ABOUT THE FAIR INTERNSHIP INITIATIVE (FII)

The Fair Internship Initiative (FII) is a youth-led global network that advocates for fair, quality and accessible internships for people of all backgrounds. FII has chapters across central UN locations, including Geneva, Nairobi, and New York. The initiative 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.

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# OUTLINE

List of Figures..........................................................................................................................................................6
List of Acronyms.....................................................................................................................................................7

**Executive Summary...................................................................................................................................................9**

1. **Introduction................................................................................................................................................................15**
   1.1 2019 – 2020: Internships in Turmoil..................................................................................................................15
   1.2 Summary of the 2019 Survey......................................................................................................................................17
   1.3 Impact of COVID-19 on internships and its aftermath.........................................................................................19

2. **Methodology and Limitations..................................................................................................................................22**
   2.1 2019 Survey..........................................................................................................................................................22
       2.1.1 Survey Design...................................................................................................................................................22
       2.1.2 Structure of the Survey....................................................................................................................................23
       2.1.3 Dissemination..................................................................................................................................................23
       2.1.4 Analysis...........................................................................................................................................................24
       2.1.5 Limitations.........................................................................................................................................................25
   2.2 COVID-19 Survey..................................................................................................................................................26
       2.2.1 Survey Design...................................................................................................................................................27
       2.2.2 Structure of the Survey....................................................................................................................................27
       2.2.3 Dissemination..................................................................................................................................................28
       2.2.4 Analysis...........................................................................................................................................................28
       2.2.5 Limitations.........................................................................................................................................................29

3. **A Quality Index of UN Internship Programmes: The 2019 Survey....................................................................31**
   3.1 Benchmarking Framework......................................................................................................................................31
   3.2 Benchmark Area 1: Recruitment and Application Process..................................................................................31
       3.2.1 Transparency of the Recruitment and Application Process...........................................................................32
       3.2.2 Selection Procedures........................................................................................................................................33
       3.2.3 Time between Selection and Start Day...........................................................................................................33
   3.3 Benchmark Area 2: Onboarding and Internship Period.......................................................................................35
       3.3.1 Onboarding......................................................................................................................................................35
       3.3.2 Support throughout the Internship................................................................................................................39
3.4 Benchmark Area 3: Completion of the Internship and Career Development

3.4.1 Provision of a Certificate or Recommendation Letter

3.4.2 Relevance of the Internship for Further Opportunities within the Organization

3.4.3 Opportunities for Interns to Provide Feedback

3.4.4 Consideration of the Feedback Provided by Interns

3.5 Benchmark Area 5: Equal opportunities

3.5.1 Geographical / Socio-economic Diversity

3.5.2 Sources of Financial Resources

3.5.3 Other Barriers

4. Update on the 2019 Quality Index

5. The Impacts of COVID-19 on UN Internships

5.1 Unpaid and Isolated: How the COVID-19 Pandemic Affected Interns

5.1.1 Repatriation Arrangements

5.1.2 Lack of Work-from-home Support

5.1.3 Financial Burden

5.1.4 Loss of Networking and Career Development Opportunities

5.1.5 Suspension of Internship Programmes

5.1.6 Inadequate and Untimely Communication

5.2 The introduction of Permanent Remote Unpaid Internships

6. Conclusion

6.1 2019 Survey

6.2 COVID-19 Survey

6.3 Recommendations

Annexes

Key policy message - Fair Internship Initiative’s Position on Remote Unpaid Internships

Table 1 Comparison of UN entities’ Response to Covid-19

Table 2 Questions for the Survey

Table 3 Corresponding Weights
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Percentage of candidates informed about the status of the application.................................32
Figure 2: Informed about the final decision within a month after the completion...........................32
Figure 3: Candidates procedure by category....................................................................................................33
Figure 4: Time before starting the internship..................................................................................................34
Figure 5: Administrative support..............................................................................................................................34
Figure 6: Receive an induction package/Briefing upon arrival..................................................................36
Figure 7: Interns are provided with information regarding policies/procedures upon arrival...36
Figure 8: Met supervisor upon arrival...................................................................................................................37
Figure 9: Organization gives explicitly specify information in internship agreement regarding the following entitlements..........................................................................................................................................................................37
Figure 10: Specific learning objectives....................................................................................................................38
Figure 11: Tasks and learning programme clearly communicated by the first week...................38
Figure 12: Guidelines for supervisors........................................................................................................................38
Figure 13: Registered in the emergency database.............................................................................................39
Figure 14: Support mechanisms for interns.........................................................................................................39
Figure 15: Essential work equipment.......................................................................................................................40
Figure 16: Organization allow interns to travel as part of their duties....................................................40
Figure 17: Organization grant a daily subsistence allowance (DSA) to interns for the period of travel..41
Figure 18: Organization grant an insurance coverage to interns for the period of travel...........41
Figure 19: Access to work premises as the regular staff........................................................................................42
Figure 20: Access to training/learning opportunities offered by Organization for internship over 3 months........................................................................................................................................................................42
Figure 21: Interns are provided with certificates and recommendation letters.........................43
Figure 22: Experience considered as working experience when applying for staff position in Organization.....................................................................................................................................................................44
Figure 23: Evaluation form about their internship experience........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................44
Figure 24: Organization refer to interns’ feedback to improve the internship programme...........45
Figure 25: Classification of interns by level of remuneration.................................................................................46
Figure 26: Geographic distribution of interns......................................................................................................46
Figure 27: Percentage of interns per income range of country of origin............................................47
Figure 28: Percentage of Unpaid interns respectively per income range of their country of origin...47
Figure 29: Percentage of Paid interns per income range of their country of origin...............48
Figure 30: Financial support of interns...................................................................................................................49
Figure 31: Allowed to apply to open staff positions without a mandatory break after completing internship........................................................................................................................................50
LIST OF ACRONYMS

CHF  Swiss Francs
DSA  Daily Subsistence Allowance
ECA  Economic Commission for Africa
ECLAC United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESCAP United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO  Food and Agriculture Organization
FII  Fair Internship Initiative
GIA  Geneva Interns Association
HQ  Headquarters
HR  Human Resources
ICSC International Civil Service Commission
ILO  International Labor Organisation
IP  Internet Protocol
ITU  International Telecommunication Union
JIU  Joint Inspection Unit
OHCHR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN  United Nations
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNECE United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA United Nations Population Fund
UNFSU United Nations Field Staff Union
UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIDO United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNOG United Nations Office at Geneva
UNON United Nations Office at Nairobi
UNOPS United Nations Office for Project Services
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNOV</td>
<td>United Nations Office at Vienna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNRISD</td>
<td>United Nations Research Institute for Social Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VPN</td>
<td>Virtual Private Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
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<td>WIPO</td>
<td>World Intellectual Property Organisation</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fair Internship Initiative (FII) conducted the 2019 survey to compare the data on current internship practices to the JIU’s benchmarking framework. Interns within the UN predominantly come from a handful of countries, are in many instances unpaid and have an unsatisfactory internship experience. The results show that the prevalence of unpaid internships within the UN system does not adhere to the UN mandate of labour rights and youth development and has adverse effects on the promotion of geographical and socio-economic diversity. As such, the UN Internship System state of internship practices in 2019 are outlined in the following four areas:

1. Recruitment and application process

This section addresses the duration and comprehensiveness of the application and recruitment process. Applicants to paid internships typically undergo a longer recruitment process with formal written applications, written tests, and interviews. This process facilitates the selection of the best suited candidates for an organisation. Paid positions have also demonstrated greater administrative support, relocation support, and legal support whereas unpaid and underpaid positions are more likely to have an accelerated hiring process as 19% of unpaid interns and 27% of underpaid interns reported that they were selected with only interviews.

The extended application and selection process for paid interns typically afford the selected candidate a reasonable timeframe to arrange travel to and housing in the country in which the position is located. Over three quarters of paid interns (77%) were provided with an appropriate amount of time to prepare for their travel to the duty stations compared to unpaid interns who were provided with less than a month to prepare their visa arrangement and travel plan. They also tend to have administrative support from their organisations to facilitate their visa applications, while 31% of underpaid interns and 42% of unpaid interns claimed they received no support from their organisations regarding visa processes.

2. Onboarding and internship period

This section encompasses the support, entitlements, and protection interns receive during their internships. Nearly one in three interns did not know if they were ever registered in the emergency
databases of their organisations and half of all interns were not informed of any mechanism to facilitate their access to justice in the case of abuse or harassment. On average, paid interns continue to enjoy better labour rights and support systems than unpaid and underpaid interns. Of paid individuals, 77% received an induction package that provides supporting information during internship onboarding, compared to 59% of both unpaid and underpaid interns. Paid interns are also more likely to have sick and annual leave entitlements (76%) while only 28% of unpaid interns reported having sick and annual leave entitlements. Over half of unpaid interns were not entitled to any leave days. Moreover, 21% of unpaid interns claimed their tasks and learning objectives were never clearly communicated, compared to only 11% of paid interns.

3. Completion of internship and career development
Here, the report examines the career development support that interns receive at the end of their internships. The percentage for all interns to receive both a certificate and a recommendation letter is low, 11% of paid, 14% of underpaid, and 12% of unpaid interns respectively. Over 45% of paid respondents claimed they do not know if they would receive any end-of-internship documents, while 37% of underpaid and 30% of unpaid interns reported the same.

Moreover, parts of the UN system discount unpaid internships as less than work experience. In comparison, the experience provided by paid internships are not discounted and are considered a full-time position that demonstrates an individual’s capacity to perform professionally. While paid interns and unpaid interns may have nearly identical expectations, unpaid internships are generally only considered to be a fraction of the experience of paid internships. 39% of underpaid interns and 24% of unpaid interns reported that their work only accounts for partial work experience. Furthermore, 57% of unpaid and 54% of underpaid UN interns face a six-month “stand down period” immediately after completing their internship, during which they cannot apply for a position within their UN host organisation, compared to only 8% of paid interns face mandatory break from applying for staff position after the completion of their internship.

4. Conditions of the internship programmes aligned to UN mandate
This section refers to the extent to which the UN Internship System is inclusively accessible to candidates irrespective of their geographical and/or socio-economic background. The survey shows that 87% of unpaid interns came from high or upper-middle-income countries. This data clearly indicates the existence of systemic barriers for young professionals from lower income
countries, as an inclusively accessible internship programme should have similar representation of different geographical and socio-economic backgrounds as other UN System programmes. The barriers identified by survey respondents included: financial inequities in applicants’ abilities to finance their internship period; informational barriers relating to unequal access to internship postings; and legal inequities, such as barriers relating to increased difficulties in visa application faced by interns from lower income countries. It is plainly evident that the UN Internship System is not accessible to all and serves a select few whose finances are able to afford them the opportunity to take the position.

