

Koloina Andriamanondehibe
FAO Liaison Office with the UN, New York



[What is your educational background and nationality, what made you apply to the JPO programme and what is your motivation to work with your UN agency?](#)

I am originally from Madagascar, where I completed my undergraduate degree in Social Sciences from UCM before earning a Master's in International Studies from Université Laval in Canada. This multicultural and multidisciplinary background shaped my understanding of development in a very concrete way — poverty, food insecurity, inequality, conflict, and climate change never occur in isolation. They are deeply interconnected, shaping people's daily lives simultaneously and across borders, and must be addressed together if we are truly to leave no one behind.

This realization led me to seek knowledge and experiences that would allow me to approach development holistically. Early in my career, I volunteered and worked with various organizations focused on gender equality, youth, education, and human rights. Working with FAO felt like a natural extension of this path, as hunger and malnutrition continue to affect millions of people worldwide. Understanding how agrifood systems connect to broader development solutions further strengthened my motivation to work in this space.

I was especially grateful for the Dutch sponsorship, which supports opening doors that can sometimes feel out of reach for young professionals from the Global South. To me, working with the UN has always felt like a calling — perhaps even more so in today's world. There is something both rewarding and challenging about contributing to something larger than oneself.

How did you prepare for CV writing, motivation letter and interview?

I strived to craft an application that would stand out while remaining authentic to who I am and what I bring. I started by researching online, looking for clear direction – what are UN recruiters looking for? How do I structure my CV and my motivation letter? What are some absolute red flags to avoid?

I asked past supervisors and mentors to review my application package. Their feedback and advice were invaluable and helped me significantly strengthen my application. When I received an invitation to interview with FAO, I took the time to carefully explore the Organization’s website, learning about its mandate, key areas of work, and expertise. I practiced answering common interview questions using the STAR method. Most importantly, I studied both my CV and the job offer to understand my strengths for the role, but also the areas where I had room to grow. This preparation helped me approach the application process with more confidence and self-awareness.

What are the main activities and tasks you are working on, what SDG’s are you helping to implement

FAO is naturally central to advancing SDG 2 on Zero Hunger. However, working as a liaison between FAO headquarters in Rome and the broader UN system in New York has given me the opportunity to engage beyond a single goal and support policy and advocacy efforts across several SDGs — such as No Poverty (SDG 1), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Climate Action (SDG 13), and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17).

As a JPO in the Liaison Office, my role is to help represent FAO in New York. I work closely with colleagues in Rome and with partners across the UN system, supporting dialogue with Member States and helping prepare FAO’s participation in major global platforms. Our goal is to ensure that food security and nutrition remain at the forefront of the global agenda, and to strengthen FAO’s position as a trusted development partner.

What is the biggest motivator for you when it comes to your work and what has been the most rewarding experience to date for you at your duty station? (work and/or non-work related)

As a former Girl Scout, I still carry our motto with me: “Try and leave this world a little better than you found it”. My greatest motivation in life is to contribute to meaningful, inclusive, and lasting change. I take real pride in being part of an organization and working alongside people who share that commitment.



One of the most rewarding aspects of my experience has been the opportunity to be “in the room where it happens”. I have learned from people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives — world leaders, experts, young people, entrepreneurs, activists, and representatives of marginalized communities. It is inspiring not only to understand how global challenges touch their lives, but also to see the resilience and determination with which they turn those experiences into solutions.

[What set of skills have you developed most throughout your assignment?](#)

This assignment was quite a shift for me, moving from operational roles into a more diplomatic environment. I developed a much clearer understanding of how global decisions are shaped, how multilateral processes actually unfold, and how the Organization works to advance its mandate in an ever-changing political landscape. I also learned to turn complex ideas into messages that resonate with different audiences, and to navigate differing perspectives with tact and respect, without losing sight of the bigger picture. Above all, the experience strengthened my resilience, adaptability, and curiosity.

[Have you been in touch with other JPOs and/or with the Dutch representation/embassy at your duty station? Did you attend the online information meetings with the Dutch National Coordinator for International Positions \(NCIF\). What are your experiences?](#)

Yes! The JPO community, both within NEDWORC and at FAO, became a true source of support throughout my assignment. It was exciting to connect across agencies and duty stations to exchange experiences, share aspirations, and seek advice. I had the chance to welcome JPOs visiting New York with a tour of UN Headquarters, and to meet others over coffee or lunch during my own travels. I also connected with former JPOs who went on to build impressive careers within the UN and beyond.

The Permanent Mission of the Netherlands warmly opened its doors to us — whether to meet NCIF representatives or simply connect with fellow Dutch colleagues over coffee and stroopwafels.

How do you feel your JPO assignment will influence your career choices/opportunities within the UN?

I am confident that this JPO assignment gave my career in international development a jumpstart. I am especially grateful to have benefited from 3 full years in the programme, which allowed me to grow and mature into a well-rounded professional.

One of the programme's great strengths is the generous annual training allowance provided by the Netherlands, which I used to pursue learning opportunities outside my regular team or with top-ranked universities. Recently, I completed a 2-month assignment with the Partnerships and UN Collaboration division at FAO Headquarters in Rome, which exposed me to a different dimension of the Organization's work and further broadened my perspective.

What piece of advice would you give to those who are considering applying to the JPO Programme? What are your lessons learned?

Applying for a position with the UN, especially through a highly competitive process such as the JPO programme, can feel daunting. Fortunately, resources such as [ImpactPool.org](https://www.impactpool.org) provide practical guidance and helpful articles on preparing strong applications for organizations like the UN. While full access often requires a Premium subscription, I found it a worthwhile investment.