participants. What I was asked to do clearly did not correspond to my expectations and did not give a ground for getting inspired and finding a nice topic to research



on for my report. Especially, given the fact that I already had 8 years of professional experience, and the tasks I was asked to carry out were for an entry job. -When i talked to my supervisor, I was told they don't need any academic research now, as the organizations is facing a reorganization and has no budget for any new activities. - After first weeks, I was under the impression to occupy the position of an event organizer (paid Consultant job), - I found difficult that I did not have a unique supervisor who will coordinate my workload, but all members of the team would give me tasks telling "i dont know what is your actual workload". - Sometimes, I did not get enough feedback with regards to my work - When I announced my intention to leave with a short notice (as advised by the intermediary organization who found this internship for me), i was under impression that it was taken very personally by the team. In the discussions that followed with my supervisors I was accused of being unprofessional and asked to stay 2 weeks (when they know that I have a strict deadline to submit my research report and I don't have time for 2 weeks, as I have to start with another internship). - Generally, I found that communication quality in the team is very low, permanent staff does not always say hello to interns and thanking for their work

Great level of trust and consideration by my team

Interns were very easily exploited as the organization is almost bankrupt. We worked for 4months to organise a conference that we didn't even get the chance to attend because "they didnt have enough budget for us to travel" Once one of the sections was asking for volunteers for a huge conference, the topic was interesting and around 25interns volunteered thinking it would be interesting to watch the conference. A day before we were briefed about our roles and it turned out we were there as hosts/hostesses because they didn't have enough money to pay actual hosts ...so we spent the entire day standing showing the way to the attendees...

I sit in a corridor with no access to a window or day light.

Interns are not considered relevant. Except for my supervisor and some others I worked with, all others do not appreciate interns.

I was left with supervisors away and nothing to do for a lot of time, but was still required to be present at the office which was frustrating. I wanted more things to work on.

My work is video editing, and the UN doesn't have the equipment to provide to me, like for example a powerful laptop and software. So I bring my own, and my own filming equipment. There's probably a very complicated way to actually get the filming equipment from the UN, but I don't think they'd ever hand it out to an intern.

I had a difficult time with communication between myself and my supervisor. There were numerous times I felt slightly inferior or incompetent, and I did not receive extensive guidance or instruction throughout my internship. Overall, I learned a great deal about the environment I work in and have come to understand the value of verbalizing my opinion respectfully and defending my work or intentions where appropriate.

I was able to be involved with a lot of different projects I am interested in, even though my duties for them was unrelated to what I want to do

Was given a task to present to partners of the organisation and was invited to go an mission abroad.

As an intern, I felt neglected. Coming to Geneva as an intern was an investment and, taken on its own, clearly was a bad one. My luck was that a consultant in my team quitted her job. As the team intern, I was then on the front row and got the position. I am lucky and grateful for that.

Unfortunately, it means that I then did a consulting work for free, for the two remaining months of my internship.

I did not feel like a member of the team and felt that I could be doing my assigned work in another location.

Unpaid UNHQ interns constantly suffer from very rude and sometimes humiliating treatment by security guards. The difference is noticeable between how security treats HQ interns and Mission interns (as Mission interns have the same badge as national delegates, and are thus not identifiable as interns).

I am able to attend meetings on behalf of the unit.

Asking for time off led to a passive aggressive encounter making me feel bad for taking extra half day off. Also general sexism.

Terrible supervision, no feedback, repetitive tasks.

My general opinion on internships around the world: I believe that organizations should consider interns as an asset as interns come with fresh skills and new ideas. I understand internship is a learning experience but it needs to be structured

I think my skills were underestimated

The director of my team did not even now I work being unpaid. Sad.

The internship was an extremely valuable learning experience for me. I was assigned to complete a major objective by the end of the internship period, and it was a substantial project which added immense value to my resume. There were also some ad-hoc tasks that I was required to do, what I found that work to be equivalent to the ad-hoc tasks being performed by full-time staff. Additionally, I was also given opportunities to choose additional projects for my free time in order to build a stronger skillset. Overall, I received a lot of support and mentorship from people around me, and learned a lot from the internship.