The survey explores the financial feasibility of unpaid internship placements in duty stations. The majority of unpaid interns were dependent on family support and/or part-time jobs. Additionally, only 5% of stipend-receiving survey respondents were able to fully finance their internship by way of the provided stipends. Evidently, third-party stipends are far from a meaningful solution to addressing the inequalities pervasive throughout the UN internship programme.

**Reforms across UN Affiliates**

Although the 2019 survey has concluded that the internship experience has not seen much improvement it must be noted that some UN organisations reformed their internship programmes during and after the survey period.

In late 2019 and early of 2020, the following UN entities reformed their internship programmes by providing stipends as well as health insurance. These organisations include:

- World Health Organization (WHO),
- United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP),
- United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), and
- United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

**FII COVID-19 Survey**

To measure the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has on internships, FII launched a survey in May 2020. The survey questioned respondents from several agencies on changes in internship arrangements. Overall, the results show that interns’ repatriation arrangements and legal status
within their duty station were not clearly communicated. Furthermore, the costs of transitioning into a work-from-home setting posed challenges to interns, many of whom were unpaid and unsupported in navigating their rapidly changing living arrangements.

As a result, FII issued a series of recommendations for United Nations organizations pertaining to pandemic and home-working support for interns. These recommendations include repatriation support, internship extension arrangements, financial aid, and work-from-home assistance to ease the burdens of interns.

Conclusion and Recommendations

FII surveys consistently indicate that the UN could do more to optimize the internship programme. The UN is preventing qualified candidates from taking positions due to their financial situation or legal status by failing to provide an equally accessible entry point into a highly coveted internship programme. As the Programme maintains its preference for higher-income candidates, FII concludes the following:

1. The diversity, accessibility, transparency, formalization, and career development opportunities of paid internships are consistently more robust than unpaid internships. UN entities offering unpaid internships are excluding qualified candidates based on financial or legal status and are thus operating a programme that is less beneficial to the organization and the intern;

2. Reforms introduced by the WHO are welcome, as the introduced stipend is in line with the recommended level and ensures candidates with any financial situation may apply and take the position. UNDP, UNHCR, and UN Women also introduced stipends. Although a move in the right direction, the stipend levels are too low to effectively remove the barriers to entry and in fact bring about regenerative effects by providing payments to those who could already afford the unpaid position;

3. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted interns, who during the pandemic faced uncertainty regarding repatriation, high travel costs, premature termination of contract, and unclear legal status in duty stations. They were also less likely to be provided with necessary work equipment to fulfill their duties while teleworking, and;
4. The UN Internship System must strive to provide a livable stipend and structured internship to interns. We recommend referring to the ILO, WHO, WIPO, and similar well-performing organisations as best models of internship employers.
Chapter 1

Introduction
Internships are essential to many young and eager graduates’ portfolio. Yet, unpaid internships are only available to those who can afford to work without compensation. Therefore, as FII has concluded in its 2017 report, unpaid internships are exploitative in nature and continue to drive the rift between young professionals from different socio-economic backgrounds and different geographic regions.¹ FII believes that by introducing a sufficient, livable stipend to all UN internship programmes can ensure quality, accessible, and fair internships be ensured. The 2019 survey presents the current status of UN internship programmes in regard to diversity, transparency, and career development opportunities. The current pandemic makes it even more evident that unpaid internships contribute to a greater social and economic divide among young professionals. Unjust policies perpetuate a system of unfair and low-quality work experiences, in which young professionals are limited in career development support in addition to retention opportunities.

1.1 2019 – 2020: INTERNSHIPS IN TURMOIL

The Fair Internship Initiative (FII) has been conducting surveys on the conditions in the United Nations (UN) Internship System since 2015. These surveys facilitate a comprehensive view of how the performance of different programmes with regards to diversity, equality, and quality learning experience for young professionals. This latest report combines the regular survey conducted in 2019 with an additional survey on COVID-19’s impact on internships.

FII has seen encouraging changes in UN-affiliated agencies since its first survey. FII has noted some positive changes in UN-affiliated agencies which improved their internship programmes via the introduction or improvement of stipends and other more structural changes. Certain UN organisations have privately cited FII advocacy as contributing to their decision to reform their internship programmes. In 2020, FII welcomes the introduction of stipends in certain agencies, including the World Health Organization (WHO), which introduced a stipend at 20% of the daily subsistence allowance, the level that FII has calculated to provide adequate financing for basic living standards. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) adjusted their programme by introducing a higher stipend for interns with only a bachelor degree, reducing the previous...

sum differentiated by their level of educational attainment.\textsuperscript{2} FII encourages other UN-affiliated agencies to follow the lead of these organisations, and to make similar reforms.

However, the overall UN Internship System requires further improvement. Many entities, including the UN Secretariat, which houses over 2,200 interns per year, still fail to provide stipends for basic living expenses. As evidenced by UN Secretary-General António Guterres’s comments\textsuperscript{3} dismissing the importance of paid internships, UN Management continues to glibly highlight the importance of inclusion in the UN system while failing to address root causes of inequality within its own walls.

The number of available UN internship positions are growing while the number of entry-level vacancies, taken here to refer to P-1 and P-2 positions, is declining, from 1,305 in 2017 to 1,292 in 2018, the last reported year.\textsuperscript{4} This is in contrast to the increasing number of interns. In 1996, the UN Secretariat hosted fewer than 200 interns.\textsuperscript{5} In 2016, the UN Secretariat hosted over 2,200 interns per year, representing a 10-fold increase in the number of interns in just 20 years. As the organization increasingly reduces paid opportunities and expands unpaid opportunities, young professionals seeking a career in international organisations are forced to compete for unpaid internships opportunities to boost their profiles.

Overall, the absence of financial compensation and support for interns has led to several negative effects on intern placements. Unpaid interns are more likely to suffer from a lack of support from their respective office and colleagues. For example, visa procedures tend to be the intern's responsibility alone. Additionally, only a small number of individuals seem to have benefitted from the possibility of employment progression.

There is ample evidence that interns were not considered systematically as the organization responded to the pandemic. For example, while borders closed and offices transitioned to

\textsuperscript{2} Previously, WIPO provided a stipend of CHF 500 to interns from category I (who completed a first degree) and CHF 2,000 to interns from category II (who completed or in the process to complete their graduate studies). In 2020, a policy change was introduced, which gives category I interns a stipend of CHF 1,570. Also, a subsidy of travel expenses was introduced. Any reimbursement of roundtrip travel up to CHF 1,500 for interns who are nationals of developing or Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and who are residing in their home country at the time of recruitment is provided.


\textsuperscript{4} A/73/79 (2018) compared to A/74/82 (2019).

teleworking, many interns were uncertain whether they were required to remain at their duty station. Those who were unable to return to their home countries due to national responses to the pandemic were additionally uncertain as to whether they could obtain the necessary legal status to remain at their duty station. Interns have also been likely to lack technical support from their agencies in terms of the equipment required to work from home. Many also continue to suffer from a lack of sufficient living space during the work-from-home period, as interns generally lack the means to live in homes where they can have a designated office space.

The provision of stipends is vital in promoting diversity by removing the financial burden of internships and giving young professionals from different socio-economic backgrounds the equal opportunity to pursue a career in international organisations. Therefore, FII believes that only by introducing a sufficient, livable stipend to all UN internship programmes can quality, accessible, and fair internships be ensured.

We would like to reiterate Article 23.2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

“Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.”

Senior management continues to defend the position that unpaid interns do not deserve wages. These unwarranted defenses confuse rather than clarify the solution. Stipends, the provision of a fixed, lump-sum amount intended to cover housing, transportation, and basic living expenses like food and health supplies, are in fact provisionally different to wages. The latter are intended to provide financial compensation for the work provided to the employing organization. FII defends the position that interns must receive stipends, rather than wages, in order to ensure equal access to the internship programme.

1.2 SUMMARY OF THE 2019 SURVEY

The 2019 survey aims to explore the differences in internship quality among paid, underpaid, or unpaid internships. Underpaid and paid internships are defined in consultation with levels of daily subsistence allowance (DSA), established by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC).

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7 Stipends higher than 15% of daily subsistence allowance (DSA) is categorised as “paid internship”; below 15% is categorised as “underpaid internship”. Our survey asks the respondents to choose from among several brackets of stipend levels, including USD 0, USD 1-499, USD 500-999, USD 1000-1499, USD 1500-1999, and above USD 2000. This categorisation is geographically sensitive, meaning a stipend of USD 1499 would be considered underpaid if the internship is in Switzerland, but it would be paid if it is located in Thailand. The location of their duty stations would
The survey received 727 responses from 46 UN organisations across 44 duty stations. The questions were designed to capture multiple indicators which measure the quality of internships. These were based on the benchmarking framework developed for UN internship programmes in the 2018 Joint Inspection Unit report on the subject (JIU/REP/2018/1). The first set of questions investigates the transparency and openness of the application process, including: the availability of real-time application status update, whereby applicants are notified of the outcome; selection methods (i.e. written application and/or written assessment and/or interview); assistance with travel arrangements; time provided to prepare for travel; and support for visa applications.

The second section of the survey addresses questions related to the onboarding process and the internship experience. It considers whether interns are provided with information on support mechanisms, access to justice, and their entitlements with regard to annual leave and sick leave. The survey also covers the comprehensiveness of contracts as they relate to the protection of workplace rights, the provision of defined learning objectives and expectations, timely communication of tasks and learning objectives, and whether supervisors are provided with guidelines on their role as intern supervisor.

To assess the adequacy of the onboarding procedure, we account for the following elements: presence of an induction package or briefing, meeting one’s supervisor upon arrival, the provision of information regarding policies and procedures, insertion of the intern in the emergency database, the provision of essential work equipment, ability to access the premises without restrictions, access to training opportunities, the inclusion of travelling among one’s duties, and the conditions offered for such travelling.

Another area of focus relates to the completion of the internship and the opportunity for career development. Within this section, we have included the provision of certificates and recommendation letters, which are an important basis for further career development and feedback opportunities, as well as the extent to which feedback is taken into consideration to improve the internship program. The survey also examined whether the internship period is considered to be full-time work experience by the agencies, and whether interns are required to take a mandatory break between their internship and a potential staff or consultant position.

Finally, the driving aim of the survey is to evaluate the extent an internship program provides factor in whether they would be categorised as paid or underpaid interns. For details refer to the methodology.
equal opportunities, which is incorporated under the fourth JIU benchmarking area, “conditions of the internship programme that align with the UN mandates”. This considers figures such as: the proportions of unpaid, underpaid, and paid interns; geographical diversity; diversity of the income level of origin countries; the frequency of family financial support; and the percentage of interns supporting themselves with their own savings.

