

JPO Story: gender evaluation for UNFPA in Lao and Headquarters

Background

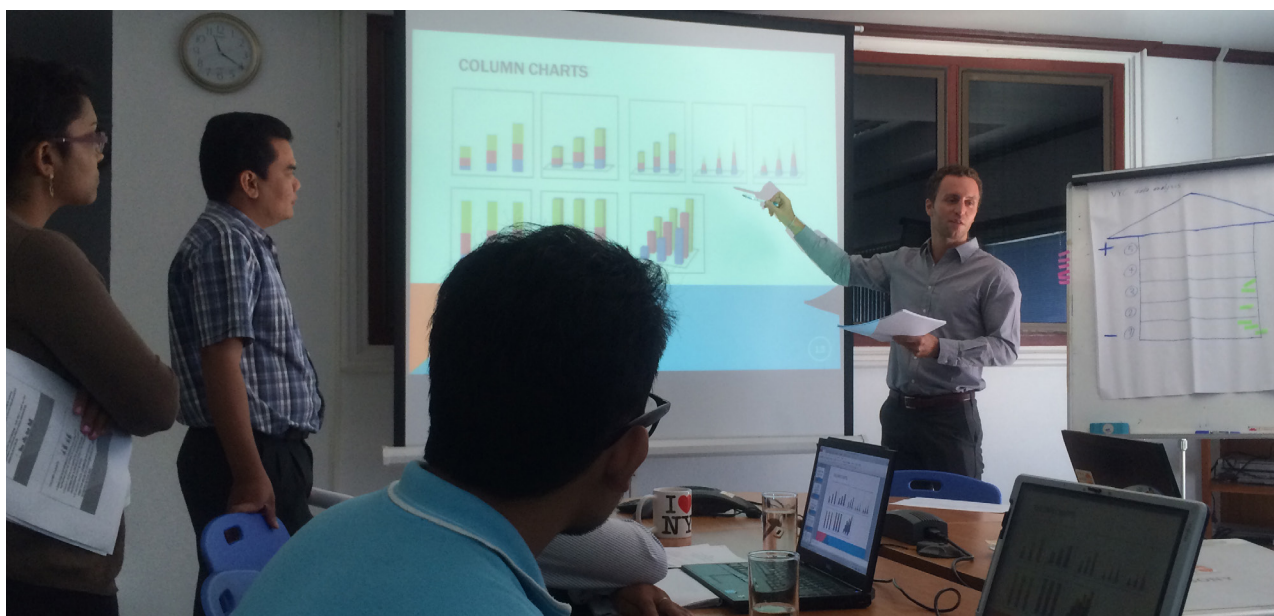
I have studied anthropology, meaning that I was reading papers and books on foreign cultures on a daily basis. By the time I had my University degree, I had never left Europe, but was very interested and felt prepared to see more. As I did not only want to travel but to engage in a real dialogue with people from different cultural backgrounds, I started working in the international development sector: first with NGOs in Peru, and later in Ghana. As these experiences were very fulfilling, I did not hesitate to apply for JPO positions as soon as they were advertised and matched my profile.



Thomas Lammar is a Luxembourg-sponsored JPO working in Lao and HQ.

Assignment

During my JPO assignment, the workload, as well as the kind of work I have been doing, very much depended on the moment. In Kosovo, I have been mostly working in project development and inter-agency coordination. In HQ, the work was much more paper-based. Currently, I'm managing two thematic evaluations, which keep me busy communicating and coordinating with all different kinds of people from government, UN agencies, CSOs, consultants, colleagues in the office and more. At the same time, I have to fit in other monitoring and training tasks in our country office; all this at a moment when many changes are happening, which also ensures a certain degree of excitement.





Certainly the most challenging thing for me is the communication with national partners due to the language barrier. While I feel it is quite easy for me to adapt to different foreign contexts with their norms and values, it always takes a considerable amount of time to get familiar with the language. However, it is very fulfilling to notice that I understand more from week to week. After work, I'm off to my Lao class!

Even though it is sometimes difficult to leave, discovering new regions, countries and places and getting to know interesting people is what is most fulfilling to me. This happens during work, as well as outside. Life has never been boring since I've started working as a JPO.

Advice to prospective candidates

At the beginning, try to read a lot, and to understand the organisation and the way it works. If, at any moment, you feel that you could contribute more, grab the first opportunity to show what you can do... people will appreciate it. If at moments it becomes too much, my previous boss used to tell me: 'It's only work, go home, tomorrow is another day'. Sport after work also helps you to deal with stress and relax.

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