

Working for peace in Africa

The secretariat of the Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA) in Nairobi is home to an example of the rich diversity of Skillshare International's development workers, in the form of Mollel Joel and Monique Janssens.



▲ Mollel and Monique

Mollel and Monique are at opposite ends of the placement timetable. Monique arrived at COPA in March, whilst Mollel's a veteran of eighteen months. Both contribute to COPA's peace building through jobs that demand excellent communication skills, with Mollel working as Funding Adviser and Monique as Research and Communication Officer. However, looking beyond these common skills the paths they've taken to arrive at their first postings with Skillshare could not be more different.

Monique is Dutch and fulfilling a lifelong ambition to work internationally. Until now this dream had been realised through travel and working in business marketing for big retailers like IKEA. With Skillshare Monique is now finding an outlet for her natural idealism. "I'm not naive but I am quite idealistic and I want to contribute, even in a small way, to improving the world," she explained.

The road to Kenya hasn't been smooth though. As the post-election conflict took hold in January, Monique's arrival was postponed. Consequently she was thrown into unfamiliar territory, helping to deliver trauma workshops. Far from making her question her decision to work in Africa, this experience has, she feels, taught her much.

Monique has now launched COPA's new website and is looking at other ways she can use her commercial experience, for instance in marketing. Communications

and research though are priorities. "Developing COPA's communication channels within their network and with the outside world, will help in their peace building efforts," she explained.

In contrast Mollel has an established background in development work across Africa. His decision to work in this sector was made at university. "I didn't intend working in development but seeing people coming into Kenya to work, and studying development economics myself, made me feel I should do something." Peace building was, however, new to Mollel and a challenge he has relished. He is a Kenyan placed in a continental organisation and based in Nairobi which was made possible by the post's funding through the IDCT programme. On the ground he and Monique see benefits; both agree his Kenyan university education and local roots have profited COPA's fundraising, with knowledge of local corporate social responsibility issues and connections in the international development sector giving him an 'edge' in Kenya.

So what does he feel he has achieved in his time with COPA? "The fact they now have a fundraising framework to enable regional offices to raise their own funds, which is a change of direction and a definite transfer of skills to other staff, is progress," he believes.



▲ Conflict mapping at a COPA workshop

In this issue:

Celebrating ACTS graduations

Kenya Green and Clean appeal

The spirit of youth

Photography competition

JARGON-BUSTER

Conflict

Conflict is a relationship between two or more parties (individuals or groups) who have, or think they have, incompatible goals.

Violence

Violence consists of actions, words, attitudes, structures or systems that cause physical, psychological, social or environmental damage and/or prevent people from reaching their full human potential.

Peace

Peace is when people are anticipating and managing conflicts without violence, and are engaging in inclusive social change processes that improve the quality of life. They are doing so without compromising the possibility of continuing to do so in the future, or compromising the possibility of others to do so.

Sources: Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action and Programming Framework for International Alert: Design, Monitoring and Evaluation.

From Vietnam to India: students of peace learn from each other

It's a familiar story: international disagreement escalates into bloody violence. But a cutting-edge MA course in Cambodia, supported by Skillshare International and the UK-based organisation Responding to Conflict (RTC), is enabling students from conflict-ridden countries to tell a very different story.

The Applied Conflict Transformation Studies (ACTS) Masters programme in Cambodia brings together NGO workers across the Asia-Pacific region to learn from each other how to build peace.

Skillshare International development worker Sophie Meredith, who has been a Fundraising Officer for the course and the Cambodian organisations running it since January 2007, says: "People in the same class were sharing their experiences from countries all over Asia: their life threatening experiences from the week before, for example. NGO workers from many different cultural and religious backgrounds not only share experiences in a safe environment and learn how to help build peace in their own countries, but are also building strong ties between organisations and countries, right there in the classroom."

Sophie notes that students not only learn from fellow students' and their organisations about what works, "but also about what has failed and why. These are issues that you are not likely to read about". She says faith is also important: "Students from the first course talked particularly of learning about integrating spirituality with community development for peace, and possibilities for inter-religious communication."

Sophie supports the Cambodian peace organisations managing the course – initially the Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT) and now the new Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) – to raise funds through consultancy, merchandising, public donations and grant-making organisations; and is developing a strategy to enable CPCS to fundraise after she leaves. Underpinning the fundraising, she worked with staff to develop their communication materials (websites, publications and branding); organisational structure (improving lines of accountability and making them transparent); and set up efficient methods for processing public donations. She found that although a generation of educated men and women were wiped out in Cambodia's recent history,

taking a set of skills with them, the younger generation running the peace organisations are very receptive to finding new ways of building community links and peace.

Sophie is also working on linking the Cambodia course with European and US institutions. Her aim is to both raise funds and also to educate the public and those directly involved in conflict globally. She has approached museums and even senior army personnel, to show how people in countries ravaged by civil war can work for peace and rebuild their countries.



