



Appointment of

Director of Programmes (and Deputy CEO)

April 2025

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Welcome Letter

Thanks for your interest in applying to be Director of Programmes at The Elders' Secretariat.

This is a unique opportunity to work with some of the most inspiring leaders of recent times. The Elders are twelve extraordinary individuals from around the world – former Presidents, Prime Ministers and other leaders, including three Nobel peace laureates. They have a mandate from our founder, Nelson Mandela, to use their experience, wisdom and moral authority on some of the world's toughest challenges.

At a time when many longstanding assumptions about the way the world works are collapsing, we are regularly told that the Elders are needed more than ever. This role plays a significant part in helping Elders meet that need. It can thus be very motivating. It can also be demanding. Prioritisation is an essential skill.

The Elders' 2023-27 strategy focuses on four programmes – the climate and nature crisis, pandemics, nuclear weapons, and conflict, with cross-cutting commitments on multilateralism, human rights, gender equality/women in leadership, and intergenerational dialogue. This is a broad set of topics, and no-one coming into the Secretariat will be expert in all of them.

This role is partly about getting the best from a team of experts. Critical to that is identifying which interventions by Elders are most likely to have impact, and helping programme leads develop theories of change for impact to happen, involving both private diplomacy and public advocacy.

It is also about service, which is at the heart of everything we do; service not only to the Elders you will support and travel with, but also to one another. The Elders' Secretariat exists to support and create opportunities for the Elders to achieve their mission. We aim to apply our values in all our work: to operate with integrity and be accountable, inclusive, respectful and collaborative. Our role is to support high-profile individuals, not have profile ourselves.

We are a small team working at pace and nimbly. This is a job for someone who likes getting stuck in, as well as managing and coaching. As a member of our Senior Management Team you will also be involved in leading change, including helping us transition from a solely UK-based team to one with staff around the world, to better meet the needs of the Elders we serve. We value diversity because it helps us deliver better.

The role will also have a function as Deputy CEO, covering for me when needed, and leading in promoting efficient cross-team working within the Secretariat.

Our current Director of Programmes has done a great job building up the Programmes team from five people to nine over the last few years (enabled by our success in fundraising). The team is in good shape. I hope you will apply to lead it.

Alistair Fernie
CEO, The Elders



Who we are

Our vision

A world where people live in peace, conscious of their common humanity and their shared responsibilities for each other, the planet and future generations; where there is universal respect for human rights; where poverty has been eliminated and people are free from fear and oppression, and able to fulfil their true potential.

Our mission

We will use our experience and influence to work for peace, justice, human rights and a sustainable planet. We will engage with global leaders and civil society through private diplomacy and public advocacy, to address existential threats, promote global solutions, and encourage ethical leadership that supports the dignity of all human beings.

Who we are

The Elders are guided by Nelson Mandela's legacy. Our values include:

- **Independence:** the Elders try to reflect the interests of the world as a whole. We aim to rise above the parochial concerns of nation, race and creed.
- **Integrity:** the Elders speak and act with honesty, guided by the consistent application of moral principles in all we do, and free from all influence and personal interests.
- **Interdependence:** the Elders share a profound sense that we are human only through the humanity of others. This common humanity transcends our differences.
- **Long-term view:** the Elders do not take the easy, short-term route, but support long-term, sustainable approaches addressing the root causes of the problems we tackle.
- **Evidence-based:** the Elders base our judgments on what science and other research tell us about the world and how it is changing, working collaboratively with experts.
- **Boldness:** the Elders take risks, speak truth to power and act with confidence and courage in promoting solutions to complex and intractable global challenges.
- **Respect:** the Elders recognise that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and treat everyone we meet with the respect that requires.
- **Humility:** the Elders do not pretend to have all the answers. We listen to young and old, believing that people are never too young to lead, and never too old to learn.
- **Hope:** the Elders remain optimistic about humanity's prospects. We believe that, with co-operation between the world's peoples, our best future is still ahead of us.