There was a policy to provide feedback on the experience, but it was never implemented.

My supervisor is too busy to even meet with me and she went on holidays without leaving me any work to do

Feeling inferior, modern slavery

There is a quarantine after the internship before you can work with the UNDP again. Unclear how long it is.

It was great to get an insight perspective into the organization however, you do not need a masters degree to complete required tasks of an internship, although i can see why they ask for a masters degree because some interns with less academic experience were immature and lacked office professionalism. I enjoyed working in an office that hosted more than 10 organizations because you met interns from different UN agencies and this is great for networking. I was very very disappointed to hear that JPOs DO NOT consider UN internships as part of work experience required for a JPO (2 years). I do not believe this to be fair at all considering internship experience is vital for smooth entry into a JPO.

There wasn't enough desk space, so interns were asked to rotate a lot and interns with different supervisors were treated very differently. Some had to pull all-nighters, some were very considerate and could take days off when they felt like it

it being non-paid was a struggle

I often had to stay late to cover the work of paid staff members because my department could

not afford to pay them for overtime. During these instances, I wasn't requested to stay past my official working hours but just expected or told.

I did not have a workplan at the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. In fact, they do not need interns. If they would actually work rather than talk to each other all day, they could get some of their tasks completed. I was repeatedly told it would pick up when the Youth Envoy arrived. However, it never picked up even when she did arrive. I asked for a workplan to be told they did not run this way. I told my skills to a staff assistant, special advisor, and my advisor to be met with "Oh we are going to incorporate you into more" and sit at my desk idly all day. I would ask consultants if they needed help, they always "had it." This left me wondering why I was even there. Other interns would be browsing the Internet. It was a waste of time. The intern listing for DPI stated I would be performing communications and outreach which is why I applied. Rather, I was ask to do "support" like reading emails, background research, and delivering documents to other offices. My supervisor would often ask me to write his high-level talking points and I would receive no credit whatsoever. He constantly told me I was a good writer then use my skills and take all credit.

I changed my department because at the department before I was just there to do work no one else wanted to do and apart from daily very repetitive work I only got very minor tasks like printing out stuff. Now, my experience is better.

Lack of a workplan and unclear goals to achieve during the internship

While my supervisor was on "contract break" I was doing her job, because it's a small team and there wasn't anyone else. I sat in several meetings where we would be discussing upcoming work, and a paid staff member would say something along the lines of "we've got all the inputs to get started on [task], but that's on hold because my intern doesn't start until October" suggesting that key workstreams are dependent on intern labour. I have an intern working with me now, and she is often in the office later than me. She is overwhelmed with work, but either feels she can manage it, or feels she cannot say no - even if I try to intercept work reaching her. issue: internship experience does not count as full work experience, while any first job opportunity does ask for highly relevant experience.

I was surprised to find out that the average age of a P2 level entry job position at the UN is 43 years. I have never met a staff member with a P1 position at UNAIDS.

Lack of supervision

As I had already had several internships I had a much better understanding of what my "rights" were as an intern. I was able to mobilize the rest of my cohort to request that a few more office comforts be available to us and the administration quickly agreed.

Not being paid and work not counting toward JPO

you can't apply for a job for 6 months after your internship

I was able to attend a one-week training in an African country during my internship. I took the training and trained other staff on the topic my team handles. I am very thankful to have been given such an experience during an internship.

I feel underqualified only because there appears to be very little work for me to do related to my training. I was honest about my skills and experience in my application and expected the work to match the position I applied for.

No staff is present, only interns doing the tasks

interns are blocked for job applications on the same organisation for 6 months after finishing the internship, this is unbeneficial for both sides

A colleague drinking at work...

