



## Visit to African Development Information Services

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[www.afdevinfo.org](http://www.afdevinfo.org)

### What is ADIS?

Bill Anderson who founded ADIS in 2003 had previously worked in the software industry in South Africa but had been very involved in politics through his membership of the ANC. ADIS is a project that combines these areas by developing an information resource to facilitate political and economic development in sub-saharan Africa.

*"Our aim is to provide a holistic, one-stop shop for objective information on the nuts and bolts of all aspects of development in Africa. We leave analysis and opinion to our clients"*

The aim of the project is to make the information available free of charge to the governments of Africa and to have other clients through subscription. All the information is being drawn from publicly available sources and will not therefore have any copyright issues. Using the service would allow you, for example, to quickly be able to find the web sites hosted in a particular country, divided by category or to find out the names and background of ministers or junior ministers in specific government departments. Clients outside of African could range from Academic libraries, media organisations, Development consultancies, NGOs.

The information is not country risk analysis – which is available but expensive. A country report from the Economist Intelligence Unit, for example could cost \$750 a year to subscribe to. A newsletter from Africa Confidential could cost £620 per year. The ADIS emphasis is on the information not the analysis.

### Recruitment

The service is expected to go live late 2006. Currently there are around 15 researchers putting the information together. They are usually students who work around two days per week. ADIS pays its researchers £10 per hour and does not take volunteers for ethical and business reasons. The work involves research – this could involve working on a specialist area – such as oil or education or government or tracking down publicly available databases.

### Applicants

Apply by CV and covering letter. A recent advert attracted 300 applicants. Typically recruits are 50% from SOAS and 50% from LSE though other students are considered and recruited.

What ADIS is looking for is

A high degree of familiarity with sub-Saharan Africa

A knowledge of specific countries

Language skills – African languages and French are helpful as well as English and German African students or those who have lived and worked in Africa. Those who intend to return to Africa are especially encouraged to apply.

The work is not just web research. The skill lies in being able to quickly discern useful information and sources. This takes knowledge and sharpness to turn data into information but also an empathy for the region and its cultures. For example looking at and harvesting information supplied by the CIA in itself is not adequate – over 30% of the names of government ministers on that particular site were spelled wrongly.

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