1.3 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INTERNSHIPS AND ITS AFTERMATH

On 12 March 2020, the World Health Organisation officially declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. This brought about various complications regarding how the UN responded to the impacts of teleworking on its internship programmes. As a result, the United Nations and its affiliated entities suspended regular office activities, barring any non-essential staff from accessing the workplace. As borders closed and lockdown measures were implemented, uncertainty increased regarding UN interns’ right and ability to stay at their duty station. The complicated situation was compounded by additional uncertainty surrounding whether and how interns could continue their internships, and if the UN would support intern retention.

While the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the UN Secretariat to investigate the introduction of remote internships, FII believes that these should not continue beyond the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that there is much work to be done to assure intern’s rights and representation.

To understand how the pandemic has affected the UN internship programmes, FII consulted with the Departments of Human Resources of 13 UN entities. Furthermore, on 28 March 2020, FII issued a survey to interns across UN duty stations addressing the impact of COVID on their housing, employment, and health status. Combining both information channels, FII has concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought complications to interns and internship programmes in the following areas: repatriation arrangements, lack of work-from-home support, Financial burden, loss networking and career development opportunity, suspension of internship programmes, and inadequate and untimely communication.

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8 The departments of human resources at ILO, ITC, OCHA, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNHCR, UNOG, UNOPS, UNRISD, WHO, and WIPO have been contacted via email in May 2020. Among them, ILO, ITC, UNHCR, UNOPS, UNRISD, WHO and WIPO have replied as of 12 May 2020.

9 Between 28 February and 20 April 2020, the survey has collected 223 responses across 37 UN entities and 16 countries.
It is imperative for United Nations entities to reflect on their ability to “build back better”\textsuperscript{10} from the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing existing and rising issues through the implementation of solutions that will not detract from the goal of improving the quality and experience of UN internships.

\textsuperscript{10} The UN High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) Inequalities Task Team has designated the goal to “build back better” in its policy brief: HLCP Inequalities Task Team, \textit{COVID 19, Inequalities And Building Back Better} (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020), https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2020/10/covid-19-inequalities-and-building-back-better/.
CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY & LIMITATIONS
2. METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

This section outlines the methodology used to develop and interpret the surveys presented in this report. We begin with the 2019 intern survey and then address the COVID-19 survey.

2.1 2019 SURVEY

The following section describes the survey design and the survey structure. The methods of survey dissemination and analysis are also explained. In addition, the limitations of the report are considered.

2.1.1 Survey Design

The 2019 internship survey builds on and incorporates the methodology, indicators, metrics and questionnaire design used in previous surveys. At its core is input received from a number of consultations with stakeholders ahead of the 2017 Global Internship Survey. The first consultation took place in June 2017, when the Fair Internship Initiative, along with the Geneva Interns Association (GIA), hosted an “Intern Board Congress”. This represented an opportunity to convene the representatives of interns in various organizations to share concerns, ideas and collaboration opportunities. Intern congresses have since been hosted bi-annually. From this first congress, FII was able to identify relevant indicators and metrics to evaluate the efficacy of a UN internship programme. Following the 2017 Congress FII formed a joint working group to elaborate the questionnaire.

After months of consultations and revisions of questionnaires used in previous surveys, the 2019 survey launched on 1st August. This coincided with the start date of many interns beginning their fall internship and the end date of interns nearing the end of their summer internship. The survey closed on 6th October.

The survey consisted of 51 multiple-choice questions - seven of which offered the respondent the option to provide customised answers. In some cases, statements were provided to which the respondents could choose from a Likert-type scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). The survey also included three open-ended qualitative questions.
2.1.2 Structure of the Survey

The survey consists of four parts. Each section is directed at assessing the performance of UN internship programmes with regard to benchmarking areas identified in the 2018 Joint Inspection Unit report on the topic (JIU/REP/2018/1). The first section addresses general information about the internship and the steps undertaken before onboarding. This includes the number of prior internships previously undertaken by respondents, the location and name of the organisation, the length of the internship, as well as questions on the recruitment process.

The second section explores the conditions of the internship. It covers the presence of learning objectives, whether intern supervisors receive guidelines for their role, and intern performance evaluation. This section also contains information on the conditions stipulated in the internship agreement: for instance, whether an intern is offered a stipend; whether their contract includes some form of protection from or recourse against harassment; leave entitlements; whether health insurance is provided, and other forms of social protection that should be universally available to all workers.

In the third section, respondents were asked to provide information on the financing of the internship. As most UN organisations do not offer any financial support, this section aimed to quantify the cost of doing an internship and to clarify the extent to which undertaking UN internships causes financial hardship. Respondents indicated their level of financial independence and whether they received financial support from their government or their academic institution. Respondents also provided information about their degree of health insurance coverages as well as their sources of income during their internship, including a second job, bank loan, and/or family support.

The last section collected information on the basic demographics 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, the country in which they obtained their degrees, their parents’ education level as well as the respondents’ age and gender.

2.1.3 Dissemination

The survey was disseminated worldwide through online social media platforms Facebook,
LinkedIn and Twitter, shared via mailing lists and other networks such as individual intern groups (Intern Boards, intern associations, student and professional unions, among others). Regular reminders were also shared until closure of the survey. The survey received 727 responses from interns in different UN organisations and duty stations.

### 2.1.4 Analysis

To examine whether 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. This variable is comprised of three categories: paid, underpaid and unpaid.

Internships are classified as unpaid if the financial support provided 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 internships that offer insufficient compensation to cover living costs. To do so, specific thresholds were elaborated for each duty station using the following methodology:

1. The median DSA was calculated for the country of each duty station, referencing the latest up-to-date information for each city representing the country from the ICSC;
2. This median was multiplied by 30 in order to scale the DSA up to a month;
3. This figure was then used to calculate a fair stipend for the duty station, which should be at least 15% of the monthly median DSA for the duty station.

\[
M_m = \sum_{t=0}^{n} \text{duty station} = DSA
\]

\[
\text{Allowance requested} = (DSA \times 30) \times 15\%
\]

All internships for which the stipend reported by survey respondents equaled or surpassed this amount were considered as paid in the relevant duty station, while those that were greater than zero but lower than the paid threshold were considered underpaid. To refer to the three categories, unpaid, underpaid, and paid, the report will use the term compensation category.

The 2019 survey not only assessed the condition of current UN internship programmes but was also used to rank UN organisations based on respondent experiences of working at their host
organisation. In order to perform this ranking each question response was given a score that was aggregated per organisation. To compute scores for each question, weights were assigned to each respondent’s answer and an average was computed.\textsuperscript{11}

Following the calculation of scores per question, the scores were clustered based on the four sections outlined previously. Consequently, the results presented an overview on each internship program’s performance in each of the benchmarking areas identified by the Joint Inspection Unit. This was intended to help future interns to make informed choices about which UN organisation to apply for.

Finally, a minimum response of three interns was needed for an organisation to be included in the analysis. This led organisations operating under the UN Secretariat to be grouped as a single entity. If we had considered the organizations as independent entities, many would not have had sufficient responses for there to be a valid result. The decision to group the responses of interns at all UN Secretariat organisations is further justified by the fact that they are all subject to the same internship policy. As a consequence of these criteria the United Nations Global Compact was ultimately excluded and questions 20 and 21, addressing work-related travel during the internship, were not taken into account.

\textbf{2.1.5 Limitations}

There were 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 (SurveyMonkey) 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 whether 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 completing the survey more than once.

\textsuperscript{11} An example of this approach is as follows: for Q1, a yes or no question, the value of 1 was assigned to Yes and 0 to No. If hypothetically there were 10 respondents for WTO and 8 of them said Yes, then the score for Q1 for WTO will be 8/10. Further details regarding the questions and their corresponding weights can be found in the Annex.
The 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, the results are limited by voluntary response bias, as answers are limited to those who voluntarily took the time to do the survey.

Although the categorisation of interns into three compensation categories (paid, underpaid, unpaid) seems relevant for the analysis, the allowance calculation does not reflect the city where the internship took place. This is due to the challenge of taking into account the city where the internship was undertaken. Allowances are typically calculated at the city level, but the survey only collected data at the country level. To overcome this problem, the median DSA of the cities included in the ICSC was calculated per country to determine the allowance. An additional caveat is that unpaid internships in the UN system are far more common than paid ones, therefore inferences made on comparing the categories of interns must always be considered as being based on the net outcomes of very different sample sizes.

Moreover, survey dissemination coverage is not necessarily proportional to the number of interns in given duty stations, as distribution networks registered different degrees of responsiveness depending on the country. Geneva and New York account for most respondents, which reflects to some extent the geography of the intern population which is highly concentrated in these duty stations. Furthermore, sample representation is not proportional to the distribution of interns per organization. While the dissemination of the questionnaire was particularly effective in some organizations (ILO, UNHCR, OHCHR, UNDP having the most responses), others appear to be far less represented (for instance WFP, UNECE, WIPO and UNOPS).

Finally, it must be considered that respondents were both current and former interns. Survey participation was not limited to respondents who had completed their internship in the last 12 months.

2.2 COVID-19 SURVEY

The following section outlines the methods employed in the COVID-19 survey. It begins with survey design, then outlines the structure, as well as the method of dissemination and analysis. This section concludes by discussing the limitations of the survey.
2.2.1 Survey Design

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposition of lockdowns across the world, the Fair Internship Initiative launched a survey in order to assess the impact of related response measures on internships in the UN system. The intention was to assess how initial measures in response to the pandemic, such as the transition to a remote setting, had impacted the daily lives of interns across the UN system. The survey was furthermore conceived with the goal to map differences across UN entities and to investigate possible discrepancies in the impact on paid and unpaid internships. Ultimately, the survey aimed at enhancing FII's advocacy for better protection of interns’ rights during the pandemic and at informing UN decision-making in this area.

Bearing in mind the rapidly evolving situation, the survey was designed following an internal consultation process with inputs from the various FII branches, before its launch on March 28, 2020. The survey was closed on April 20.

2.2.2 Structure of the Survey

The survey is divided into seven parts. The first section identified the UN entity for which respondents were/had been interning with. A second section was devoted to the remote status of the internship. Questions highlighted the transition of UN entities to remote status. Additionally, respondents who had been offered a remote option were asked in a third section whether they had been provided with specific equipment and tools to continue their internship at home, such as professional laptops, VPN access, corporate headsets, etc.

The fourth section aimed to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the completion of the internship. Respondents were asked whether their internship programme had ended abruptly, and if so, whether that had been at their own request or due to a request or informal pressure from the administration. Questions addressed whether the intern’s contract remained unchanged following the transition or if rearrangements of the contract were made. Finally, respondents were invited to specify whether they had been given the option to extend their internship due to the pandemic.

