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alert

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search



COO recruitment



Dear prospective candidate,

Thank you for spending time getting to know International Alert and considering serving as Chief Operating Officer for a time of pivotal transformation.

Alert focuses on tackling the root causes of violent conflict, working with people from across divides. We firmly believe that peacebuilding works best when it is shaped and driven by people and communities directly affected by violence.

We work with over 100 partner organisations in over 20 countries to build long-term, sustainable peace. We use our international network to connect peacebuilders across different contexts, and to ensure the voices of people affected by violence are heard in global decision-making. Our advocacy and research support actors in local contexts and influences systemic change more broadly. We seek to shape and influence the work of development and humanitarian organisations, and investors in conflict-affected countries, so they contribute positively to peace.

You find us entering a 12-18 month period of significant organisational transformation, driven by two factors:

Our new strategy (2024-30), developed in deep consultation with our peacebuilding partners in Alert's country contexts. The strategy sets out how our already country-led peacebuilding model will further transform, so our work is increasingly led by our local partners; how our organisational structure and practices will change, driven by global equity and inclusion; and how we will, as an international organisation, deliver the added value that partners and communities most want.

A significant change in our funding model. While Alert has long benefited from institutional core funding alongside its predominantly institutional project-funded model, that core funding is in significant decline. Our strategy sets the target of sustainability without significant core funding by 2026.

We are now beginning to implement the new operating model that will deliver this transformation. The COO role will oversee the transformation of our operating model, strengthen our systems and operating frameworks in line with the strategy, and foster the cultural changes necessary to achieve our goals.

The COO will need to ensure strong business-as-usual delivery through the change process, maintaining high standards of operational effectiveness for our finances, people, and compliance and fostering those high standards across the organisation. You will play a key role on Alert's inclusive Executive Team and Global Leadership Team and work closely with our Board of Trustees.

This job requires strong transformation and operational leadership, delivering with and through a geographically distributed team and through leadership of others outside the team itself, and making the most of diverse talents and perspectives. You will need to ensure a culture which empowers and supports those at the front line and fosters collaboration and learning.

Alert's peacebuilding mission is as important as ever, with conflict trends continuing to rise around the world. It is not an exaggeration to say that as COO you will make a huge difference to International Alert's ability to serve partners and communities in the common cause of peace for years to come .

With gratitude for your consideration of International Alert,

Nic Hailey

Executive Director, International Alert



Partner case study: Rwanda Organization of Trauma Counselors (ARCT-Ruhuka)

ARCT-Ruhuka aims to lead the development and application of innovative psychosocial approaches to mental health services and strengthen professional capacity in understanding, treating and preventing mental health problems. They deliver mental health and psychosocial support interventions, conflict management and peacebuilding for sustainable development in all 30 districts of Rwanda. We have been working together to improve reconciliation efforts in Rwanda through healing of historical wounds and facilitation of open and inclusive dialogue on contemporary sensitive issues in communities, secondary and high schools, universities and civil society.

ARCT-Ruhuka's community-based intervention uses cognitive behaviour therapy and humanistic approaches, through which trustworthy volunteers are trained in basic mental health and psychosocial intervention, with technical support and clinical supervision by professional counsellors. By the end of 2022, 150 community facilitators were trained and providing therapy sessions to genocide survivors, released perpetrators, returnees, ex-combatants and young people from those families (to prevent transgenerational trauma). Between them they formed 255 therapy groups (2,917 members, 61% female, 39% male), which serve as safe and confidential spaces where members express their emotions, and exchange and learn from each other about healing, social cohesion and resilience building. The community facilitators received technical guidance from the project's professional counsellors, through clinical supervision and field visits to their group therapy sessions. Members have reported reduced symptoms of trauma, such as fear, anxiety, isolation, anger, guilt, lack of trust and an increased sense of belonging to one's family and society.

