

## Doctors of the Future Gain New Perspectives

In February 2009, Skillshare International staff and development workers delivered the first course on the Global Determinants of Health and Development with the School of Medicine at Trinity College Dublin. The course is the result of an innovative collaboration between an academic institution and Skillshare International Ireland, and aims to develop students' understanding of global and local issues around health, social inequality and international development that facilitate or limit access to health care. The School of Medicine made a strategic decision to make this new course compulsory for all third year medical students, in order to bring perspectives on international development issues in health delivery to a wider audience. This led to the adoption of a new model of global health education. In an intensive one-week module, all 132 third year medical students participated in workshops, debates and plenary sessions on topics including Understanding Development and Globalisation, Social Cultural Influences on Health, Education and Empowerment, Politics of Immunisation, Participatory Approaches in Local Communities, Conflict and Health, Malaria, and Gender and Human Rights in Mozambique.



Skillshare International has been running special study modules on global health and development with the medical schools at Leicester University since 2002 and at Nottingham University since 2006. One of the strengths of these modules is that we are able to give students the opportunity to meet and talk to health professionals with direct experience of working in developing countries. Skillshare International development worker Monique Janssens, who was placed with the Coalition for Peace in Africa in Kenya, shared her experiences of the impact of conflict on health and services with the students.



The students also benefited from the experience and knowledge of Dr Alice Mabota, a human rights lawyer from Mozambique who specialises in gender issues and engaged with the students through a video conference. One of the students who participated in the 2009 course in Dublin said, *"By sharing their skills and ideas, the Skillshare team helped us to develop new skills and our own ideas, and also to become more aware of development issues. I think it is of great benefit to us, as many of us plan and prepare for*

*electives in some of the world's developing countries, to have gained an insight into a few of the challenges that these countries face with regards to healthcare. I hope that this will enable us to be better equipped for and more aware of these problems when we travel".*

The students were assessed by a reflective essay and group presentation on a specific topic, and completed an attitude questionnaire before and after the course. One student said, *"Having considered myself to be forward-thinking, I was shocked at my own prejudices. While I favour the minimisation of paternalism in modern medicine in the developed world, I had managed in my own mind not to extend this principle to my image for healthcare in the developing world. I now appreciate why communities... may be slow to blindly adopt measures imposed by foreign agencies. Informed consent should be a universal concept, a right not a privilege."*