For interns receiving financial compensation, such as a stipend, a fifth section was devoted to the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on the provision of the stipend. Respondents were asked
whether their stipend was affected if they decided to leave their duty station and transition to remote work, and, if the interns' stipend was affected due to the transition to remote work, whether they were predicting financial instability due to the loss of their stipend.

The sixth section covered matters of resiliency, relocation and legal status. Firstly, respondents were asked whether their UN entity had implemented any kind of resiliency preparedness plan for interns, such as the provision of a one-time payment to support repatriation. If provided with repatriation support, respondents were asked to specify what the resiliency preparedness plan was. Respondents were asked whether their internship was/had been based in the same country as their country of origin, and if they were still stationed in the country where their internship was based. Another question inquired whether respondents were required to abruptly relocate due to COVID-19. One question addressed possible guidance provided by the organization or supervisor on repatriation. Finally, several questions relating to legal status closed the section, addressing whether respondents’ had received information on their legal status at the duty station and support by the employer in extending legal status at the duty station.

Lastly, the seventh section related to communication of the measures and overall perception of the handling of the COVID-19 situation by the UN entity. Respondents were also invited to share any other remarks they may have had.

2.2.3 Dissemination
The survey was disseminated online through mailing lists and social media sites Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram. Where possible, intern groups (Intern Boards, intern associations, student and professional unions, etc.) around the world were also used for dissemination. Dissemination was followed up with regular reminders until closure of the survey. The survey received 232 responses.

2.2.4 Analysis
Firstly, FII analysed aggregate data in order to release overall findings on Labour Day (May 1, 2020). This preliminary analysis enabled FII to develop a first assessment of how internship programmes had been impacted by COVID-19 related measures.

Secondly, in order to conduct more in-depth analysis, the data gathered by the survey was disaggregated. Depending on the entity they had indicated, respondents were divided into
three categories (paid, underpaid and unpaid) using the methodology described in section 2.1.4., enabling us to map possible discrepancies among UN entities.

2.2.5 Limitations

The same limitations to the 2019 survey are present for the Covid-19 survey. Additional limitations relating to dissemination revolve around the broader challenges of transitioning to remote work. For example, interns that were ill, relocating, or otherwise impacted by the pandemic, may not have had continued access to networks that would have otherwise introduced them to the survey.
CHAPTER 3

A QUALITY INDEX OF UN INTERNSHIP PROGRAMMES: THE 2019 SURVEY
3. A QUALITY INDEX OF UN INTERNSHIP PROGRAMMES: THE 2019 SURVEY

This chapter will now outline the results of the FII survey sent to UN system interns in 2019. As previously mentioned, this is an annual survey intended to understand the demographics of UN interns, in addition to providing an assessment of the experiences of UN interns with regard to the benchmarking areas identified for UN internship programmes in the 2018 Joint Inspection Unit report. The results communicate that paid internships are generally more in line with JIU benchmarks to ensure quality and fair internships when compared to unpaid and underpaid internships.

3.1 BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK

In 2018, the Joint Inspection Unit of the UN produced a report looking into UN system internship programmes (JIU/REP/2018/1). The report included a series of benchmarks covering various aspects of internships. These aim to improve the effectiveness of the internship programmes in addition to the reputation of the host organizations by establishing “a coherent internship programme across the United Nations system with a common set of good practices.”12 This benchmarking framework was used as the basis for assessing UN internship programmes throughout this report. What follows is a breakdown of survey results as they relate to each of the four benchmarking areas.

3.2 BENCHMARK AREA 1: RECRUITMENT AND APPLICATION PROCESS

For internships to be fair and inclusive, the selection process should be competitive and merit-based. This requires the application process to be open and transparent. During the recruitment phase interns should be provided with sufficient time and adequate administrative support to meet the bureaucratic requirements of the country where the duty station is placed.

According to the ILO’s General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment, “recruitment should take into account policies and practices that promote efficiency,

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transparency and protection for workers in the process, such as mutual recognition of skills and qualifications.”

3.2.1 Transparency of the Recruitment and Application Process

The first JIU benchmark identifies that, “for the recruitment and application process of an internship programme to be considered open and transparent, the applicants should be informed of their application status in real time.”

Regardless of the compensation category of intern, most of the candidates are generally informed about the application in real time (Figure 1). As exemplified in Figure 2, unpaid and underpaid are typically informed about the success of their application within a month of completing their application. In contrast, the paid category seems to have a longer waiting period before being informed of whether their application was successful or not.

![Figure 1 Percentage of candidates informed about the status of their application(s) in real time by category](image1)

![Figure 2 Informed about the final decision within a month after the completion](image2)

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14 Report Of The Joint Inspection Unit For 2018, 12.
3.2.2 Selection Procedures

JIU benchmark 2 states that “applicants should also have an interview and, when necessary, a written examination.” Figure 3 indicates that the longer waiting period for paid interns may be explained by the fact that, typically, paid candidates are more likely to be required to follow three procedures: a written application, a test and an interview. On the other hand, underpaid candidates may be selected simply on the basis of an interview, and unpaid candidates may be selected to undertake an internship after only submitting a written application. Both of these approaches may accelerate the selection process. Nevertheless, most candidates follow this two-step procedure: (i) supplying a written application and (ii) undergoing an interview. Interestingly, fewer unpaid respondents had to undertake a test and an interview than underpaid candidates.

![Candidates procedure by category](chart-image)

**Figure 3 Candidates procedure by category**

3.2.3 Time between Selection and Start Day

JIU benchmark 3 states that “host organisations should not only ensure that successful candidates have adequate time between their selection and their start date, but they should also provide administrative support for travel and visas.” Paid interns, on average, have more time to prepare for their internship (Figure 4) and also tend to receive more administrative

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15 Report Of The Joint Inspection Unit For 2018, 24.
16 ibid.
support for visa application (Figure 5). Unpaid and underpaid interns, in contrast, are on average less likely to receive administrative support for their visa application, with these interns likely navigating visa applications themselves. Given that visa requirements differ across duty stations and also depend on the nationality of the applicant, a lack of administrative support could create additional barriers for interns that may delay their arrival at the duty station or could contribute to added stress.

**Figure 4 Time before starting the internship**

**Figure 5 Administrative support**
3.3 BENCHMARK AREA 2: ONBOARDING AND INTERNSHIP PERIOD

In line with the SDG 8, full and productive employment and decent work for all, and the United Nations Global Compact, all employees around the world should have decent working conditions. The Global Compact indicates the standards of decent work should include ensuring workplace security, social protection, better prospects for personal development and social integration. These standards should be observed during the onboarding and throughout the whole duration of the internship. It is proved that improving workplace practices beyond legal compliance can result in higher morale and job satisfaction, and foster creativity and innovation.17

3.3.1 Onboarding

For the onboarding process and internship experience to be considered as protective of interns, the organisations should, as a minimum:

- Provide an induction package featuring information about policies and procedures, how their hosting department is located within the broader organisation and additional useful aspects for living in the stationed city and country within the first week of the internship (JIU Benchmark 4);
- Present a comprehensive written contract outlining the entitlements to sick and annual leave vacation days within the first week of the internship (JIU Benchmarks 4 and 7);
- Clearly communicate the terms of reference within the first week of the internship, including a list of tasks and the learning programme for the internship period, including specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound indicators for the final evaluation, and informing them of training and learning facilities at the interns’ disposal (JIU Benchmark 4);
- Enable interns to meet their supervisor as soon as possible (JIU Benchmark 4), and;
- Register interns on the hosting organisation’s emergency database (JIU Benchmark 8).

The survey shows that most of these criteria are influenced by the payment status of the internships: Paid interns were more likely to receive an induction package and meet their supervisors upon arrival than underpaid and unpaid interns (Figure 6) and were also more clearly informed about policies and procedures in the first week of their internship (Figure 7).

Furthering this inequality during onboarding, unpaid interns were less likely to either receive an induction package or meet their supervisor upon arrival (Figure 8) and had no learning programme communicated to them. Unpaid interns only received an induction package or briefing in 23% of cases, which was only slightly higher for underpaid interns with 25%. Moreover, unpaid and underpaid intern induction packages were less comprehensive compared to the ones for paid interns. Importantly, unpaid interns were less likely to be informed about their annual leave and sick leave entitlements, which is recommended in JIU Benchmark 7. 51% of unpaid respondents indicated they did not receive any information on their entitlements, compared to 4% and 14% for paid and underpaid interns (Figure 9). This shows that paid internships have established and comprehensive onboarding structures, in contrast to unpaid and underpaid ones.
Additionally, the survey evidenced common shortcomings in all forms of internships. As indicated in Figure 10, specific learning objectives were only communicated to less than one-third of all interns, while tasks and a learning programme were communicated only to 55% to 64%, in the first week (Figure 11). Moreover, the majority of interns were not aware of the presence of guidelines for supervisors, although it can be also stated that such guidelines are more likely to exist for paid internships (Figure 12). As recommended by JIU Benchmark 5, supervisor guidelines for their role as intern supervisor are an important instrument to ensure common standards among internships and have an inequality dimension, as supervisors of unpaid interns are less likely to receive guidelines. This further outlines differences in internships explicitly linkable to the payment status.
In a similar vein, more than a third of all interns did not know whether they were registered in the emergency database of their organization, while paid interns were more likely to be informed about this (Figure 13). This shows that common shortcomings exist regarding emergency preparedness, which are yet erroneously influenced by the payment status of interns.

![Specific internship / work learning objectives](image1)

![Tasks and learning programme clearly communicated by the first week of your internship](image2)

![Guidelines for Supervisors](image3)
3.3.2 Support throughout the Internship

It is similarly crucial the interns are provided with support mechanisms throughout the whole internship period. The provision and clarity of support mechanisms for cases of abuse or conflict situations encompassed in JIU Benchmark 6 are problematic to access for interns in general but worse for those that are unpaid. Figure 14 shows that around half of the surveyed interns were not informed about these mechanisms nor had access to them, with one-third of unpaid interns having none of the above. This demonstrates that unpaid interns are more vulnerable to abuse, harassment or related problems as they are without the possibility to receive support in such situations, unlike their underpaid and paid peers who are slightly more protected. This constitutes a heavy burden on unpaid interns and speaks to the differing treatment of interns based on their payment status.
Essential work conditions for internships, including necessary equipment and regular access to work premises, are outlined in JIU Benchmark 8, and are essential provisions in recognising the professionalism of interns’ work and upholding their dignity. Yet, paid internships scored better in this area than unpaid and underpaid ones, reinforcing the notion according to which payment status significantly affects the quality of the internship (Figure 15).

