



Going Places with Geography

Development and Global Issues

**Royal
Geographical
Society**
with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning

Olly Parsons

Disaster Response Coordinator, Mobile for Development, Groupe Speciale Mobile Association (GSMA)

Geography was always my favourite subject at school. I had a great teacher who was able to bring every topic alive in some way, and continued my interest on to study at Royal Holloway, University of London. During my degree, I completed internships with the Disasters Emergency Committee and led a research team to Kenya to study the potential of technology enabled community mapping on development goals.

This stood me in good stead for my current job which I began in the summer of 2013.

What does your role entail?

The GSMA is the global trade association for the mobile phone industry, and my role as Programme Coordinator, which sits in the Mobile for Development department, is varied and exciting. We undertake a large range of work, from working specifically with the mobile network operators to increase their resilience, to studying ways in which the mobile phone can be a channel for the delivery of aid during a disaster response, and communications used as a lifesaving tool.

How do you use your geographical skills?

I work in a global industry, and our focus on disaster and crisis naturally requires me to have an understanding of these issues. At the most basic level, geography gives me an appreciation for global events, both natural and political. I also need to use skills such as report writing, presentation skills and information analysis. Communication skills are critical when it comes to working with our members

and partners around the world, being aware of cultural sensitivities and working with a range of different people at different levels.

Advice to someone thinking of taking geography further?

Network. Get your own work out there and show you're serious about your topic. Make yourself relevant to the area you want to work in, and at the end of the day, the most important thing is that you enjoy it.

Other geographers working in this sector include:

Assistant Consultant, International Development Division at Ecorys UK

Catastrophe and Exposure Manager, Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Group

Catastrophe Risk Analysis, Willis RE Development and Flood Risk Technical Specialist, Environment Agency

Head of Education and Youth, Oxfam

Head of Polar Territories, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

HM Armed Forces

Social Development Advisor, Department for International Development

Further support

Details of undergraduate courses: For more details of the range of geography courses offered by universities and how you can enhance your application to higher education see www.rgs.org/studygeography.

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