

Working with Conflict Management Networks

In 2004, Skillshare International's work in conflict management expanded through its partnerships with COPA and ACTION.

COPA is a continent-wide network of African peace practitioners which was started in 1996 by "Responding to Conflict" course alumni. They recognised conflict as a major contributor to Africa's state of poverty and underdevelopment and knew they could address this by building capacities within Africa to respond effectively to conflict.

Action for conflict transformation (ACTION) started in 2000 and is a global network of individuals and organisations that have developed diverse and innovative approaches to resolve, transform, and prevent situations of injustice and violence. The network evolved out of a need from practitioners for sharing experience from conflict transformation interventions and to provide practical capacity-building and support to people working for sustainable peace and justice in conflict-affected areas of the world.

Skillshare International placed a Finance and Fundraising Officer with ACTION and a Programme Officer with COPA. With funding from Comic Relief, Skillshare International supported COPA to undertake a full evaluation of their programmes to assess their impact in areas of conflict and potential conflict in the last 5 years in Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda and South Africa. The evaluation also made recommendations to COPA on improving their decision making systems, involving all members in consultations and improving the management structure so that members understand who to contact in the organisation. Skillshare International supports this process as it continues the partnership.

During her development worker placement as Programme Officer, Michelle Spearing has assisted COPA to develop systems and procedures for fundraising and is improving the organisation's project management and monitoring and evaluation systems to help COPA better reflect the benefits its members and communities reported during the recent evaluation.

Joan McGarry started a 12-month placement as Finance and Fundraising Officer at ACTION in March 2004. This was the first time that Skillshare International had placed a DW in South Africa. Joan's role was to support ACTION to establish financial systems which closely monitor income, expenditure and cash flow.

Joan says *"my main achievements during my placement were preparing 27 months of accounts for audit and establishing some systems of financial accountability for the organisation."* The benefits of this placement extend beyond improvements made to ACTION's financial systems. Joan, who had never worked in conflict management before joining ACTION, said *"I would be interested in working in peace again. That's the great thing about working in a small office – you get involved in everything so you learn a lot about the organisation's work."* In addition to Joan's placement, ACTION's Coordinator is attending Skillshare International's Leadership Development Programme in 2005.