As another aspect of the recognition of professionalism in internships, interns receiving some form of pay were more likely to receive travel allowances compared to unpaid interns who were forced to commit to work-related travel at their own expense (Figure 16). Also, fewer organizations provided insurance to underpaid and unpaid interns than paying organizations. As part of JIU Benchmark 9, work-related travel is a significant component of the learning experience in internships which is disadvantageous to unpaid interns. These points embody a clear inequality in internships related both to a lack of recognition for the professionalism and work of unpaid interns and greater burdens in benefiting from the valuable experience of work-related travel (Figure 17 and 18).
As a final remark that further evidences the existent inequality, paid interns were more likely to have the same access to the work premises and training and learning opportunities as staff, in line with JIU Benchmark 10. Having the same access is a general component that symbolizes a recognition of the work of interns but is influenced by the payment status (Figure 19). Also, unpaid interns benefited significantly less from training and learning opportunities, as they were less likely to be informed about them or to have reduced or no access, lowering the quality of their learning experience compared to their paid peers (Figure 20). This clearly shows the link between the learning experience and the payment status and counters the argument that unpaid internships are remunerated through the gained experience and learning. Rather, unpaid and underpaid internships come with a lower learning experience when compared to paid ones, showcasing worrisome inequalities.
3.4 BENCHMARK AREA 3: COMPLETION OF THE INTERNSHIP AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

In relation to the argument that unpaid internships are compensated by experience that advances their career, the question stands as to whether they truly provide such benefits. Whether interns receive documents confirming and commending their work, and to what extent internships are counted as relevant working experience at the host organization are key elements.

3.4.1 Provision of a Certificate or Recommendation Letter

Regarding the confirmation and recommendation documents, all internship categories have deficiencies. Fewer than half of the surveyed interns received a certificate and/ or recommendation letter (Figure 21). Though JIU Benchmark 11 specifies the importance of issuing a certificate or recommendation letter at the completion of the internship which are important documents interns require for future applications, the survey results show that a high
Fair Internship Initiative

proportion of interns are not provided with the necessary documents that would assist them in advancing their career. As such an essential aspect of the internship, the dependency on the supervisor to receive the documents for over one third of all interns is too high. Moreover, the high proportion of interns who did not know whether they would receive a certificate and/or recommendation speaks to the lack of common standards in their provision and deficiencies in the communication with their supervisor that fail to specify what interns can expect from their internship.

3.4.2 Relevance of the Internship for Further Opportunities within the Organization

The lack of certificates and recommendation stands the question of whether internships are regarded as relevant working experience for staff or consultancy positions within the host organisation. JIU Benchmark 13 emphasizes the importance of organizations to recognize the experience of interns as working experience, as an important reason for interns to commit to internships is in the anticipation that they are positioned to advance their career within the organization. It can be seen that paid internships are more likely to be treated as work experience within the UN system than unpaid or underpaid ones. This trend highlights a significant disparity in the treatment of internships that penalizes those who are unpaid or underpaid (Figure 22). Organizations that pay their interns assign more value to the intern’s experience compared to unpaid ones. The argument that all internships are a stepping-stone career-wise is patently false as the experience of unpaid interns is erroneously discounted, for no reason other than the stated policy in administrative directives.
### 3.4.3 Opportunities for Interns to Provide Feedback

An important component in improving internships is the opportunity for interns to provide feedback to the host organization. JIU Benchmark 12 underscores the importance of ensuring interns have a voluntary but viable feedback mechanism. With less than half of all interns indicating the possibility to fill out an evaluation form upon completion of their internship (Figure 23), interns across all compensation schemes are unable to offer feedback to their supervisors. As such, organizations are signaling that intern feedback is unnecessary to effectively operate. This is problematic for many reasons; namely, in order for organizations to evolve and best serve their employees and constituents, they should reinforce feedback mechanisms, as opposed to limit voices within the organization. In addition, interns provide valuable and cost-effective inputs that drive the efficacy of these organizations. These organizations rely on interns yet limit their voice within.

#### Figure 22 Experience considered as working experience when applying for staff position in Organization

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#### Figure 23 Evaluation form about their internship experience

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<td>6%</td>
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</table>
3.4.4 Consideration of the Feedback Provided by Interns

A major difference remains the feedback from paid interns. These seem to be more likely to be used by host organizations as references for the improvement of internship programmes (Figure 24). This furthers the aforementioned argument that paid internships are valued more than unpaid or underpaid ones, contributing to the huge inequality between compensation statuses and hampering the overall internship experience for those who receive no or inadequate pay. It should be noted that the considerably high proportion of surveyed interns who could not answer these two points shows the lack of common standards in internships. It also demonstrates a lack of communication.

3.5 BENCHMARK AREA 5: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

UN internship programs should align to the inclusive mandates of the UN in support of youth and to the Sustainable Development Goals, “leaving no one behind.” Providing equal opportunities is essential not only to grant the realization of human rights for every young person, but also to empower them to achieve their full potential and recognize their positive contributions as agents of change.18

As indicated in the UN Global Compact conditions for decent work include non-discrimination and equal opportunities and treatment, including for men and women.19 Additionally, an inclusive culture attracts the best talent and generates a diverse workforce that delivers effectively by tapping into different perspectives, experiences, knowledge and approaches.20

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19 “Labour”, UN Global Compact.
3.5.1 Geographical / Socio-economic Diversity

In line with the above, internship programs should be accessible to all candidates that meet the selection criteria, with no distinction in regard to their region of origin or socio-economic status (JIU benchmark 14). Nonetheless, as of 2020, most of the internship programmes throughout the UN system remain unpaid, as many UN bodies, including the largest UN entity, the UN Secretariat, exclusively offer unpaid internships. This has severe implications for the accessibility of UN internship programmes as it excludes potential applicants who cannot afford to work for free (Figure 25).

A frequent critique of unpaid or underpaid intern opportunities is that these positions discriminate against those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and directly contribute to deepening social inequalities.21 In order to analyze if UN internship programmes promote equal opportunities, the respondents to the survey have been classified geographically according to their country of origin. As displayed in the graphic below, it is remarkable that more than 50% of the interns come from Europe and Central Asia22, while each of the other regions account for less than 15% of the total (Figure 26). It is plainly evident there is a geographic imbalance among interns within the UN System.

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21 Fair Internship Initiative, 2017 UN Internships Report.
22 Central Asia—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
Moreover, if disaggregating further from region to the income range of country of origin\textsuperscript{23}, the gap between the percentage of interns from high-income and low-income countries is even greater. Indeed, only 14\% (Figure 27) of the total interns come from countries ranked as low or lower middle income.

The distribution of unpaid interns is similar to the general distribution of interns (Figure 28). Nonetheless, while the percentage remains low, there is a significant increase in the percentage of interns representing low and lower middle-income countries when the internships are paid (Figure 29). Figure 29 shows a more diversified pool of interns, which reflects how paid internships increase the opportunities for people coming from areas classified as low or lower middle income.

\textsuperscript{23} The classification disregards the specific socio-economic background of each of the interns.
### 3.5.2 Sources of Financial Resources

To allow the provision of equal opportunities and fostering diversity, the organizations should facilitate the availability of resources to cover the living expenditures of interns by establishing suitable mechanisms such as project resources, ad hoc trust funds and partnerships with no strings attached (JIU benchmark 15). Given that most UN System internships are unpaid or underpaid, individuals from wealthy backgrounds are favoured as they are able to take on the financial burden of an unpaid or underpaid internship.

As most of the internships offered by the UN agencies and programs are unpaid, interns from disadvantaged financial positions are forced to find other sources of funding that will allow them to at least partially cover their expenses.

The survey results reflect the different sources that provided financial support to interns. Most of the paid interns are capable of covering their expenses with the stipend provided by the host organization while a small percentage still need support from their savings, their families, university scholarships or governmental aid (Figure 30). In stark contrast to paid internships only 5% of underpaid interns can fully rely on their stipend to finance their stay, thus the vast majority need additional revenue sources, support from their families or scholarships.
Finally, for unpaid interns families are the main source of financial support, followed by savings or a part-time job and, to a lower degree, governmental aid or university scholarships.

The analysis leads to the following conclusions:

- As underpaid or unpaid interns need financial support from their families, individuals with a wealthy background are favored, thus introducing discrimination against those whose families cannot afford to support them. Families that decide to finance an internship, may incur financial burdens, which may lead to additional stress;

- If the underpaid or unpaid intern has to work before the internship to save money, there might be a delay in the interns’ engagement in the UN system as obtaining enough money to cover the expenses in the cities where the HQ and agencies are located may take a long time. This is a discouraging factor in applying for internship positions;

- In case the person has no visa restrictions to engage in a part-time job during the internship, the underpaid or unpaid intern will be at a disadvantage in the job market when compared to a paid intern, as working extra hours may take focus away from the internship and decrease the intern’s performance, not to mention the higher stress they would incur. This would be accompanied by less time for job applications or networking, factors that might negatively affect future employment opportunities.
Therefore, according to JIU Benchmark 15, budget lines and annual reporting of expenditures should be established to monitor the costs related to internships, and to provide for these costs. This should then be translated into the inclusion of stipends covering the living expenditures of interns in budgets. It would be preferable that travel expenses, such as a round-trip ticket to join the duty station, are also covered by the contracting agency or organization if interns cannot afford it. Further supporting measures might be the facilitation of accommodation or the provision of meal vouchers for the interns.

### 3.5.3 Other Barriers

Another major barrier to equal employment opportunities is the mandatory break some agencies impose before interns may apply for open positions after the internship period. This break causes a disadvantage for former interns compared to the larger pool of job applicants as they will have to find a job outside the organization or engage in other activities before the organization allows them to apply to its open staff positions.

In this case, unpaid and underpaid interns are again at a disadvantage as more than half of them cannot apply for a staff position without a mandatory break period (Figure 31). The JIU Benchmark 16 calls for the UN system to eliminate the mandatory break to allow interns to apply at any time for open positions for which they may qualify.

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<td>Paid</td>
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*Figure 31 Allowed to apply to open staff positions without a mandatory break after completing internship*
CHAPTER 4

UPDATE ON THE 2019 UN INTERNSHIP RANKING
4. UPDATE ON THE 2019 QUALITY INDEX

In 2019, FII created a UN Internship Programme Quality Index\textsuperscript{24} based on the responses collected in their UN-wide intern survey from 2019. The survey addressed issues relevant to the benchmarks identified within the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) report 2018, “Review of Internship programmes in the United Nations system”.

The scoring mechanism assigns a grade from 1 to 5 based on the four benchmarks:

1. Fairness and transparency of the application and selection process, including pre-departure administrative support;
2. Support for interns through the onboarding and internship period;
3. Completion of the internship and career development, and;
4. Equal opportunities (conditions of the internship programmes aligned to the United Nations mandates).