Many interns were either slow or did not do their work. Instead of encouraging them to do their share and help them improve, the work was given to me behind their backs to fix/redo. This is not conducive to a good workplace environment or to professional improvement for any intern.

You cannot be employed in the 6 months after your internship - policy

When my visa application was held up, the director allowed me to begin the internship remotely in order that it not be extended into the holidays.

Very complicated to find an accommodation in Geneva without being paid.

Another group asked to have my support in their work because of my expertise and knowledge in a certain field.

I feel anxious and unsatisfied with my internship experience. This is not how UN interns are supposed to be treated. And it's inhuman to pay nothing for full-time job.

It has been a great learning experience for me and I am glad I signed up to it.

I am very comfortable with the way the agency works and the work that goes on within my country.

Holistic experiences in UNHCR Malaysia and it enabled me to broaden my network which is greatly important to pursue my career of interest in international government level / political organization globally.

WE WANT TO GET PAID !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

During my first two weeks of internship I was said to need training before I could start working. But I had to find the training myself. My supervisor did not really plan any training for me.

It was the best experience I had and I would suggest that interns are paid so as to cater for their small expense

the fact that interns are not allowed to apply for job openings before 6 months past the end of their internship leads to lost work opportunities for them that they have been trained for.

Based on the my experience and relationship with other interns, I believe the internship experience is heavily influenced by interactions with the supervisor. Luckily, I'm in a smaller unit and have daily interactions with my supervisor. Although we're in the same office, I've noticed that interns from other units have not enjoyed their internship experience as much as I have.

It is a great opportunity to learn and experience everything first hand and to feel that there are great things made happening by the UNHCR

Through an internship, I gain clarity on my strengths, weaknesses, and interests. Equally important, I can also learn a lot. internship experience helps me overcome that obstacle .

Yes it was an ideal learning experience where I got more than what I asked for..

I am very proud of UNHCR, MY SELF, THANKFUL

It was a great learning experience but the accommodation and financial conditions were really problematic.

Some of the staff working directly with POCs need either a reminder of why they are part of this organisation or praise for the work they have done as moral is low in some units.

During my internship, I felt like I was simply absorbing the work that other staff did not want to do (e.g. staging, and filing). This hindered many opportunities to do other tasks (e.g. research,

shadowing meetings, detention camp visits), which I had from the beginning expressed an interest for. Sometimes, this even prevented me from attending the mandatory security briefings.

Love the people and work environment

This experience has amplified the vision i had from UNHCR work. I've learned about the functions and different working areas, i would like to learn more about UNHCR and UN work.

Intern Coordinators are amazing, encourage people to join them, encourage UNHCR staff and focal points to support them and give each new Coordinators team sufficient leverage to be creative and do things their own way

Being in a small office allows interns to do more than their initial TOR. It is engaging and highly interesting.

My Internship experience with UNHCR was really commendable. It was a great learning experience. I thoroughly enjoyed my internship and now have very valuable experience under my belt.

A 6-month internship for doing menial tasks without stipend or any bonus! Get a load of this: You cannot apply for a position for six months after the termination of internship! In a nutshell, I call it "modern slavery"!

A bit unorganized because of staff shortage, lack of follow up from staff who were asked to provide logistical assistance, lack of pre-defined activities for internship thus led to surplus downtime

To what extent do you feel supported by your supervisor(s)?

My tasks were not a problem. On the contrary, it was far more interesting this way.

I would be happier to have more hands on experience. To be able to DO what I propose, not just write analysis about it. I am not sure how much of my work will be applied. I am missing the trust to apply what I preach. Although some of my analys

Supervisor is fine with whatever I am contributing to, not much efforts to involve me in anything.

I had two supervisors (A & B). Two persons were in position A. The first supervisor A was initially too busy to be supportive - they ranged from 1 - 4 on your scale. The second supervisor A was a 5. Supervisor B was a 1 throughout.

Interns are usually supervised by other people than it is stated in the official letter

I was lucky with the supervisors that were appointed to me, but some other interns in the same organizations have had issues regarding their supervisors, as there was none or he/she was a different one every week or so.

