There is now a consensus that the rise of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) is an important element of world society. But despite all the attention they receive in the media and the literature for their role in international politics, INGOs are not yet well understood in their function as employers. While there is anecdotal evidence of career mobility between both, headquarters and national offices of large INGOs, no systematic study of the emerging transnational labor market in the third sector has been undertaken to our knowledge so far. To contribute to closing this research gap, the paper examines emerging transnational labor markets for NGO staff through the lens of cross-border careers of individuals working for INGOs. The purpose of the paper is twofold: At a theoretical level, it draws on the sociology of careers in the Chicago School tradition and combines it with insights from the French sociology of conventions to develop a theoretical framework for the study of transnational labor markets in the making. Both approaches suggest that people’s careers are not just an individual phenomenon but unfold in orientation towards to reference groups, through which they become socially recognized. Hence, careers are a good starting point to investigate the links between mobility patterns, collectively defined career scripts and labor market institutions in a transnational context where institutions are expected to be fluid and undergoing recurrent negotiation. At the empirical level, the paper presents results from a pilot study of careers of staff in 10 INGOs drawn from the global environmental policy field.