

# JPO Story: working with the Armenian SDG Innovation Lab

## Background

I have a BSc in Political Science and Economics from Uppsala University (Sweden) and a MSc in Development Economics from School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London (UK).

I applied to the JPO programme because I had my mind set on continuing my career in impact investment in Africa when I saw the ad for the position. With a focus on SDGs and innovation, the job seemed very interesting and diverse - I thought it would allow me to build on many of my previous experiences in the private, public and social sectors. Having worked for UNDP for almost 18 months now, I feel particularly motivated by our mandate. The complex development challenges of today need integrated and innovative solutions, routed in strong partnerships and willingness to collaborate. This is exactly what UNDP brings to the table.



*Louise Skarvall is a Swedish-sponsored JPO working on SDGs and innovation for UNDP in Armenia.*

## Assignment

My job and the activities that I get involved in are very diverse since I work across all of UNDP's portfolios as well as for the National Armenia SDG Innovation Lab. Currently, I'm working a lot on SDG16 through our SDG16 project.

On a normal day, I provide support to my colleagues in terms of quality assurance, concept and proposal development, SDG assessments and so on. Moreover, I work with our programme team on strategic issues, prepare briefing notes and talking points, organise and participate in events and so on. As the SDG Liaison officer, I also engage in the nationalisation process of the SDGs here in Armenia.

I rarely implement projects directly, but it's always fun when you see that your colleagues' work has an impact on peoples' lives and is appreciated by our partners, the government and other relevant stakeholders. One experience that was particularly rewarding for me personally was my involvement in the design and delivery of the 2019 global JPO workshop on Innovation4SDGs, held here in Yerevan in November. After several weeks of hard work to ensure that the content and speakers were top notch, it was great to see everything come together so well. The feedback we received from the participants, the JPOSC as well as UNCT/UNDP colleagues were very positive, and I am convinced that it laid the foundation for cross-agency collaborations as well as the replication of some of UNDP Armenia's innovative initiatives.



My role as SDG Liaison Officer has allowed me to deep dive into a number of development challenges present in Armenia and the region more broadly, and develop new and innovative approaches to SDG acceleration that I hadn't been exposed to before.

I feel that the JPO programme is a great stepping-stone for continued work with the UN: in addition to all the practical experience you will gain in your duty station, you also get access to a broad network of JPOs from different regions and agencies, and the learning budget allows you to develop specific skills that you may need in your future career.

### Advice to prospective candidates

If you are considering applying to the JPO programme, make sure to go for the jobs and organisations that get you excited. Working for the UN is typically not a 9-5 job and it is important that you feel motivated and believe in what you do. Think about what you want to get out of the programme and try to get as much exposure in these and other areas as possible.

*"I love going to work in the morning as I never know where the day will take me and what I will learn."*

