



Fran Scott: building awareness of aid and development

In March 2009, Skillshare International development worker Francesca Scott shared her experience of being an international volunteer in Swaziland when she participated in DFID's White Paper consultation. Fran joined the panel as a keynote speaker at the public consultation event on the White Paper - Eliminating World Poverty: Assuring Our Common Future, held in Birmingham on 18th March.

Skillshare International is committed to raising UK public awareness about the realities of international development by sharing the experience of our development workers. DFID is the leading funder of Skillshare International's international volunteering programme, and its White Paper consultation events earlier this year were an opportunity for us to illustrate just one way in which British taxpayers are contributing to development. Fran's placement was with a government department in Swaziland, so it was also an opportunity to challenge assumptions about aid spending, showing how governments in the North and the South can work with civil society organisations to tackle pressing challenges together. For Skillshare, raising awareness about development issues is critical in our journey to building a global partnership of communities working to reduce poverty, inequality and injustice.

Fran Scott volunteered as a development worker with Skillshare International in Swaziland between October 2006 and December 2007. We placed her with the Ministry of Social Health and Welfare where she was a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer working to build health management capacity across the country. Speaking to a large audience at the White Paper consultation, Fran shared what she had learnt from her experience: about the challenge of delivering quality health services in a context of scarcity and about the role of aid, NGOs and international volunteers in supporting those who are working and living in a particular context, who will have the knowledge and understanding to be able to find realistic long-term solutions. On a panel with a DFID minister, Fran took questions from the public audience and then joined the audience in small discussion groups to debate the content of the White Paper.



*Skillshare International development worker,
Fran Scott.*

This was an excellent opportunity for DFID and Skillshare International to work together to facilitate engagement between the UK public and an experienced development worker, showing how the value of international volunteering goes beyond the development placement itself to have a lasting impact in the volunteer's home country.

Feedback from participants at the consultation was that they had enjoyed the event and appreciated the chance to air their views. The DFID staff member who arranged for Fran to speak considered that this was due in no small part to Fran's presentation, which gave participants a different perspective on development, and food for thought that they could use in their discussions.