

Name

Charlotte Lusty

Job title:

Gene bank program manager for the Global Crop Diversity Trust in Bonn

Career:

I did a Bachelor in Biological sciences and then I took off and worked at a Jane Goodall institute in Tanzania. My task was to follow chimpanzees and to look what they were eating so I had that very strong practical botanical background where I identified plants and looked how they were used. I realized that chimpanzees and we often ate the same foods and this is how I started thinking about the development of agriculture. I wanted to do a MSc and a PhD but I was taken away by a fulltime job, working on global collaboration. I had so much practical experience that these degrees were not necessary to get to my today's position.



Responsibilities:

My job is to manage that program. It takes place in 11 different countries like Nigeria, Ethiopia, Morocco, Peru, Mexico, Philippines, India and many others mostly developing countries. These countries bring together some of the best scientists in the world who can work on the seeds and improve the varieties that are planted in farmer's field and help to deal with all the kind of challenges like pests, diseases, climate change, desertification or simply differences the people want in the shops and market. In the stored varieties you find a lot of interesting characteristics that aren't in the cultivated crop and can therefore be used as a source of hybridisation to face present and future agricultural challenges. One final backup of the world's crops is stored in a big seed vault on the arctic island of Svalbard, Norway.

A normal day in the office is characterised by project management work like Skype conferences, e-mail correspondence, proposal writing and budget checking. But the job requires a high amount of travelling, roughly 2 weeks per month, visiting gene banks, donors and politicians throughout the world.

Essential skills in my Job:

- Teamwork skills
- Cultural competences
- Speak English fluently
- Flexibility

What I need to **know** in my job:

- How to raise funds
- How to manage projects
- How to write proposals
- How to manage budgets

Global Crop Diversity Trust

The Global Crop Diversity Trust is an independent international organisation founded in 2005. Its aim is to ensure the conservation and availability of crop diversity and food security worldwide. Crop diversity is the biological foundation of agriculture and the raw material farmers and plant breeders use to adapt crop varieties to pests and diseases. This is also the basis for agriculture to adjust to climate change.



This project has received funding from the *European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme* under grant agreement No 665100.



Gene bank program manager Charlotte Lusty, Global Crop Diversity Trust

My name is Charlotte Lusty and I work as a gene bank program manager for the Global Crop Diversity Trust in Bonn, Germany. The foundation coordinates the biggest gene banks that are holding all the crop varieties of the major crops that the world eats: rice, wheat, maize, potatoes, cassava, bananas, beans and many others. The aim is to collect and store the seeds of as much different varieties of crops as possible, e.g. the type of potatoes that can grow even in dry places, the type of rice that grows extremely fast in the beginning and can survive heavy flooding, etc. Most varieties do not seem important for agriculture at all, but no one knows which kind of crops we need in the future.

My job is to manage that program. It takes place in 11 different countries like Nigeria, Ethiopia, Morocco, Peru, Mexico, Philippines, India and many others mostly developing countries. These countries bring together some of the best scientists in the world who can work on the seeds and improve the varieties that are planted in farmer's field and help to deal with all the kind of challenges like pests, diseases, climate change, desertification or simply differences the people want in the shops and market. In the stored varieties you find a lot of interesting characteristics that aren't in the cultivated crop and can therefore be used as a source of hybridisation to face present and future agricultural challenges. One final backup of the world's crops is stored in a big seed vault on the arctic island of Svalbard, Norway.

My team and I are trying to raise funds so these gene banks can be funded forever, so no one has to worry about. We're a group of 26 people, and a third are working on fund raising, and the others are the scientists who are working on the gene bank program. We have quite a lot of women working here, and there might be more women than men in the team. I think we have like 15 nationalities: several persons from Argentina, El Salvador, Cameroon, Philippines, Italy, Great Britain, Germany, USA and individuals from a diversity of countries.

A normal day in the office is characterised by project management work like Skype conferences, e-mail correspondence, proposal writing and budget checking. But the job requires a high amount of travelling, roughly 2 weeks per month, visiting gene banks, donors and politicians throughout the world.

I do not have a very conventional educational background. I did do a Bachelor in Biological sciences and then I took off and worked at a Jane Goodall institute in Tanzania. My task was to follow chimpanzees and to look what they were eating so I had that very strong practical botanical background where I identified plants and looked how they were used. I realized that chimpanzees and we often ate the same foods and this is how I started thinking about the development of agriculture. I wanted to do a MSc and a PhD but I was taken away by a fulltime job, working on global collaboration. I had so much practical experience that these degrees were not necessary to get to my today's position.

However, I wouldn't recommend this way of education because in general it is very difficult to apply for jobs without having the credentials on paper. One advice to young people would be that practical experience is incredibly important. The academic side is obviously very important, too, but I think the practical experience is almost equally important. And the other thing I would advice: If you really want to do something, send out a hundred letters, write to people, contact, don't hold back and try to work voluntarily in your field of interest to gain a foothold.

The most fascinating parts of my work are the seeds and crops themselves. Seeing the diversity is extraordinary. I can go to a gene bank in Colombia and have a look at the beans and it just blows your mind. You have black and white beans and white and black beans and some with stripes or spots and so on and on. There are several thousands different varieties of beans you can explore in the gene bank. For me, it is the most incredible collection of biological organisms. And then of course the people who deal with the seeds. Knowing these people from all over the world, working in sometimes extremely hard circumstances, is a real privilege!

