Samia Dumbuya Campaigns Assistant

Royal Geographical Society

with IBG

Advancing geography and geographical learning

skills.



Job title: Campaigns Assistant Organisation: Change.org Location: London, UK

How did you get to where you are now?

I studied Geography, English Literature, and French for A-Levels. I studied BSc Geography because I wanted to understand the relationship between humans and natural sciences, and also explore environmental solutions because I am interested in climate justice. Before and during university, I always volunteered and did extra-curricular activities like volunteering for environmental causes and projects. One of my favourite experiences was volunteering with the International Citizen Service (ICS). I took part in their water and sanitation project in Nicaragua when I was 19 doing community work and understanding the challenges of improving water and sanitation in the country.

During my time at university, I took part in Uprising's Environmental Leadership programme, which is a ninemonth programme to develop the skills of young environmental activists. After I graduated from university, I secured an internship with the Royal Borough of Greenwich council to develop my community engagement skills and get a better understanding of local politics. Consequently, I transferred those skills to get a role with the Climate Justice and Energy team at Friends of the Earth Europe, where I had the opportunity to observe and interact with campaigns concerning energy and climate justice across Europe and other continents. I currently work at Change.org as a Campaigns Assistant for the UK team, where I assist campaigners to win their campaigns. I want to note that in-between these jobs and during university, I worked part-time in restaurants and bars to sustain myself and also improve my work

Was there anything particularly useful that helped you get into this role?

I think taking part in campaigns and developing my skills in campaigning voluntarily played a huge role because it showed that I have a passion for community work and also taking part in campaigns training with Campaign Bootcamp, Young Friends of the Earth Europe and Uprising. Uprising, in particular, is a charity that empowers young people to take leadership and create change in their communities. They run youth programmes that run up to nine months, upskilling young people to be skilled leaders.

What are you responsible for?

I am a Junior Campaigner at Change.org, a company with the mission "to empower people everywhere to create the change they want to see. We're an open platform because we believe more change happens when people with different backgrounds and perspectives can participate in the conversation". I work with petition starters who need assistance with reaching their campaign goals. We work with a lot of people who care about multiple causes and who want to seek justice in the world. My job is about empowering people to create change and providing them with the tools and resources to do so. It is a fun organisation to be with because everyone is passionate about using digital tools to get justice.

What skills and characteristics do you need for this role, apart from geographical knowledge?

For this role, it is important to be flexible and adaptable. What does that mean? It means that I have to adapt to changing circumstances and approach tasks with an open mind. What's also important is being transparent, honest and being a good communicator. When working with teams, it is vital to have communication skills or else projects and tasks won't have a great outcome. In addition, being aware of what's happening in the news and in the world helps a lot with decision-making in the workplace. My main message to graduates and students is to be open to new experiences and try new things.

How does geography feature in your work? Geography features in my work through all the

Geography features in my work through all the transferable skills I received from the degree, like report writing, collecting data, conducting surveys etc.

Geography is a worldly subject and I haven't had a wok experience where I do not use my knowledge from Geography.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I like talking to people about issues happening all over the world. There are people in the company who live in different countries and we exchange discussions about culture, food and everything that we like.

Do you get to travel for your work?

Yes, but right now I can't travel because of the pandemic. Usually we get a chance to visit other offices in other countries and we do staff retreats in other countries.

What are the opportunities for career progression?

I would like to combine my two passions, community engagement and environmental consultancy. I have some plans but right now I'm just experimenting with different ideas and see what works for me.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to go into this career?

For all students: VOLUNTEER! Volunteering demonstrates your passion for a particular cause or hobby. If you can't find opportunities, create your own. For example, start a geography film club, where you watch documentaries about the planet OR start a blog to talk about things that excite you.

How do you maintain your knowledge and interest in geography outside of work?

I volunteer for opportunities I see pop up on social media, environmental job websites and also by contacting organisations about available opportunities. I have a habit of reading the news every day (AlJazeera mainly) to stay on top of global affairs. It's good to stay up to date with global news because it's a great way to develop your language and see what's trending in your interested industry.

Why did you choose geography?

I chose Geography because I wanted to explore and discuss the relationship between humans and nature and work in environmental consultancy. I enjoy talking to people and making them aware of environmental issues and how to be a part of the solution.

* This interview was undertaken in 2021 and was correct at the time of publication. Please note that the featured individual may no longer be in role, but the profile has been kept for career pathway and informational purposes.