The sum of the scores in each of these four areas was compiled to produce an overall score. This was then used to produce the ranking of the UN internship programmes that were reviewed by survey respondents.

No UN internship programme received an overall score within the ‘Very Poor’ range, but neither did any organisation receive an overall score within the ‘Very Good’ range. The overall scores for the reviewed internship programmes were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Mediocre</th>
<th>Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UN-Women (1.7/5)<em>, United Nations Volunteers (1.8/5)**; UN Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the near East (1.95/5); UNDP (1.97/5)</em></td>
<td>UNESCO (2.06/5), ITU (2.11/5), UNAIDS (2.23/5), UN University (2.25/5), UN Secretariat (2.35/5), UNIDO (2.37/5), UNFPA (2.4/5)<em>, WHO (2.43/5)</em>, UNITAR (2.7/5), UNICEF (2.73/5)</td>
<td>FAO (3.01/5), IOM (3.14/5), UNHCR (3.29/5)*, WFP (3.42/5), UNOPS (3.56/5), WTO (3.84), WIPO (3.91/5), ILO (3.99/5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\* Organisations listed in italics were undergoing a review of their internship programme during the development of the Index or are currently undergoing a review.

\** UN Volunteers have largely replaced their internships with funded volunteers.

The low scores of UN organisations that were in the ‘Poor’ and ‘Mediocre’ interval were mostly determined by the fact that the internship programmes do not provide a stipend, implying a score below 1 for benchmark section 4 (Equal Opportunities). Subsequently, the highest scorers were primarily placed in the ‘Good’ category because they provide a stipend. The provision of a stipend offers equal opportunities to all potential candidates, as it removes the financial barrier to undertaking an internship.

However, we noticed that in several cases higher scores for benchmark section 4 are accompanied by higher scores for the other benchmarks. This indicates that better scoring internships programmes have more than just financial support, and also include holistic approaches that account for many quality dimensions.

Since the publication of the 2019 Quality Index, the organisations that were listed in italics in the scoring table above have updated their policies. WHO, UNDP, UNHCR and UN-WOMEN have started providing a stipend to their interns, implying that now they would score higher in the “Equal Opportunities" benchmark section. Additionally, UNFPA is currently reviewing its internship programme. These reforms are highly welcomed and encourage FII to keep pushing forward in its advocacy mission, especially given that three out of four introduced stipend schemes were below the recommended level.

The objective of the FII UN Internship Quality Index has been to raise awareness about the strengths and weaknesses of UN internship programmes, as well as encourage and applaud positive reforms. Unfortunately, due to data collection issues caused by the pandemic (i.e. abnormally low numbers of interns that would have biased sample representativeness) FII was not able to conduct an index-based survey for 2020.

These are the latest updates regarding stipends:

- **WHO**: provides interns who need support with a stipend equivalent to 20% of the reduced daily subsistence allowance (DSA) rate, up to a specific amount per duty station;
- **UNDP**: provides interns with a monthly stipend of 10% of the reduced DSA rate, up to USD1,000 a month, to cover costs associated with the internship;
- **UNHCR**: provides interns with an allowance equivalent to 10% of the local DSA rate;
- **UN-Women**: provides interns with a stipend of 10% of the reduced DSA rate.
This information was drawn from communications between FII and the respective organisations’ HR and interns, in addition to information readily available on the organisations’ website. FII’s recommendations with regard to stipends, which were included in the 2018 JIU report, argue that they should be 20% of DSA for the duty station, or at least above the poverty line for the duty station. This level of stipend would broaden the pool of possible internship candidates, as it would enable interns to cover basic living expenses and thus remove unnecessary financial burdens. UN internships would therefore become truly equal opportunities for eligible candidates from any country and any socioeconomic background.

With this recommendation in mind, we would like to note that the stipends introduced by UNDP, UNHCR and UN-Women are too low, based on the percentage of DSA rule, thus interns in these organisations are still underpaid. The stipend introduced by WHO however is set at an appropriate level. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that in all organisations interns are responsible for the costs related to travelling to the duty station. Covering these expenses on the part of the employer would further improve UN internships’ fairness. Nonetheless, we applaud the efforts of these organisations for introducing stipends and continue to encourage other organisations to follow suit. Finally, we encourage all organisations providing stipends to make efforts to ensure that the provided stipends are in line with our recommendations, ensuring interns receive an adequate level of financial support and therefore do not have to undertake financial burdens in order to pursue a UN internship.

The Fair Internship Initiative intends to produce the next version of the UN Quality Index in the year 2021. The updates discussed here, and any others that may occur in the meantime, will be reflected in the updated Index, along with the experiences of their interns.
CHAPTER 5

THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON UN INTERNSHIPS
5. THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON UN INTERNSHIPS

On the 12th of March, the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. As a result, the United Nations and its affiliated entities suspended office activities, barring any non-essential staff from accessing and working within the premises.

In most UN entities, interns, who are classified as gratis personnel and not employees, suddenly faced immense uncertainty. The pandemic disrupted daily life for most people in the world, but as the most vulnerable members in the UN system, interns were, and continue to be, disproportionately affected compared to regular staff. During this time, interns have been negatively affected economically, mentally, and professionally.

Amidst the pandemic, the UN Secretariat and a few UN agencies are seeking to introduce permanent remote internships. Although necessary during the pandemic, we believe that extending remote internships beyond this crisis will not make internship programmes more diverse, refuting the common argument in favour of a new system of remote internships.

In this section, we will illustrate the many different ways interns have been affected by this pandemic, the immediate response from UN entities, the pitfalls of plans to permanently introduce remote internships, and FII’s response to the pandemic.

The work-from-home arrangements are continuing into the fourth quarter of 2020, with various UN entities yet to resume 100% office capacity. Interns are often the last to return to the office, assuming they see the office at all during their internship.

5.1 UNPAID AND ISOLATED: HOW THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AFFECTED INTERNS

To understand how the pandemic has affected UN internship programmes, FII contacted the Departments of Human Resources of 13 UN entities. Furthermore, FII disseminated a survey to UN interns globally, including those in duty stations such as Geneva, Nairobi, New York among others. Combining these two sources of information, FII has concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought complications to interns and internship programmes in the

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25 The departments of human resources at ILO, ITC, OCHA, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNHCR, UNOG, UNOPS, UNRISD, WHO, and WIPO have been contacted via email in May 2020. Among them, ILO, ITC, UNHCR, UNOPS, UNRISD, WHO and WIPO have replied as of 12 May 2020.

26 As of 20 April 2020, the survey has collected 223 responses across 37 UN entities and 16 countries.
following areas: repatriation arrangements; lack of work-from-home support; financial burden; loss networking and career development opportunity; suspension of internship programmes, and; inadequate and untimely communication. The following subsections will outline the issues raised in these areas.

5.1.1 Repatriation Arrangements

Since most interns travelled from outside their duty stations\(^{27}\), they needed to decide in a very short period of time whether to stay at the duty station or return to their home countries as the pandemic hit and offices closed. Among the entities that replied to our inquiry, ILO, WHO and WIPO allowed interns to decide whether they wanted to stay in their duty stations or to return to their home countries, whereas UNRISD, which is under the Secretariat, did not allow interns to leave. Given the highly volatile environment COVID has created, living limitations as stipulated by UNRISD force interns to remain in cities that may pose extreme health risks.

In contrast to the guidance and information provided by these organisations, our survey shows that 62% of respondents did not receive any guidance from their employers on whether to remain at their duty station, causing confusion. For example, interns did not know if they were allowed to continue working from outside of their duty stations, or whether their stipend (if provided) would be suspended if they left. The delay in making and communicating decisions that would affect interns restricted the range of options available for repatriation. Furthermore, these limitations can exacerbate already stressful situations as interns are forced to remain in a foreign country, restricting their ability to rely on support systems in their home country.

On the other hand, some interns whose internships ended during the pandemic have faced challenges in returning to their home countries as flights were suspended, prices for many flights increased, and countries went into complete lockdown. Some UN entities supported their interns in extending their legal status at their duty station. For example, the ILO requested a humanitarian extension of the Carte de Légitimation from the Canton of Geneva for its interns and/or provided a three-month extension of internship contracts. Nevertheless, about 34% of respondents to the survey did not receive guarantees about an extension of their contract after its completion and 41% were not given the option to extend in spite of the uncertainty surrounding options to repatriate.

\(^{27}\) 70.6% of FII COVID-19 survey’s respondents were interning outside their countries of origins.
5.1.2 Lack of Work-from-home Support
Interns, whether they chose to stay or leave the duty station, had to work remotely as offices closed. However, only 42% of respondents were provided with the necessary equipment and tools for teleworking. As interns are not classified as staff by the UN\textsuperscript{28} it was not guaranteed that they would be provided with a company laptop or VPN.

Working from home was a necessary measure during the first period of lockdowns internationally. But compared to UN staff members, who were likely far better prepared to afford a stable living environment, interns were often living in shared sublet apartments. Some did not even have a desk or quiet environment to work. A former intern commented that they had been living in a tiny room in an apartment shared with two other people, and one of them had to sleep in the living room during the lockdown.

5.1.3 Financial Burden
Among paid interns who responded to the COVID-19 survey, 93% reported that their stipend was not affected by the lockdown. However, a large number of interns in the UN systems are unpaid. Work-from-home presented a whole new challenge to these interns.

As previously stated, interns were likely to face costly travel tickets if they chose to leave the duty station. Regardless of their travel situation, interns still need to pay for living costs. The cost of working might have shifted to interns due to home-working, as the interns needed to fund office supplies, Wi-Fi, and electricity instead of the organizations. The financial burden has always been heavy for unpaid interns, but it has become even more unaffordable facing the financial crisis ahead.

Medical expenses should also be considered as interns are required to have health insurance in duty stations such as Geneva. For interns, especially unpaid, an extension implies a steep increase in expenses that they might not have factored in before they arrived. It is worth noticing that the administrative policy remained unclear as to whether they were still covered by the scheme if they were no longer in the duty station.

Encouragingly, knowing the burden this pandemic imposed on interns, several entities offered

\textsuperscript{28}According to the UN Secretariat, interns are classified as "gratis personnel", A/73/79. “Composition of the Secretariat: Staff Demographics”. 
financial support to their interns. UNEP has provided their interns with a one-time resiliency fund of USD500, the ILO offered to reimburse interns if the travel cost to their home countries was too high, and the WHO helped arrange repatriation flights. Additionally, both ILO and WHO provided financial support for interns to purchase extended medical insurance. Nevertheless, 67% of our survey respondents stated that their entities did not implement any resiliency plan for interns.