My supervisor has not taken time to welcome me, I only hear from him when I did something wrong or when he has a request.

Poor communication, strong and unprofessional tendency to "gossip" about interns amongst staff members

Experience in the internship entirely depends on the type of supervisor you have, and their willingness to support your work and goals.

According to me, the experience of your internship highly depends on your supervisor.

I received good support from the team, however, I did feel in over my head many a time.

I am quite fortunate to have a supervisor who is aware of the unfairness of internships in UN and

how non-remuneration favors the privileged. She gives me tasks that will be strategic for my CV and future career path/plan. This is not the usual

Supervisors show lot of support and interest in teaching.

my supervisor trusts me and gives me tasks I enjoy. She also supports me and promotes me i rarely got feedback on the tasks that i accomplished.

She was always too busy although she was very ethical and wanted us to be happy

I feel I was taken on without specific projects in mind and my supervisors said they would arrange tasks for me but rarely did.

I feel very lucky to have a supervisor that challenges me, gives me creative freedom, and gives credit to my work, and promotes it within the organization so other people might want to consider me for a job proposal. Unfortunately, I heard giving credit is a real issue with internships. Supervisors take the credit, and it's completely unfair.

I have a very good supervisor (lucky)

Advisor wasn't very present and had just integrated the section.

The staff is as helpful as possible but I am working on an aspect that they have never done before so I am generally on my own. They can help me with specific questions but not in project guidance.

I am fortunate in that I already knew the staff here from having interned at near by UN agency. On that note I am on good terms with my supervisors and other staff members.

I would not recommend my internship to anyone.

Since interns are hired routinely to support daily work, rather than on exceptional basis for particular tasks, there was little interest on behalf of my supervisor to really invest in me / my career.

My supervisor is always very busy, I have to make an effort to sit him down to talk things through. It also creates an atmosphere in which I feel I have to walk on eggshells sometime.

During the first 4 months of my internship, my supervisor was physically present in the organisation for about 3 weeks (discontinually). Otherwise, he was on mission or on holidays. Among other aspect, this is a negligence from the organisation to allow a manager to hire an intern he WILL NOT be able to manage and welcome in the organisation. In addition, it turned out that the description of my internship was fraudulent, to look like a real mission fitting for an internship. The day to day was about absorbing staff excess of workload and completing repetitive tasks.

My supervisor's holidays fell during my internship and she was away for one month of my three month term. During this time I was not told who I could go to for support. I spent the month working on an independent project and made very little contact with any staff at UNICEF.

I did not have enough work to keep me busy. When I asked for more tasks, there was often a 4+ day delay in assignments.

Have been extremely pleased with the working relationship I have had with my supervisor

Very passive aggressive, so never know if he's serious or trying to manipulate

My mentor supported me in every possible way. Definitely a positive side of this internship.

I would suggest move question 14 to the same as this one so that I know what question 14 is

Some days I have absolutely nothing to do.

It was unclear to me who my direct supervisor was; while our unit coordinator was officially listed as my supervisor and wrote my review, two individuals under him were who I met with for

guidance on a more regular basis.

I feel supported by my supervisor generally, although in this internship in comparison to other IO internships I have done the work-load is much larger and my supervisor is very strict.

Sometimes the workload of my supervisor is very big and she does not have time to support in some tasks. I have also done several tasks for external companies and organizations and it was not right because they were being paid for that. I work in a Training Centre and I would like to have had more time to follow courses and learn about content, but usually tasks given to interns do not include learning about content and project.

between 35 and 45 depending on the project at hand.

Often my supervisor was unclear and lacked leadership, but was very good at explain concepts and ideas (less good at putting them on paper)...sometimes it was unclear what they wanted from me.

Supervisor was away a lot.

My supervisor was never present. He wasn't there on the first day of my internship. He never responded to my emails.

