Aid workers typically operate in front line conditions, facilitating the effective distribution of humanitarian aid to people who have been hit by human or natural disasters.

Humanitarian work opportunities can be found across the world. Depending on the nature of the situation, some relief work may be in dangerous locations. Aid workers are directly involved within communities, giving hands-on support in areas such as education, healthcare and housing. Other tasks revolve around planning, administration and implementation of projects.

Work activities

Work responsibilities in this area vary greatly depending on the project in question. Duties might include:

**Emergency response:**
- Rapidly assessing emergency situations; working closely with staff located within the area or other emergency departments.
- Managing the implementation of emergency activities and monitoring their effectiveness.
- Overseeing security procedures to ensure the safety of staff working in potentially unstable conditions.
- Producing response reports, recommendations and proposals for emergency intervention.

**Project management:**
- Researching and establishing the project requirements and ensuring adequate supplies of medicines, tools, equipment etc.
- Ensuring compliance with appropriate national and international procedures, policies and regulatory codes.
- Liaising with United Nations agencies, government officials, colleagues etc.
- Working with local service providers to ensure long-term initiatives are put in place.

**General management:**
- Communicating with head office about the progress of a project.
- Managing budgets and allocating resources.
- Monitoring objectives and producing funding proposals.

**People management:**
- Co-ordinating and supporting the work of volunteers.
- Organising induction, support and training for volunteers/other aid workers.
- Implementing, overseeing and ensuring strict adherence with security/safety procedures.

Work conditions

Travel: both national and international travel is an integral part of many roles.

Working hours: can be very long and irregular.

Location: opportunities can be found throughout the world.

Salaries

Many international aid roles for graduates are on a voluntary basis with your expenses usually being covered – flights, accommodation and living expenses. In some international charities, graduates can be expected to fundraise in advance and to bring a contribution to the organisation when they begin the placement. Paid roles in overseas development usually only come after three or four years’ experience.
Aid worker/humanitarian worker (continued)

Entry requirements and training

Entry is open to degrees of all disciplines. Qualifications in first aid and management can be extremely beneficial. Approved courses are provided by various organisations in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Graduates with a specific skill in areas such as healthcare, logistics and engineering might find it easier to get a placement overseas.

Although there are no specific entry requirements, being in good health yourself is important.

Skills and qualities

- High energy levels and resilience: you are no good to anyone if you burn out and placements can last from two to 12 months.
- Being flexible and resourceful: you will have to cope with basic living conditions while working hard and being positive.
- Interpersonal skills: you will be interacting with many people, of different nationalities, including both locals and co-workers.

Postgraduate study

While a postgraduate course will increase your knowledge base, your practical skills are what really count.

Training

Charities usually organise comprehensive training programmes for staff heading overseas.

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