

# DEVELOPMENT STUDIES GRADUATE

AHMED SHAAM



**CURRENT ROLE: MASTER OF SOCIAL CHANGE IN DEVELOPMENT UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE**

**PREVIOUS ROLE: PROGRAMME ASSOCIATE, UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND MALDIVES**

**DEGREE: BACHELOR OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE**

Shaam is incredibly passionate about working in advocacy for young people and gender-based issues. Shaam is enthusiastic, ambitious, and caring and hopes to continue providing positive contributions towards these issues.

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO SINCE GRADUATING?

When Shaam graduated with his Bachelor of Development Studies he returned to the Maldives and began work with the [United Nations Population Fund](#) (UNFPA) as a Programme Associate. UNFPA primarily works with ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, particularly for young people. Shaam's role was supporting the implementation of the UNFPA's country programme. Shaam worked within a small team of five staff and he was required to complete a range of tasks including communications, logistics, administration, and program delivery. Shaam found the role challenging and exciting. Shaam worked with different government entities such as the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services, Ministry of Youth, Sports & Community Empowerment and the National Bureau of Statistics to ensure necessary sexual and reproductive health services are available to young people and women. Shaam enjoyed being able to implement the things he learned during his degree within real-life practical situations. When Shaam's contract ended with UNFPA he decided to return to Australia and further his studies.

“It is really rewarding working with young people.”

Shaam is currently completing a [Master of Social Change in Development](#) at The University of Newcastle. Shaam's interests are around program development and research. The graduate program ties into the foundations of the Development Studies degree and allows Shaam to focus on specific issues of interest.

HOW RELEVANT HAS YOUR DEGREE BEEN SINCE YOU GRADUATED?

Shaam credits his Development Studies degree in landing him the Programme Associate role with UNFPA. Shaam's major was *Culture and Citizenship* and the courses he covered provided him with the theoretical knowledge

necessary to work with the UNFPA. A couple of elective courses that Shaam found to be the most applicable in his role with UNFPA were [Policy Development, Program Management and Evaluation](#) and he studied [Youth Culture and Risk](#) as part of his major. Shaam found that his program development knowledge was extremely valuable.

Shaam consulted with the Program Convenor and lecturers to work out what courses would best suit him and his goals. Shaam also selected courses that were within the spectrum of development work and interested him but were flexible enough that he could branch out in the future.

The Bachelor of Development Studies provides a great foundation for whatever work you find yourself in after graduating. The multidisciplinary nature and holistic approach of the degree enables you to approach any role or issue with a multidimensional lens. Shaam is passionate about working with young people and gender-based issues. It is important to understand how people can be influenced by different factors and you must be open to approaching issues from different angles. Shaam highlights that you cannot work with young people by taking a single approach and that the Development Studies degree provided him with the ability to look at and approach issues from multiple angles.

Shaam applied three years in a row before he was awarded the Australia Awards scholarship that allowed him to travel to and study at The University of Newcastle. As a result, Shaam was extremely focused on his grades and eager to learn a range of topics during his degree. He was interested in learning everything he could from macroeconomics to philosophy. Although Shaam was not successful the first two years he applied for the scholarship, he remained focused and continue build up his resume through volunteering and working within his community.

“I was like a sponge, wanting to learn everything that I could possible learn.”

With his friends, who were also passionate about social change, Shaam started the “Dhi Youth Movement” which the United Nations provided funding for a number of projects. The group facilitated small community-based programs that

were aimed at young people. These programs included flash mobs and random acts of kindness to encourage young people to become more involved with volunteer work. This volunteering experience meant that Shaam had prior experience of working with the UN even before completing his degree. Along with his theoretical knowledge of project management and implementation from his Development Studies degree, Shaam's volunteering experience was advantageous in landing his first role after graduating.

When Shaam returned to the Maldives between university semesters, he continued to gain experience through volunteering. Shaam volunteered with [Hope for Women](#), an organisation that works with issues around gender and women's empowerment. Shaam conducted workshops on gender-based violence and the state mechanisms that are in place to help women feel empowered and escape cycles of domestic violence. This volunteering experience was different from what he had been previously involved in and he found the work challenging, interesting, and rewarding.

#### ADVICE: ASK FOR GUIDANCE WHEN CHOOSING YOUR COURSES

The courses that Shaam chose to study during his Development Studies degree were extremely helpful when applying for the role with UNFPA. Shaam advises that you should consult with your Program Convenor as they are able to provide wonderful advice and guidance on what courses to select. As the Development Studies degree is multidisciplinary, the breadth of courses available provides you with so many opportunities to study. Students will find talking with the Program Convenor extremely beneficial.

#### PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Shaam is passionate about working with young people and on gender-based issues. Shaam relates to this area and feels as though he can meaningfully contribute in this area. When Shaam has completed his postgraduate studies, he hopes to find work within Australia particularly working in program development, research or policy analysis with indigenous communities, young people, and women rights.



Image: Shaam with Maldivian peer educators after completion of the UNFPA Peer Educator Training, 2019.

To find out more about Shaam and our other Development Studies graduates please visit; [uonblogs.newcastle.edu.au/ges/graduate-profiles/](https://uonblogs.newcastle.edu.au/ges/graduate-profiles/) [facebook.com/DevelopmentStudiesatUON/](https://facebook.com/DevelopmentStudiesatUON/)

For more information about the [Bachelor of Development Studies](#) you can contact:  
**Program Convenor**, Assoc Prof Kathy Mee  
[kathy.mee@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:kathy.mee@newcastle.edu.au)  
+61 2 4921 645