In the Department of Public Information-Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, there were 4 interns. Two in the Communications Division and two in "Support". We did nothing. I was a support intern and it was a joke. I did background research that took two minutes. I told my supervisor all my skills I was willing to give. I even cried because of frustration. It changed for like a week and it went back to doing menial tasks. I asked him about a work plan. My last internship in UNHQ OHRM had a work plan where I had specific tasks. He told me there was no work plan because they ran differently. Most days I did absolutely nothing. I felt frustrated. Similar to another intern in my department, I left a week early because it was a waste of my time.

My supervisor and coworker's are always respectful of my work and my time
very under stimulated by my supervisor.

My direct supervisor was fine, but she was a consultant and her contract was subject to all the crap consultancy contracts are subjected to, so in the middle of my 3-month internship, she had a 7 week (maybe more?) "contract break"

Some supervisors are wonderful. There needs to be greater accountability and check-ups on supervisors.

I was lucky to work with a supervisor who very much was focused on training her intern(s). I noticed early that this was not the case for every intern at the organization.

My supervisor thought very highly of himself, usually having 3 or 4 interns at the same time, though his lack of management skills and disorganization made the experience some of my coworker very disappointing.

I love the team I'm working with, although in slower week the job seems to drag on without a final objective

She allows me to follow my interests and regularly communicates that she is grateful for the work I've been doing

Very unorganised team without any clear roles as to who is my supervisor

I did a first internship with IOM, and this experience was very different from the one I have now. Now there is a much better organization, I have clear goals, I work normal hours, I am very well supported, etc.

IOM DTM has been very supportive. We received enough introductions to relevant topics and

were given responsibilities from the beginning.

above is based on current internship..... and not on previous internships esp. with regard to support

She was very supportive and kind, but it would have helped if I had gotten an introduction

I never received a clear TOR or any kind of work plan. It is quite difficult to find work to do. However, I arrived during the summer leave period and therefore a number of my supervisors have been away.

staff is overloaded, it would be good to clarify common goals, set up a work plan

No delegation of tasks

Felt valued because I did work for them, but did not feel like I was being encouraged to grow.

I'd like to see more structured administration and more welcoming human resources BUT THAT'S WHAT I DO! So I'm glad to be in yet another placement which allows me to leave a legacy for workplace behaviour. I do wish I were paid to do the work I do, because this is the second internship I have that is beyond my masters degree in international management.

Supervisor is too busy with own work to be capable of supervising the intern

The supervisors often didn't have time to properly supervise.

No feedback and no meetings regarding my internship

I would prefer more direct and frequent communication.

I lucked out with having a great supervisor.

Being available did not mean that the supervisor was responsive to concerns

a very good man with a high team work spirit

Do/ did your internship cause you, or those supporting you, any financial difficulties or affect your/their living conditions?

I used my savings to come to Geneva, and will probably get unemployed without any social insurance. Also, it is quite difficult to invest in a career in International Organisations coming from developing countries. Not only money, but visa requirements hinder the opportunity of more equal opportunities. The recent reduction of the time that an intern can stay in Switzerland after the internship (from 2 months to 2 weeks) is a clear reflection of such inequalities.

I used all my savings, which I didn't have much. So I lived very minimal life

Even with the help received from my government, it was not enough money for all my living expenses so I had to borrow money. Considering the number of hours of work and the workload, plus the fact I was living in a country I did not know well h

As my parents are hosting me, I am one of the privileged few that do not spend too much in Geneva. Even though, with no income at all, I almost spend all my savings in plane tickets, telephone and basic expenses. In no situation it is appropriate to receive nothing at all.

A family member was forced to sell an apartment, a vehicle and furniture because of me and my desire to add the prestige of working at the UN to my resume only to find out it was not worth it at all.

The reason I was able to do the internship was because it was paid. Otherwise, it would have caused me and my family financial difficulties, and I would have been obliged to decline the offer.

I am in massive debt. More than I would be in if I had not done the internship.