After 62-year-old Theoneste, a widower with four children, was released from prison for participation in the genocide against the Tutsi, he felt shame and was afraid to meet survivors, especially those whose family members he had killed, so he ran away from them or stayed inside his house alone all day. Hearing this from neighbours, a community facilitator explained to him about the importance of the therapy groups for trauma healing, unity and reconciliation. In a therapy group, he met two survivors who openly shared their stories and how they felt. Two weeks later, Theoneste also shared his stories with other participants, contrasting how he felt previously, and his inability to sleep, with how he felt after releasing all that was inside his mind. He said that after sharing his stories and asking for forgiveness, his symptoms are much reduced. "I felt so relieved and happy. Now I sleep well, socialise with others by attending weddings, church and other government development programmes." He also feels more resilient and accepted within his community. "Before, I used to see anything and get frightened. Even a tree would scare me, thinking it is someone coming to kill me due to what I have done. But now I am comfortably living with others in the community." Kabahizi, whose family members Theoneste had killed, forgave him and, as a symbol of a renewed relationship, even promised to give him a cow.

International Alert overview

International Alert (“Alert”) works with people directly affected by violent conflict to build lasting peace.

We focus on solving the root causes of conflict with people from across divides. From the grassroots to the policy level, we bring people together to build sustainable peace.

Peace is just as much about communities living together, side by side, and resolving their differences without resorting to violence, as it is about people signing a treaty or laying down their arms. Peace is when you can walk your children to school in safety, feed your family or make a living, no matter who you are.

We bring people together to inspire and amplify voices for peace. In collaboration with communities, partners, businesses and policymakers, we turn our in-depth research and analysis into practical solutions that make a difference, and advocacy that makes the case for national and global change.

Vision

Our vision is that people and their societies can resolve conflicts without violence, working together to build sustainable and inclusive peace.

To fulfil this purpose, we:

- work with people directly affected by violence to support lasting solutions;
- advocate with them for the changes to policies, practices and behaviours that are required for peace to be inclusive and sustainable; and
- collaborate openly and in solidarity with all those striving for peace, to strengthen our common cause.

Alert works from fifteen countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. The majority of our 200 staff work in country offices in those contexts, partnering with local civil society organisations and communities to support people and institutions to build peace. Our annual budget is around £20m. We value progress, fairness, inclusion, respect, and openness.

International Alert is headquartered in London, UK.