5.1.4 Loss of Networking and Career Development Opportunities
Another hardship faced by interns during the pandemic was the loss of career development opportunities. An internship is often a crucial first step at the beginning of a career. Interns have the opportunity to learn from their supervisors and colleagues, network with people in different departments and organisations, and adapt to cooperating with co-workers. In fact, one of the most common arguments against paying interns is that interns gain valuable learning experience and networking opportunities when working in duty stations. However, interns who worked during the pandemic lost precious learning opportunities because of the teleworking arrangement, without any efforts to ensure that these crucial, and now missing, elements were otherwise compensated for. A testimony from our survey illustrates this problem:

“I think now I am also doing so much more work and responsibility […]. All opportunities for networking, mentoring, learning, cross-training, and attending events that make the internship experience complete are gone and I am now just an unpaid consultant basically.”

(COVID-19 survey, 2020)

Teleworking of course is necessary to protect public health, but the organizations should also ensure the learning elements in internships are not all lost during the lockdowns. This is particularly true for soft skills which are harder to develop virtually. Frequent communications between supervisors and interns should be encouraged, the organizations should consider providing more online skills development tools and arranging virtual networking events, seminars, and career development sessions.

5.1.5 Suspension of Internship Programmes
As a result of the pandemic international travel has been delayed or suspended indefinitely. Also, to prevent further spreading of the virus, most UN entities have opted to suspend the hiring of interns until further notice and would not consider opening the roster before the beginning of 2021. Many programmes only accept applications from interns who have graduated with their master degree a year ago or less. It is still unclear whether this imposed limit would be lifted for
the year 2021 or when the organisations would reopen their internship programmes as of the publication of this report.

5.1.6. Inadequate and Untimely Communication

A considerable number of respondents reported feeling overwhelmed and left to their own devices. Comparing survey data with information provided by Human Resources departments, our inquiry reveals a gap between the policies put in place and their implementation, often due to inadequate communication of these policies to supervisors and interns. Multiple survey respondents also reported a feeling that intern-specific measures had not been sufficiently considered by the host organisation.

5.2 THE INTRODUCTION OF PERMANENT REMOTE UNPAID INTERNSHIPS

The COVID-19 crisis has inevitably changed the mode and perception of work. Many have been forced to adapt to working remotely, including various UN agencies. Since the closing of the main office in Geneva from the 16th of March 2020, all staff, including interns, were requested to adopt teleworking from home to avoid an outbreak in the office. The teleworking arrangement was an extraordinary measure that was to be temporary. As of September 2020, most UN offices have returned to limited or full capacity, ranging from 50 to 100% limits.

While it was anticipated that internship programmes would gradually return to normal, FII was made aware that the UN Secretariat instead seeks to adopt remote internships permanently. A new administrative instruction was discussed the viability of remote internships to promote diversity within the internship programme. It was argued that remote internships would allow developing professionals who are normally prohibited from taking UN internships (implying the effects of prohibitively high costs associated with unpaid internships) to opt instead for a remote internship in expensive cities such as Geneva.

Lowering the barrier of entry has always been an ideal way to introduce diversity. However, FII believes that providing a stipend is the best solution to ensure diversity and bridge the gap between applicants from high- and low-income countries. Remote unpaid internships would instead intensify the inequality between socio-economic classes, by segregating in-person internships, which would be accepted by those who can afford them, and remote internships, which would be pursued by those who cannot. As evidenced by the COVID-19
survey results, remote internships strip interns of valuable in-person learning opportunities, professional development, and networking opportunities. Without monetary compensation, remote internships are reduced to “unpaid consultancies”, as one of our survey respondents aptly pointed out. UN agencies not under the Secretariat, such as the ILO, WHO, and WIPO, have stated they would not introduce permanent remote internships as they value the learning opportunities in-person internships can provide.

To urge the Secretariat to recognize the importance of in-person internships, FII has published a key policy message, an open letter to the UN Secretary-General Mr. Antonio Guterres, and launched a UN-wide petition. Both have gained wide support from former and current UN interns and staff, including the UNOG, UNOV and UNON Staff Councils, UNFSU, ESCAP and ECLAC Staff Associations, ECA Staff Union, ESCWA Staff Council, UN Globe, as well as intern boards and associations in Geneva, Nairobi and New York. As of 29 October 2020, the petition has collected 1,044 signatures from UN interns and staff. Our key policy message summarises the unpaid remote internships as a red-herring that does not solve the problem of lack of diversity and unfairness. The whole policy statement can be read in the last section of the Annex.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION
6. CONCLUSION

Paid internships tend to be the best option in terms of ensuring a diverse, effective, and quality internship programme. The investment in financial compensation for interns by some organizations implies that some members of the UN system have recognized the unequal nature of unpaid internships and have responded by using the existing budgetary channels to remedy a very apparent issue. Rather than searching for an external solution (for example in the form of a trust fund wherein other actors are responsible for footing the bill to ensure a more egalitarian system) actors like the WHO and ILO demonstrate ownership, responsibility, and awareness of the issue that many key decision makers at the UN fail to recognize.

The problem of unpaid internships could be described as nothing short of discriminatory. As UN agencies, such as UN Women, UNICEF, and UNDP respectfully but insufficiently respond to these inequalities, it is shameful that the UN Secretariat continues to feign ignorance to the inequalities its own internship programme perpetuates. It is clear that the UN’s mission extends to and serves countless underprivileged, vulnerable, and, at times desperate populations, but it is important to recognize the deleterious effects internal systems of inequality have on the overall efficacy of the UN’s unique mission in the world.

While the provision of stipends has proven to be a key differentiator between a quality and an inferior internship programme, factors such as access to conflict and abuse reporting mechanisms, fair and transparent hiring timelines, defined expectations, and the provision of basic labor rights such as sick leave, also contribute to a quality internship programme.

The importance of this report is not just that it underscores the failings of key actors in the UN system to respond to decades old issues, but also that it details clear points of action that are in the hands of decision makers. FII aims not just to advocate for interns’ rights and for quality internships, including the promotion of sufficiently paid internships and the discontinuation of extended remote internship programmes, but also to voice the struggle of many interns throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We have witnessed first-hand the various challenges faced by UN interns. Without us to highlight and address the issue, various key elements to interns’ experience of the transition to teleworking would have been overlooked.
FII hopes that this report will bring about more knowledge on the current crisis within the UN Internship System and prompt appropriate, remedying action. FII will continue to push for a more sustainable agenda regarding intern's rights.

6.1. 2019 SURVEY

The results of the 2019 survey consistently showed that paid internships outperformed underpaid and unpaid internships in all four areas of the JIU benchmarking framework. Furthermore, underpaid internships tended to perform better than unpaid internships. This highlights the extent to which the payment status of an intern is a determining factor for overall quality of the internship programme. This includes not only protections for the interns but also the availability and quality of educational and training aspects and opportunities for career progression and development.

Interestingly, the disparities between the quality of paid, underpaid and unpaid internships were the largest in the second area of the JIU benchmarking framework, Onboarding and Internship Period. Within this area, the starkest difference was found in whether or not the internship contract specified information on annual and sick leave, with 51% of unpaid interns reporting no specification, compared to only 14% of underpaid and 4% of paid interns without leave specified. In contrast, payment status was less of a predictor of whether the internship contract establishes specific learning objectives. No learning objectives were specified for 35% of unpaid, 37% of underpaid, and 36% of paid interns.

The justification for unpaid internships is flawed, arguing that unpaid internships are merely a learning and training experience that offer young people opportunities to develop their career. The implication therein is that interns deserve neither a wage nor a stipend, as they are compensated with experience and education. It is evident this argument does not stand up in the light of the survey results which show that the benefits of internships are less accessible for interns that do not receive financial support. Organizations which pay their interns assign more value to them compared to unpaid ones which counters the argument that all internships are a stepping-stone career-wise. Evidently, paid internships are more so.

6.2. COVID-19 SURVEY

Our survey reveals that the COVID pandemic has acted as a magnifying glass, highlighting disparities
between interns who benefit from substantial support from their organisations and interns who do not. In this regard, pre-existing issues linked to unpaid and underpaid internships were exacerbated, while new challenges linked to repatriation or home office arrangements emerged.

The current pandemic has presented the UN with unprecedented challenges, prompting UN entities to take unforeseen measures. Nevertheless, despite the unprecedented circumstance, the UN should not place burgeoning professionals into a precarious health and financial situation. These moments constitute an opportunity to reflect on how crises impact interns, and how adverse effects can be mitigated. We believe that increasing the involvement of interns and interns’ representative bodies into decision-making processes is essential to ensure that interns’ needs and views are adequately taken into account and their rights protected. Furthermore, the UN administration must improve its channels of communication with interns to ensure that relevant information is shared and discussed in a clear and timely manner. Lastly, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of ‘safety nets’ to cope with the disruption of our work routines. Our survey results have brought to the forefront the need to support interns through stipends, medical insurance and resiliency plans. As the UN looks forward, the COVID-19 pandemic should be seized as an opportunity to “build back better” and rethink internship programmes to make them equal, fair and accessible.

6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our 2019 and COVID-19 surveys, we see little improvement from the UN System regarding their internship policies, barring a few entities that recently reformed their policies. To capture this trend of improvement, FII continues to urge the entire UN system to reform their internship programmes so that interns can be better protected and true diversity is implemented. This can be done by implementing the following recommendations:

1. UN entities must introduce a stipend equivalent to 20% of daily subsistence allowance for interns so that they can maintain a minimum living standard, whether in their home countries or at the host organisations’ duty station. This would offer equal access to all qualified candidates regardless of their socio-economic status or country of origin.
2. Affirmative action, such as programmes targeting candidates from the least developed countries or the Global South, should be implemented.
3. Recruitment processes should be fair and thorough with a formal written application, an interview, and a written test if applicable.

4. UN entities should provide support to incoming interns to facilitate visa application, such as providing a note verbale.

5. If interns are travelling far to the duty stations from their home countries, UN entities should provide travel cost reimbursement.

6. Basic labour rights and entitlements for the interns must be formally observed, such as sick leave, access to justice mechanisms, health insurance, and a living allowance. Such details should be written in the internship contract to protect interns.

7. Interns should be registered in the emergency database of their affiliated entities upon their arrival.

8. Intern organizations should be formed in each UN entity. The Human Resources departments should maintain constant communication and collaboration with these organizations and should ensure that all interns receive a comprehensive and proper induction upon on-boarding.

9. Health insurance or monetary assistance to purchase health insurance should be provided to interns.

10. Access to training and learning opportunities should be provided to all interns as internships are meant to be a learning experience.

11. There should be a formal mechanism to issue a certificate and recommendation letter to interns who successfully complete their internship.