I spend all my savings from previous jobs during the time in NY plus my parents supported me (with more money than usually) All scholarships did either not apply for UN Institutions or Deadlines were already over (11months in advance)

My family is supporting me and it is a lot of effort because the standard of living in my origin country is lower than in Switzerland.

I worked 3 months in a bar and I could put money aside to pay a part of my livings during the UN internship

The fact that life in Switzerland is unexpectedly expensive has put a strain on my relationship with my family, who simply could not support me after 6 months.

I am a senior intern, meaning, I already have a previous job working in the field. I went on sabbatical to pursue graduate studies. The internship was necessary as I wanted to see what else is out there. So I specifically targeted 4 international organizations, hoping to gain more inside info on how to get my foot in with one of those targeted organizations. Thus, I was ready with the financial aspects/issues when having this internship.

I did need a second job but it was impossible because of the numbers of hours worked (finishing late as well and changing times of ability to leave the office)

Not financial difficulties but obviously my family is investing in me (and my internship) rather than putting it in other equally important causes.

In Geneva, we have to be careful about every expenses especially on food because everything is more expensive than in the rest of Europe. It takes adaptation and I don't do groceries the same way, I'm buying less. For accommodation, only shared flats are affordable.

Only through an Aunt was I able to complete the internship, and she could barely afford to help me, which caused some strain, especially as my mother lives on an exceptionally low-income which affected their relationship.

I had a bank loan to provide me money.

I was able to earn some money for my internship during my studies. I knew well in advance about my position so I was able to take extra shifts in retail to be able to save for the internship.

At UNESCO it is a well-known anecdote that interns spend their days hungry because they only get a small plate of vegetables at 2€ from the cafeteria (because everything else is too expensive and we do not get any special discounts as interns)

Due to the scholarship stipend support and savings from prior work experience, this is a feasible experience, even if it is a financial stretch, for a short period.

Not at the moment of doing the internship but later when I have to finish my study program since I won't receive a scholarship anymore

I am working evenings and weekends in order to do this internship. I knew what that would mean for my conditions, and I made the decision willingly. That said, I am working very hard to make ends meet and it's affected my financial situation. I do not receive any money from my family.

I go to France to do grocery shopping. I commute to work (3 hours a day)

Extra Loan

Despite the pay, I would not have been able to afford the internship if it hadn't been for previous savings.

In IATA, I was paid. But in UNEP (prior to IATA) I wasn't paid and my father and education loan was used to finance myself.

I didn't work in another job during my internship but before and live partly from my savings (and

the other part from my scholarship).

no social life

Both my parents are working and living in the city I am interning in.

I had money saved up for travel so I used it towards this experience.

I had hard time to search for the accommodation in Geneva, because not every house is cheap here. I have to go far e.g. France for saving money from grocery, haircut and etc.

While the income was sufficient to cover basic expenses and I was lucky to have a very low rent (by Geneva standards), I still had to receive help from my family for items like clothing, health insurance, any additional travel to/from my home town.

I was broke and ate cheap food. I don't think there is a need to elaborate.

No money for health insurance or to save for emergency. Caused high levels of stress and anxiety

I've lived in NYC my whole life. My internship was in NYC. I lived with my parents the whole time.

I had to take out a loan, move into a very small room and strictly limit my budget

Since I work from 9am-5pm everyday, I don't have time for another job during the weekdays. I work during the weekends, but I don't receive enough money to pay all my expenses. Because of that, my husband's salary is used for the two of us.

As the internship is unpaid and the grant I received from university doesn't suffice. I can't cover my costs in Washington D.C. Thereby I live in other people's home and pet sit and water their plants for them in return for accommodation. Even it is a really good way to save up the money. It is still hard to fund myself as the grant doesn't cover the basic costs of food and transport. I live 60 mins away in a different state and have to commute to Washington D.C everyday which is really tiring experience for me. Especially in the evening where I have to bicycle for 40 mins and amount of calories I take in are not adequate for the calories I burn. I feel completely exhausted at the end of the day.

