

Christian Aid – Research and Policy

Rocco Blume is Christian Aid's Senior Policy Officer for Sudan. We spoke to him during a recruitment campaign for temporary research staff.

What does your role involve?

"Developing policy positions on situations such as that facing people in Darfur. For example our policy position on the region incorporates peace keeping, the humanitarian context, security and the peace process. In addition I am also involved with advocacy based on those policy positions. This involves forming alliances with other involved agencies such as NGOs and multilaterals. For example when we are trying to influence the Chinese government it is fairly fruitless trying to do it directly. We share our lobbying with partners. Our partners in Africa can communicate with African governments and it is at that level that we may be able to influence the Chinese government. Policy and the advocacy that flows from it has to be based on robust research but this is difficult to do in places like Darfur."

The research work

"At the same time powerful advocacy needs new and unique material. A new report we have created involved holding interviews with communities in Sudan. We need researchers to ensure that the material isn't just 'vox pop' and that it is intellectually defensible. The way we conduct the survey – the questions we ask them, who is interviewed and how many people we speak to – has to be based on a rigorous research methodology. The role we are recruiting for will also involve a certain percentage of admin work. Even though an organization like Christian Aid is big enough to have its administration done in a professional way, temporary posts like the researcher post will require additional admin."

Skills needed

Experience – just above entry level, for example previous internship experience in an NGO. You need to demonstrate your practical experience, rather than simply your academic research experience.

Research skills and experience – evidence of core research skills: internet and phone based research, methodology, report writing, quantitative research on development issues. An awareness of non academic research aspects is also important, for example gathering information through meetings and emails.

Confidence – to approach people for information.

Promulgation – once the research has been completed it then needs to be distributed. Different outlets will need information in different ways to ensure it makes as much of an impact as possible. In addition, monitoring the take up of research and the effect it has is also vital.