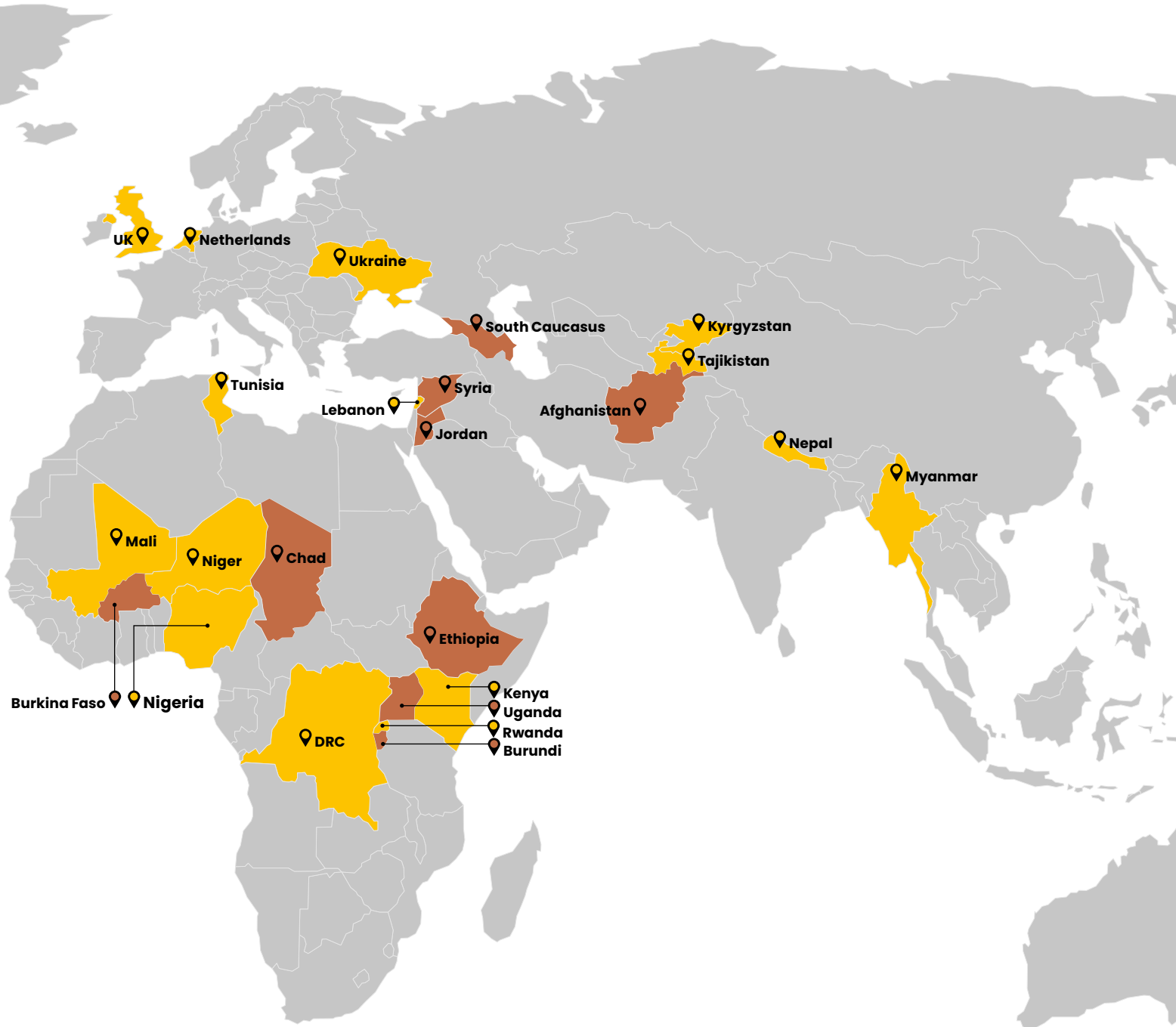


Partner case study: House of Peace and Basmeh and Zeitooneh


Our partnership with the two Lebanese NGOs, House of Peace and Basmeh and Zeitooneh, embodied our desire to contribute to local leadership of peacebuilding. House of Peace focuses on peace as a right for all people and respecting diversity and gender, and Basmeh and Zeitooneh works on peacebuilding, social cohesion and civil society enablement. Together we supported the capacity strengthening of local organisations and communities to respond to the needs of Syrian refugees and host communities in Bekaa and Tripoli. Each of us worked on an approach to social stability that best fits our expertise, network and resources, aiming for complementarity. The project contributed to establishing a network of civil society organisations (CSOs) in Bekaa and Tripoli, creating new dialogue groups while concurrently empowering existing groups, and building existing youth and women committees’ capacities in peace education. Among other contributions, House of Peace focused on building the conflict sensitivity capacity of CSOs through trainings, in which CSO representatives reflected on the potential conflict dynamics related to their own programmes. Basmeh and Zeitooneh provided tailored peace education to the committee members that challenges stereotypes, helps them with their own coping mechanisms and helps them to work together as a committee. Our collective work helped participants build new relationships and change attitudes and perceptions while also strengthening community mechanisms. Community initiatives brought together people with different identities and demonstrated how they can work together and collectively benefit the community. It also enabled parents and children to understand their own concerns and ensure self-care, and provided mental health support.

Locations

The countries and territories where we worked in 2022.



 Offices

 Other focus area



Organisational context

Conflict has become the single biggest obstacle to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and it blights the lives of hundreds of millions of people. Conflict is development in reverse: it destroys decades of hard work and hard-won gains, it entrenches suffering and marginalization, and closes off routes to positive social change. It easily becomes embedded in cycles of violence that are hard to break – not least because those with power, or perverse interests, benefit from them.

Peace requires many approaches and contributions. But for it to be sustainable and sustained, peace must be shaped by those directly affected by conflict, through long-term work focused on the root causes of violence.

In 2022-23, International Alert conducted a wide consultation with our partners and staff team that resulted in the launch of a new Strategy towards the end of 2023. Key priorities in this new strategy are:

- Further transforming our relationships with local communities and peacebuilding partners, ensuring that our organisational plans and objectives flow from communities' needs, and that our partnerships are firmly based on equity and local leadership with our peacebuilding increasingly led and managed by our local partners.
- Sharpening and increasing our role integrating peacebuilding with responses to the other needs and aspirations of the communities we serve, such as better livelihoods, or equitable access to basic services, and influencing and partnering with those who meet such needs to embed peacebuilding in their delivery and practice. This will include a focus on developing strategic partnerships with development, humanitarian, or investment actors in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.
- Making the most of our international network: convening partners to share learning with each other, connecting partners with platforms for influencing, drawing learning from across contexts to inform peacebuilding approaches and global advocacy, and fostering an internal, international culture of collaboration and learning.
- Reshaping our organisation so it is fully equitable and inclusive, with global recruitment for most previously HQ-based roles, inclusive and participative decision-making, and more delegated accountability within a more transparent and robust operational framework.
- Ensuring our business model is sustainable, in the face of continuing reductions in the availability of unrestricted funding.