Though I am paying for my rent/living expenses for this unpaid internship, my family is wealthy and I know I could reach out to them for emergency financial support at any time.

I had to work in an unrelated job first before I could come do this internship.

I have significant savings from my previous work prior to going back to school. I have received support from my family but would have been able to do this internship regardless

I didn't need a second job, but I also have a trust fund that allows me to live comfortably, so my situation is unusual.

I am now in debt

Living in NY is much more expensive than I'm used to, because of that I have to cut my expenses and only spend on bare minimum

I wanted to focus 100% on my internship but unfortunately the stipend was not enough to cover the expenses. I had to take up a part time job to support my living which in the end worked well. I also had asked financial support from my family every now and then.

I could never do this without support from my family.

Had to take an additional student loan, thus forcing me into further debt

I did the internship while studying on a scholarship in the same city, but were it not for the scholarship and same location, I would have been unable to do the internship.

My parents and grandparents support me financially, I did not have enough time to apply for a

scholarship or to receive financial support from my government because I had just 1 week to come here. So my family covers that and without them I could obviously not be here. I cannot eat lunch at the cafeteria on a daily basis because it is too expensive and cannot buy bio food like I used to in my home country. But that's fine, sometimes my colleagues pay for my lunch and grocery shopping in France is way cheaper...

The moving costs were very high...

I would not have been able to do the internship had I not had savings from previous work

It was an incredibly expensive job to hold, and one that I could not have done without significant savings and support from family.

My plan to crowdfund my internship did not work out.

Even though I have worked freelance throughout the school year, and my family has also helped me financially, the cost of living in New York has been a difficulty.

My parents financed my stay and I lived in my cousin's house.

Health Insurance contribution of around 45US\$ was highly inadequate for the health insurance/costs. Had to take a plane twice during my internship to see a doc at home, since I didn't have health insurance in Switzerland as the ILO does not include interns & most short term officials in the health insurance. Staff Union was not supportive and rejected to help to include interns in the health insurance.

Giving up on other classes/paid jobs I could've take in summer

Working without pay is very difficult for my family who supports me all the way from my home country, a continent away. I'm only able to do it because I went to school where I'm interning.

I have liquidated all my savings, and am broke now!

I get 450 euros a month as intern, and I spend usually 900 euros to live in Turin. Without the support from my family and a short scholarship I had from my Master, it would be impossible to come here. The salary does not give conditions to live with dignity and usually interns come from countries where salaries are very high or they are migrants in places where salaries are high but use their passports (from countries in development) to get the internship through the unofficial quotas for developing countries. This is not diversity and this is not equity of opportunities. Global South women and men should have the right to work in International Organizations.

Short time (4 month), probably could not afford longer

Parents have make financial sacrifices

I was lucky to be able to live with a family member and not pay rent.

I needed help from my family to get extra cash by the end of the month and buy groceries. Otherwise, it would be impossible to survive here.

I was able to support myself on the basis that I DID NOT relocate. Thus, I had to turn down 2 previous internships in the field due to the reason that I had to relocate, and ALL costs should be born my me. Mind you field internships need additional/private health insurance, additional vaccinations (50-150USD\$) and or malaria prevention medication (for entire duration of internship which is 6 months worth of medication), lengthy and expensive travel costs and often car rental upon arrival/pay for drivers (depending on security levels, etc)...this excludes living costs (rent & food). In addition, often such location require VISA, this varies depending on citizenship and destination of course but often not taken into account. In any case, after crunching the numbers for a 6 month UNPAID internship to Maputo, Mozambique with all the above costs

mentioned, would cost a TOTAL: 10,000 USD\$

Caused debt

The only reason I could afford doing an unpaid internship was that I have been working a couple of years before doing this internship. I used my savings for my expenses

I had no sleep because I was either interning or working to cover my expenses, so i was working about 80-100 hours a week one paid and the other non-paid

New York is an expensive city, so the rent, travel expenses were very high.