The Elders has been chaired since November 2024 by Juan Manuel Santos, former President of Colombia and Nobel Peace Laureate. Previous chairs are Mary Robinson (who is still an active Elder), Kofi Annan and Desmond Tutu. The Deputy Chairs are Ban Ki-moon and Graça Machel. Other active Elders are Gro Harlem Brundtland, Ernesto Zedillo, Hina Jilani, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, Elbegdorj Tsakhia, Helen Clark and Denis Mukwege. More details about individual Elders can be found [here](#).



How we work

As former leaders, The Elders know the challenges of decision-making in an unpredictable world and understand the transformative power of empathetic leadership.

In their careers, The Elders have brought peace to intractable conflicts, broken decades-old political norms, led social change, pioneered new thinking on sustainable development, promoted women's leadership, and helped broker historic international agreements. They learned that only by working together can the world overcome the shared challenges we all face.

As Elders, they seek to catalyse moral leadership, foster agreement and inspire hope. They champion courageous, compassionate decision-making, and call out those in power who break their promises. They stand together with those fighting for a sustainable future rooted in inclusivity, equality and justice. By using individual reputations and collective experience to impress upon world leaders the importance of ethical decision-making, the Elders work with civil society to challenge impunity and injustice, and provide a platform for those who are unheard in the corridors of power. They convene diverse voices to find solutions to our shared problems.

Private diplomacy

Personal contact and relationships at the highest level are critical drivers of change, so we will continue to prioritise Elders meeting world leaders. Through private dialogue with decision-makers, Elders can have sensitive

discussions, help broker solutions, and stimulate negotiations. Elders are well placed to use our collective experience and influence to help resolve tensions. We can also offer leaders private advice based on our own experience and independent view of the world.

Public advocacy

The Elders' public advocacy focuses on influencing world leaders and policy-makers through communications and engagement. The Elders engage with mainstream, specialist and social media to amplify unheard voices and solutions, and inspire ethical decision-making. A public narrative balances an emphasis on existential threats with the spirit of hope at the heart of Mandela's mandate to The Elders. They target decision-makers and influential audiences in all regions of the world.

Partnerships

We work in partnership with civil society organisations, think tanks, academics, international organisations, media and other stakeholders to inform our strategy and activities; extend our influence, reach and visibility with decision-makers; and amplify the influence of other organisations that share some of our objectives. We plan to deepen our partnerships, including by working more closely with selected partners, and developing more partnerships with Global South organisations.



Our Strategy: 2023-2027

Our 2023-2027 strategy is focused on four programme areas that address existential threats to humanity requiring a collective response – the climate and nature crisis, pandemics, nuclear weapons, and conflict. Drawing on our values and our mandate from Nelson Mandela, we have also chosen four cross-cutting commitments to be incorporated selectively into the four programmes: multilateralism, human rights, gender equality and women in leadership, and intergenerational dialogue.

Climate and Nature Crisis

The impact we seek: The planetary emergency is contained and the most vulnerable protected through revitalised global cooperation.

Pandemics

The impact we seek: The world is prepared for future pandemics, through a transformed multilateral system that is sustainably financed, inclusive, transparent and equitably governed.

Nuclear Weapons

The impact we seek: Current and future generations are free from the threat of nuclear destruction.

Conflict

The impact we seek: Global peace and security are improved through enhanced respect for international law, and more inclusive national and international dialogue.



Director of Programmes (and Deputy CEO)

Role Overview

The post holder provides leadership and strategic direction to The Elders' Secretariat on Elders' programmes. The role involves ensuring advice and support to Elders is aligned with the organisation's strategy, Elders' decisions and preferences, staff capacity and budget, and opportunities and risks in the external environment. She/he acts as a critical advisor to Elders within our culture of service, shaping programme priorities and decisions while driving cross-organisational collaboration to maximise influence and effectiveness.

The post holder is responsible for leading a team of nine staff, fostering a high-performance culture of quality advice, prioritisation, cross-team delivery and effective partnerships, and engaging externally with senior stakeholders to advance Elders' priorities globally.