“Without a dramatic reduction in conflict, violence and the spread of weapons, the 2030 Agenda will remain out of reach for a large percentage of humanity”

UN Secretary-General
António Guterres

We can not deliver this strategy without changing our culture and our operating model. This is the context for appointing a transformational COO for a 12-18 month period to help us move into this new way of being International Alert.

COO Role Profile

Strategic Leadership

- Lead Alert's global Finance and Operations teams, providing strategic direction and ensuring staff work collaboratively to deliver effective peacebuilding in support of Alert's mission. Provide effective leadership and support to a diverse team of staff, ensuring their professional development and well-being, and fostering a collaborative and inclusive work environment.
- Line manage the Heads of Finance, IT and People; the Senior Security, Safeguarding and Safety Officer and Senior Controls Officer, and the Global Support Officer.
- With the Executive Director, lead the implementation of the Future Operating Model in line with our new strategy, including re-shaping of our global and regional teams to ensure financial sustainability from 2026.
- Work with Regional Directors to enable development of sustainable Country Hubs, with efficient and sufficient staffing structures to enable peacebuilding delivery.
- Lead Finance and Operations teams to adapt their practices to shift accountability closer to our contexts and promote a more self-service operational culture.
- Serve as a global director playing a key role in Alert's operational and strategic decision-making as part of the Executive Team and a member of the Global Leadership Team. Deputise for the Executive Director during absences.



Partner case study: Mines Advisory Group (MAG)

We supported MAG in its commitment to further integrating conflict sensitivity into their humanitarian mine action and armed violence reduction work. We provided accompaniment and technical advice on conflict sensitivity to five MAG country offices, including analysis, training, guidance and tools development on conflict sensitivity. Additionally, we worked with MAG to develop an organisational conflict sensitivity framework that outlines the relevance of conflict sensitivity to MAG's work and entry points for application at strategic, policy and programming levels and in terms of capacity development for staff and partners.

Governance

- Ensure Alert's staff and Trustee governance bodies have what they need to make robust, appropriate and strategic decisions on Alert's operations. With the rest of Alert's leadership team, foster and champion the organisational culture and working practices that support all the above.
- Oversee efficient governance processes, ensuring the Board, Risk and Audit Committee, Executive Team and Global Leadership team meetings are well planned and provisioned, in collaboration with the Executive Director, and managing the Global Support team to administer our governance functions.
- Ensure risk-based decision-making at all levels of the organisation. Lead on organisational risk assessment, responsible for quarterly updates to Organisational Risk Register and annual risk assessments by all teams.
- Lead the Policy Review, to ensure our organisational policies are all updated by mid-2025. Work with the Head of People to oversee review of HR policies, and lead author operational policies.
- Lead the organisation's annual planning and budgeting process.
- Lead the writing of Alert's Annual Report and Accounts, including overseeing the 2024 audit led by the Head of Finance.
- Develop and oversee implementation of annual plans and budgets, monitor and adapt these during the year and report against the plans.

Finance

- Develop and monitor Alert's organisational budget, working closely with the Head of Finance and with the Executive Team to ensure sound financial management. Oversee the Global Finance's team's support to sound financial decision making across the organisation, including timely and accurate reforecasting and management accounting.
- Lead on issues of taxation including overseeing our VAT review and implementation of recommendations.
- Support the organisation's growth in contract income, including planning for adequate internal management and control of such income in collaboration with the Resource Development team.
- Lead development, implementation, and review of global and country shared cost recovery procedures, ensuring full cost recovery in project budgets.
- Oversee strengthening of our treasury management, including foreign exchange management and developing options for investment.
- Oversee and approve payroll for UK, Netherlands, and International staff.

Operations

- Oversee roll out of Dynamics 365BC as our finance and project management system, in all our countries of operation, to go live on 1 January 2025, working closely with the Head of Finance and Systems Accountant.
- Oversee management of our UK and Netherlands offices by our Global Support team.
- Lead renewal of our global, UK and Netherlands insurance, ensuring appropriate provision in line with regulatory requirements and Alert policies.