12. UN entities should have a contingency plan in case of emergency such as the COVID-19 pandemic that includes interns:
   
a. In case of travel restriction, the entities should have criteria to determine whether interns should stay in their duty stations and the decision should be communicated as soon as possible.

   b. If interns are stranded in duty stations which are not their home country, legal support should be provided to obtain or extend their legal right to remain. Such methods may include intervention on behalf of the intern with the relevant authority or extension of the internship.

   c. If interns decide or are asked to return to their home countries, their host
organisations should assist with their travel arrangements, such as providing travel cost reimbursement or repatriation flights.

d. In case of work-from-home arrangements, company laptops and VPNs should be provided to interns to relieve part of their burden to afford everyday office supplies.

e. Financial assistance should be provided, for example through continuation of the stipend by internship extension or a one-time relief fund.
KEY POLICY MESSAGE - FAIR INTERNSHIP INITIATIVE’S POSITION ON REMOTE UNPAID INTERNSHIPS

Remote internships fail to resolve the discriminatory nature of unpaid internships, but perpetuate it.

- Only pays lip service to the issue of diversity, while failing to take systemic action to address the root cause (the unfairness of unpaid internships);
- A move “just to make statistics look good” that does not concretely improve chances for disadvantaged youth;
- De facto establishes 1st and 2nd classes of internships, reinforcing the existing discrimination and even introducing a new one between those who can afford a more valuable in person internship, and those who cannot;
- If they would be unpaid or underpaid, they would continue to reproduce the inequalities of the current system. In fact, working for months without any income is for a large number of youth not an option, as they would normally still need to cover living expenses in their location.

The organization would fail to take responsibility for intern’s well-being and basic rights.

- Unfairly puts completely on the intern the burden of sustaining the costs associated with the equipment and infrastructure required to work remotely (e.g. internet fees, computers, headsets, webcams, printing facilities, a private ‘office’ space, etc.);
- No possibility for the organization to guarantee the safety, health and decency of the working conditions, which would be entirely upon the intern.

Impacts on the educational and training aspects of internships.

- Reduced opportunities to achieve meaningful learning
  - No opportunity to “learn by seeing”;
  - High dependency on supervisor, reducing opportunities for the intern to learn from other members of the team;
  - Limited professional interaction with a variety of personnel.
- Strongly reduced or no meaningful mentorship
• No face-to-face mentorship;
• Limited opportunities to solicit and receive feedback from supervisors.

• Nature of the work will be predominantly on a “delivery basis” and consist more of menial tasks, further reducing the learning component
  • Nature of work would be mostly individual with little opportunities to collaborate;
  • Many online UN Volunteers have reported that they were assigned mostly basic tasks (e.g. translations, maintenance of databases, spell-checking, admin tasks, documents layout, etc.) with little career development value;
  • In absence of meaningful interaction, mentoring, learning and networking opportunities, it would resemble an unpaid consultancy more than an internship
  • (which requires a predominantly learning component).

• No acquisition of key social and other soft skills necessary for any work environment
  • The learning experience should include learning how to work in an office, dealing with colleagues and managers, verbally interact and collaborate, understanding and dealing with office dynamics, etc;
  • No possibility for informal interactions and “off the records” discussions;
  • No possibility to fully learn how to work as a team, understand and interpret nonverbal messages or learn to deal with diversity on a day-to-day basic

• Very limited opportunities to develop a good understanding of the organisational environment
  • Very limited opportunities to participate in or learn about organisational work beyond their team;
  • No exposure to UN’s culturally diverse teams and specific work environment.

Social and psychological impact

• Potentially heavy impacts on mental health and increased isolation
  • Without meeting or coming into contact with the team or other members of the organisation the intern would not feel like part of the team;
  • Potential feeling of alienation, frustration and isolation with limited or no access to support services and difficulty for the organization to provide support when necessary;
  • No contact with other interns, no possibility to socialize and share experiences or socialize with peers.
• Negative impact on work-life balance due to the blurring of the professional and private sphere, especially for those (likely the majority) at their first work experience, who may not be used to draw the line or give in to supervisor’s pressure/excessive expectations.

**Occupational safety and health problems**

• No control for the organization over the adequacy of the home premises, with higher occupational health and safety risks, including ergonomics, safety of premises;
• Higher risk for the intern to work excessively long hours with negative impact on physical well-being;
• By spending long time at home, especially in the case of female interns, the risk of being subject to domestic violence would increase (as demonstrated during COVID-19).

**Risk of abuses and lack of remedy systems**

• Interns become very dependent on supervisors for any matter, with increased risk of abuses;
• Without the broader office environment they would likely not know where to ask for help or discuss a problem;
• More difficult or no access to formal support/remedy services (worsening the situation of already limited or no access in many organizations).

*[FII has already received reports of abuses due to the total dependency of UN interns from supervisors in the current remote working during COVID-19 and is currently following up on them]*

**Impact on the quality of interns’ work**

• Reduced productivity of interns due to increased stress and distractions, as well as reduced levels of mentorship and stimula;
• More time required to understand the context of the project and the specific instructions of assigned tasks;
• With an increased dependency on supervisors and without access to the broader office environment it is likely they would not know where to ask for a second opinion, discuss a problem, ask for inputs on a specific topic from other staff.
Impact on supervisors’ work

- High dependency on supervisor would increase the workload of the supervisor;
- Distance communication with the intern (in writing or via VC) would require more of supervisor’s time to explain tasks, track interns’ work and provide feedback;
- No opportunities for supervisors to monitor and evaluate behaviour, including:
  - How interns work and fit in the team;
  - How interns perform their tasks on a day-to-day basis.

Impact on career development

- More limited opportunities for career development or gain employment after the internship
  - Very limited or no networking opportunities;
  - Total replaceability of the role;
  - Limited opportunities to fully demonstrate skills and capacities due to lack of physical presence.
- In presence interns would be preferred at the moment of hiring to remote ones, as they have gained more exposure and more fully demonstrated their skills, thus reproducing existing distortions in staff (geographic and socioeconomic) representation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UN Entities</th>
<th>Paid internship?</th>
<th>Teleworking support</th>
<th>Stipend and allowance</th>
<th>Extension</th>
<th>Allowed to leave duty stations</th>
<th>Medical support</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>Paid. CHF 2200 (Geneva)</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Unchanged if interns leave Geneva</td>
<td>Yes. 3 months extension. 9 months maximum.</td>
<td>Yes. Reimbursement of travel cost.</td>
<td>CHF 130 / month without deduction of health insurance.</td>
<td>Their human resources representative stated that &quot;current contracts will be respected&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITC</td>
<td>Unpaid</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>Paid. CHF 1000 (Geneva)</td>
<td>Yes, both at duty stations and home countries.</td>
<td>Stipend unchanged; Food and local transport allowance</td>
<td>Yes, in addition to the maximum 8-month internship in case of travel restriction</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14 consecutive sick leave.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOPS</td>
<td>Paid. USD 1242</td>
<td>Same arrangement as staff as they do not distinguish between interns and staff</td>
<td>Stipend unchanged. USD 120 health insurance.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Unsure. No intern requested to leave duty station.</td>
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<td>UNRISD</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Their human resources representative stated that UNRISD “follow UN Secretariat’s policy”</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>Paid. CHF 2000 (Geneva)</td>
<td>Yes. Two half-day induction on WebEx for interns</td>
<td>56CHF / day living allowance; 15CHF lunch voucher cancelled; 10CHF / workday of allowance.</td>
<td>CHF 1990 (April)</td>
<td>No.</td>
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<td>WIPO</td>
<td>Paid. CHF 2070 (Geneva)</td>
<td>Arrangement similar to staff</td>
<td>Unchanged. Stipend with CHF70/ month transport allowance</td>
<td>?</td>
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### TABLE 2 QUESTIONS FOR THE SURVEY

**Questions**

1. Were you informed about the status of your application(s) in real time?
2. Were the tasks of your internship described in the internship posting?
3. Before being accepted as an intern in your unit, did you (check all that apply):
4. Were you informed about the final decision within a month after the completion of the interview and/or application submission?
5. Upon selection, were you given a reasonable time (at least 1 month) before starting the internship?
6. Does the hosting organization you were accepted to normally provide (check all that apply):
7. Did the organization provide you with an induction/orientation package and briefing upon arrival?
8. Did the organization ensure that you met with your assigned supervisor upon arrival?
9. Did the organization provide you with information on policies and procedures upon arrival?
10. Upon arrival, were you registered in your organization’s database so you would be included in the event of an emergency evacuation?
11. Were your tasks and learning programme clearly communicated by the first week of your internship?
12. Do/did the tasks or learning/work programme of your internship include specific learning objectives?
13. Does your organization have guidelines for supervisors?
14. Are interns’ performance evaluated (check all that apply):
15. Does your organization ensure that interns (check all that apply):
16. In the internship agreement, does your organization explicitly specify information regarding the following entitlements? (check all that apply):
17. Do you have the same access to work premises as the regular staff?
18. Do you have ... ? (check all that apply):
19. Does your organization allow interns to travel as part of their duties if proposed by their supervisors?
20. If so, does your organization grant a daily subsistence allowance (DSA) to interns for the period of travel?

21. If so, does your organization grant insurance coverage to interns for the period of travel?

22. If an internship is longer than 3 months, do you have access to training/learning opportunities offered by your organization?

23. At the end of your internship, will your organization issue: (check all that apply)

24. Do interns have the opportunity to provide feedback (fill out an evaluation form) about their internship experience?

25. If so, does your organization refer to interns' feedback to improve the internship programme?

26. Is the internship experience considered as working experience when applying for staff positions in your organization?

27. Were you asked about your financial means during the selection process?

28. Does your organization offer interns stipends and/or discounts? (multiple answers possible)

29. Are the stipends sufficient to cover living expenses (i.e. accommodation, health insurance, food, transportation) in the duty station? *

30. How much do/did you receive per month FROM THE ORGANIZATION YOU INTERN FOR (in USD)? *

31. How do/did you support yourself to undertake the internship?

32. Are interns allowed to apply at any time to open staff positions for which they may qualify without a mandatory break after completing their internship?
## TABLE 3 CORRESPONDING WEIGHTS

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<th>Questions</th>
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<td>Administrative support for interns’ travels to the duty station?</td>
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<td>Visa request/application procedures for interns?</td>
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<td>Are informed of support mechanisms that can assist them in the event of abuse, harassment or conflict situations during their internships?</td>
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<td>Have access to support mechanisms that can assist them in the event of abuse, harassment or conflict situations during their internships?</td>
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<td>A desk of your own</td>
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<td>A personalized email address (eg: <a href="mailto:name.surname@un.org">name.surname@un.org</a>)</td>
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<td>Yes, it provides a full DSA allowance</td>
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