Reporting to the CEO and serving as a member of a Senior Management Team of four, the post holder plays a crucial role in the strategic development and operational excellence of The Elders' Secretariat. She/he will also serve as Deputy CEO, covering for the CEO when needed and leading in promoting efficient cross-team working within the Secretariat.

The Elders' strategy for 2023-27 contains four programmes (conflict, the climate and nature crisis, nuclear weapons and pandemics), and four cross-cutting commitments (multilateralism, human rights, gender equality/women in leadership and intergenerational dialogue). The Programmes Team works across all eight of these areas. The post holder does not need to be expert in any of them, but some knowledge of them all is needed to manage the team well.

Director of Programmes (and Deputy CEO)

Main Duties and Responsibilities

Programme management and delivery

- Provide expert advice to Elders on the strategic development and implementation of The Elders' programme work, ensuring alignment with the organisation's strategy (vision, mission, values, strategic objectives and long-term objectives).
- Drive the impact of The Elders' programme work, by assessing global trends and working with colleagues to proactively propose initiatives that strengthen the organisation's influence.
- Drive delivery of programme decisions made by Elders at board meetings and elsewhere.
- Help advise Elders on how to prioritise a large number of incoming requests for their engagement in line with the strategy and operational constraints, and respond to requests from Elders.
- Oversee the Elders' approach to private diplomacy – getting Elders the right meetings and ensuring they are well briefed to maximise their impact.
- Collaborate with the Director of Communications to agree public advocacy that supports programme delivery, and amplify The Elders' voice and reach.
- Oversee monitoring and evaluation of impact against the outcomes in the strategy, maximise learning from this, and work with communications and fundraising colleagues to articulate Elders' impact.

- Oversee relationships with external consultants and partners to support programme delivery.
- Provide oversight of the programme budget, spending and financial forecasts.
- Engage with Advisory Council members and their networks where relevant to help deliver programme impact.
- Support fundraising work led by the Director of Development and Corporate Services, including reviewing funding proposals and reports to donors.
- Ensure timely preparation of Board papers on programmes and briefing materials for Elders' visits and other engagements, that are insightful, accurate, concise and tailored to Elders' requirements.

External relationships

- Cultivate and maintain high-level relationships around the world with governments, policymakers, civil society leaders, multilateral institutions, opinion-leaders, think tanks and the private sector, to enhance The Elders' global influence and impact, and inform advice to Elders.
- Accompany Elders on international visits, supporting them to deliver their objectives when meeting external stakeholders (including Presidents/Prime Ministers and multilateral leaders), giving advice, and helping build relationships to facilitate future visits.

Director of Programmes (and Deputy CEO)

Strategic direction and management of the organisation

- Contribute to the ongoing development of The Elders' overall strategy, especially the programme strategy, for agreement by Elders.
- Participate in the overall leadership and management of The Elders' Secretariat as a member of the Senior Management Team.
- Deputise for the CEO in his or her absence for whatever reason.
- Lead and manage the Programmes Team (nine staff, including this post), supporting a high-skilled, high-functioning team and their ongoing development and welfare.
- Mentor, develop, and support the high performance, continuous learning, and professional development of colleagues across the organisation.
- Lead in promoting efficient cross-team working across all three Secretariat teams.
- Promote an inclusive culture of respect, support and collaboration across all three Secretariat teams, in line with the values in the Secretariat staff charter.
- Undertake other tasks requiring senior leadership but not falling clearly to one of the three teams, as requested by the CEO.