Human Resources

- Oversee the Reward Review led by our Head of People to finalise a common Reward Framework, global recruitment practices, and work towards more equitable salary and benefits frameworks.
- Work with the Head of People, and Director of Global Peacebuilding Unit, to develop and implement new frameworks for learning, exchange, and collaboration.

Security and Compliance

- Lead on ensuring Alert's regulatory, donor and policy compliance, including compliance with audit recommendations, UK charity law requirements, and ethical and safeguarding standards.
- Oversee registration, de-registration, and other entity status developments, taking legal advice where appropriate.
- Oversee Alert's security policy and procedures, including ensuring appropriate responses to security incidents across the organisation, managing the Senior Security, Safeguarding and Safety Officer.
- Lead response and reporting on Serious Incidents, including working with Head of People and Senior Controls Officer to respond appropriately. Ensure timely reporting to trustees and Charity Commission.
- Act as Safeguarding Officer, working with the Senior Security, Safeguarding and Safety Officer to improve safeguarding procedures and staff and trustee awareness of safeguarding.
- Oversee our Internal Audit function, managing the work of the Senior Controls Officer. Decide annual internal audit plan, oversee management responses.





Essential Requirements

- Experience as a successful operations senior leader with UK charity sector experience.
- Proven ability to lead complex organisational transformational change programmes that deliver tangible benefits, championing both the overall vision and direction and the detailed, sequenced delivery of change.
- Proven ability to lead and motivate a geographically distributed team, building the team's capability and creating with them a collaborative and inclusive environment and culture.
- Strong familiarity and comfort with financial, risk and compliance standards, oversight and management, and demonstrated experience of fostering a solid culture on these issues across a complex team.
- Proven ability to balance long-term strategy with the short-term and sometimes unpredictable requirements of operational delivery in complex, conflict-affected environments, working with clarity, empathy, and a concern for staff wellbeing.
- Experience supporting risk-based decision making by governance bodies including charity boards and executive teams.
- Proven ability to present complex information to governance bodies in ways that foster timely and high-quality decision-making; and to strengthen the systems and practices across the organisation that generate such information.
- Commitment to and understanding of safeguarding, health and safety, and wellbeing
- Strong emotional intelligence and self-awareness.
- Spoken and written fluency in English, including experience of writing reports and governance papers.
- Commitment to International Alert's values, to Gender, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and to anti-racism.
- Existing right to work in the UK.



Partner case study: Federation of Sexual and Gender Minorities – Nepal (FSGMN)

FSGMN is the only federation of LGBT+ led community-based organisations in Nepal, comprising of 37 affiliated organisations. It aims to create a strong network of organisations with the capacity to work on the rights of LGBT+ communities across Nepal. FSGMN led advocacy to secure greater rights of LGBT+ people in Nepal's 2015 constitution, including their recognition as a gender and sexual group, their right to change their sex and progress towards recognition of same-sex marriage. We partner with FSGMN to contribute to greater social and political inclusion of sexual and gender minorities, for a cohesive and peaceful Nepali society. In 2022, together we successfully advocated for inclusion of LGBT+ as a target group in the second national action plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820.

How to apply

International Alert is working with Macaulay Search on this appointment process.

We welcome all applications for this role from underrepresented people including women, people from the Global South, BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ people, people with disabilities, and other historically marginalised people.

The salary is circa £85,000 pa with 10% pension contribution.

The initial employment contract will be for 12 months, which could be extended. It is also possible the appointed candidate remains as a permanent contract COO, but we recognise this COO role description calls for someone who thrives in periods of transformation rather than the period of operational continuity that will follow on from the next 12-18 months of transition at International Alert.

While we would welcome applications from candidates able to travel to Alert's country offices as required, there will be other ways to make a big impact in this job if your circumstances mean you prefer not to travel (or not to do so regularly).

The application deadline is midnight BST on Wednesday 24 April 2024.

Your application should comprise:

- a short and informal cover letter sharing your motivation to serve International Alert, and highlighting your transformational leadership experience;
- a CV setting out your experience and relevant achievements.

Please send your application to ewen.mcalpine@macaulaysearch.com. Ewen McAlpine can also be contacted if you have specific questions about the opportunity.

Selected candidates will be invited for interview in early May.

Our ideal start date for this post would be the end of May.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions regarding this appointment process.

Thank you for considering this absolutely pivotal role at International Alert.