No rent because a close friend is hosting me. Money comes from savings from a previous internship that was well paid.

Bad food, I got sick

My mother's retirement fund was completely wiped out so I could spend the summer interning at UNHQ.

Since I am not paid by the organization I am working with I have to accept unpleasant living conditions in order to fit my budget (1600\$/month). The latter eventually adversely affect my working performance.

Family had to financially support me

Have lived and had to sustain myself on less than half the poverty line amount to during a previous internship.

I relocated to accept this internship but had to live with family in order afford living without an income. However, I still had to pay rent on my old apartment that I had left since my lease term was still in session as I would be returning to it to finish my master's degree.

I financed my own internship, using savings earned from a full-time job prior to commencing my internship.

would not have been able to do this internship without my family fully supporting me.

My parents are approaching retirement but had to work extra hours to support me. My family struggles financially.

With my financial situation in an expensive city such as Geneva, I was forced to live very basically.

I was very lucky and privileged to have the full support from my parents and grandparents.

I lived mainly on credit cards and family support. I had an almost two year old I had to relocate with me to NY and enrol in day care during the internship

I have moved several times due to the instability of my work conditions/term. Because I am never sure how long I'll be here for, it is difficult to find accommodation, not just affordable, but short-term, and there are many landlords who don't want to rent short-term, and many who take advantage of short-term renters. Further, it is very difficult to survive without being paid.

Luckily I was able to save money through jobs prior to my internship and in addition to that my family was able to support me. It would have been impossible to afford living in New York - the rent, food, public transport - without support of my family and careful planning.

Had to live at home with my parents rather than in the city on my own

My parents are now overdrawn because of my internship

Needed to take out a loan to work

Entirely funded through university grant/bank loan (either my own or my parents' overdraft). I am in a LOT of debt.

On one hand, was I was very lucky to have family in Geneva. I could stay with them free of

charge. On the other, I would have never chosen to live with them if I had enough money to rent a flat.

The internship does not cause any financial difficulties, but only because I am financing it through three different scholarships. If I had not received one of these scholarships, the internship would place important financial difficulties on me and I would have been obligated to touch my savings I received some financial support from my family especially for the health insurance. However, I think I would be able to afford all of that with my previous savings.

I cannot be self-sufficient.

I had to use my savings

I could afford to do this because I worked in an unrelated field for a year to save up. But I know many highly qualified people in my country for whom it would not have been an option.

Having two UN jobs at a time isn't an easy task. Also, it's been long time since I could afford only a flatshare.

It puts a huge restraint on my family as one of my parents is already retired. Plus I have to my tuition fees.

Sacrifice to do a full time unpaid internship. I must find other sources of income and I do NOT come from a family with resources.

I am privileged enough to be able to have my family pay for me to be here. It is a privileged person's internship and it's not fair.

I worked a lot before starting the internship

I did not want my parents to help me financially during this opportunity because this is something I signed up for. I had some money saved from working back home and had to dip into my personal savings and school loans to afford this internship

I took one year off between a bachelors and my masters to work two full-time jobs (one in an HR office and another bartending) in order to make the money necessary for the second unpaid internship. Otherwise, FAFSA granted me a loan for the masters program, which beyond tuition allowed me 1k per month expenditures during my studies plus the first internship.

Living at my parents who now have to support me

I am spending from my master's money

Funded by family but without this support It wouldn't have been possible to do this internship

I did not have to work because I have a scholarship that covers my costs. However, if it was not for that, I wouldn't even have the means to live in Geneva, let alone work for free

It was hard finding a place to live

Budget is very tight but it hasn't affected living conditions

Eating cheese bread every day, living at a dirty small place

I took out a loan. The internship has created conflicts with members of my family, because of money.

Big financial sacrifice for my parents. My bank account was constantly under zero during this internship.

I have to strictly cut on food and grocery every month. and I strictly limited my expenses to pretty much only grocery.



Fair Internship Initiative