Person Specification

The ideal candidate is expected to demonstrate a majority of the following skills and experience:

- Educated to degree level; a Masters in a relevant subject may be an advantage.
- At least 20 years' of experience in international affairs, including at senior levels, ideally including programme and project management.
- Experience dealing with sensitive geopolitical advocacy and engagement with political leaders.
- Substantial professional experience in one or more of the Elders' programmes and cross-cutting commitments.
- Ability to understand the range of considerations that are part of running a small organisation smoothly, including external communications and corporate services, and to collaborate with colleagues leading on those areas.
- Outstanding people leadership, management, and development skills, combining delegation with holding staff accountable for high quality and timely delivery.
- Strong policy and analytical acumen; keen political antennae, and the ability to demonstrate diplomatic finesse and agility across different cultural environments and world views.
- Able to provide clear direction to staff and advisers working on programmes across a portfolio of different issues, combining high-level insights with a keen eye for accuracy and attention to process management.
- Confident in managing conflicting priorities and deadlines, and the experience and capabilities to handle high levels of ambiguity and pressure successfully in what can be a fast-paced role.
- Excellent written and spoken English, with experience of quality controlling and coaching less experienced writers to produce briefing and other written work of the highest standards.
- Experience in effective influencing, negotiating, and building productive partnerships.
- A strong personal commitment to the mission and values of The Elders.
- A flexible style and willingness to work in a small, collaborative team committed to a culture of service.

This role may require frequent international travel, sometimes at short notice and, in exceptional circumstances, for up to two weeks. Additionally, you may be required to attend staff or Elders events in the UK from time to time, and to build and maintain external networks at diplomatic, think tank and civil society events (mostly in London, sometimes in the evening).

How to Apply

To apply, please submit a CV and short covering letter, detailing how you fulfil the role description and personal specification to <https://candidates.perrettlaver.com/vacancies/> quoting reference **7819**. The deadline for applications is **9am BST Monday 12th May 2025**.

Given the Elders' global outlook, we particularly welcome applicants originally from countries in the Global South. As we are not able to sponsor visas, all applicants must have the existing right to work in the UK.

The role is based in London, United Kingdom and the successful candidate will be expected to be in the Central London office every week, although there is a lot of flexibility for working from home. This role may require frequent international travel, sometimes at short notice and, in exceptional circumstances, for up to two weeks. Additionally, you may be required to attend staff or Elders events in the UK from time to time, and to build and maintain external networks at diplomatic, think tank and civil society events (mostly in London, sometimes in the evening).

The starting salary scale is between £99,900 and £108,000 depending on fit and experience, with scope for progression. A generous benefit package includes a 10% employer pension contribution and 28 days' annual leave (plus public holidays).

Perrett Laver will conduct an executive search process in parallel with the public advertisement of the role. Longlisted candidates will be invited to interview with Perrett Laver in May and the Selection Panel will subsequently meet to decide upon a final shortlist for the post in early June, following which two rounds of interviews with The Elders' Secretariat will take place in mid-June, together with an informal conversation with the CEO, a staff panel, psychometric testing and a written test. If you require any reasonable adjustments to assist you in the selection process, please advise us of these so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

The Elders is committed to creating an inclusive working environment that values diversity and equal opportunities. We welcome and encourage applicants of any ethnicity, religion, age, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation or disability. We will assess purely on your abilities and fit for a role.

To confidentially get in touch about this role, or for advice on your application please contact Isabela Betoret, Senior Research Associate Isabela.betoret@perrettlaver.com for a confidential conversation. Should you require access to these documents in alternative formats, please contact Freya Coombes, Senior Project Manager, Freya.coombes@perrettlaver.com

If you have comments that would support us to improve access to documentation, or our application processes more generally, please do not hesitate to contact us via accessibility@perrettlaver.com

Perrett Laver's GDPR Policy

Protecting your personal data is of the utmost importance to Perrett Laver and we take this responsibility very seriously. Any information obtained by our trading divisions is held and processed in accordance with the relevant data protection legislation. The data you provide us with is securely stored on our computerised database and transferred to our clients for the purposes of presenting you as a candidate and/or considering your suitability for a role you have registered interest in.

Perrett Laver is a Data Controller and a Data Processor, and our legal basis for processing your personal data is 'Legitimate Interests'. You have the right to object to us processing your data in this way. For more information about this, your rights, and our approach to Data Protection and Privacy, please visit our website <https://perrettlaver.com/privacy-policy/>.



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