▲ Sophie with one of her colleagues

Development Workers

NEW

Paula Diaz Mendez
Business Adviser,
Okavango Polers Trust,
Botswana

Chinwe Obianu
Resource Mobilisation Officer,
SWAGAA, Swaziland

Ma-Lord Makaya
Communications and IT Officer,
Emang Basadi, Botswana

Kelly Murphy
Executive Director,
Cancer Association, Botswana

Suemin Han
HIV and AIDS Community Educator,
Letloa Trust

Patric Ann
Tourism Lecturer,
Catholic University of Mozambique

COMPLETED PLACEMENTS

Paula Diaz Mendez
Environmentalist, Katleho
'Moho Association, Lesotho

Stephen Ojwang
Programme Adviser,
UNCODET, Tanzania

Caroline Sande
Political Dimensions
Programme Manager,
SARPN, South Africa

Harriet Musoke
Health Education Co-ordinator,
Project Hope, Namibia

Kelly Murphy
Management and Business Adviser,
Somarela, Botswana

Skillshare International
News in brief...

Kenya Green and Clean Appeal

We are working with the Greater Horn of Africa Rainwater Partnership and Kenya Rainwater Association to provide drinking water and sanitation facilities for schools and communities in six districts of Kenya that are threatened by climate change.

You can help us to provide rainwater harvesting facilities and new toilets for schools, improved reservoirs and a range of other services to help these communities for years to come.

If you would like to support the appeal

please visit www.skillshare.org and click the yellow button for contact details and more information. This would be a great project for you or your friends, family, school or company to fundraise for so please get in touch with us and we will help you.



Costello FC tournament raises over £1,400 for CFH!

A fundraising football tournament was organised by Costello FC, a Hull based junior football club on 14th June. This was the first ever UK Coaching for Hope tournament and over 300 under 11 year olds took part. Each team visited our stand, watched a DVD about our work and heard a short talk from CFH Director Jane about our work in Africa.



▲ The Costello Tigers



▲ Teaching guitar at THT

Celebrating the spirit of youth

To mark International Day of the African Child on 16th June, young performers from Skillshare International partner organisation the Tanzania House of Talent (THT) showcased their music, dance and theatrical talent in a 90-minute performance at the Russian Cultural Centre in Dar es Salaam. The event, called Young @ Art, was THT's first independent production and was supported by Skillshare International and other sponsors.

THT's founder, Ruge Matahaba, said, "It's a great way to raise awareness of the positive contribution children can give to Tanzanian society whilst also highlighting the challenges children still continue to face whilst growing up in Africa."

Celebrating ACTS Graduation

Two groups of students from the Applied Conflict Transformation Studies course have completed their studies. For both groups, one from the Balkans and one from South-East Asia, the two-year Masters course finished with a public seminar and the nerve-racking thesis defence in front of a panel of university academics.

From the Balkans 15 people completed the course, with 10 receiving their Masters degree. In Asia 11 people completed the course, with nine receiving their Masters degree. Students attended the course from countries such as Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo, Israel, Cambodia, Vietnam, Nepal and the Philippines. The students themselves come from a wide range of fields including education, youth work, development and conflict transformation.

There are two common links between students. They are all practitioners with a number of years' experience of directly working for social change

and they are all working in communities and societies which have been affected by violent conflict. ACTS works with the students (part-time) over a period of two years to build their understanding of the field of conflict transformation, to identify and develop the skills required in their work, and to engage with them on a piece of research based on their actual work. One of the aims of the course is to provide an opportunity for those who are engaged in practical every day work for peace to explore the theories in the field relevant to their work, to test them against their own practical experience, and ultimately to develop real answers which can meet the needs of local situations.



▲ ACTS graduates

The Applied Conflict Transformation Studies course was launched in 2005 and currently has centres in Cambodia for the Asia region and in Serbia for the Balkans region. Responding to Conflict works in partnership with the Centre for Peacebuilding and Conflict Studies, Nansen Dialogue Centre (Serbia), Pannasastra University, and Novi Sad University to implement the programme. ACTS is funded by the UK's Department for International Development through the Integrating Development and Conflict Transformation project, a joint project with Skillshare International. For more information on the ACTS programme visit www.globalacts.org

Editor's Note ...

The focus this time is Peace Building, including articles about our Integrating Development and Conflict Transformation (IDCT) project and our three development workers in Kenya and Cambodia. Please feel free to address your comments about this edition and suggestions for future articles to me at the UK office in Leicester, or by email to editor@skillshare.org.

Best wishes

Claire Lewis-Armes

Claire Lewis-Armes
Editor



▲ Last year's winning photograph

Make a difference... take a photo



It's the third year of our annual photography competition, so why not enter your photos...

Skillshare International prides itself on capturing strong, positive, accurate images of development work and the people touched by our activities.

We are looking for strong photos showing how we work with our partners.

As well as being featured in our newsletter, the winner and two runners up – wherever you are – will also receive a prize (details of prizes are available on www.skillshare.org/photocompetition.htm).

This competition is open to everyone: development workers, partner organisations, trustees, staff and supporters and everybody else involved in our work!

Competition deadline: 31 October 2008. So take them and send them in quick!

Email your photos to: editor@skillshare.org

Or send on a disk to:
126 New Walk, Leicester,
LE1 7JA, UK

Terms and Conditions

It's FREE and open to all photographers. Submit up to 10 images per person. Digital resolution: 1 mega pixel (minimum). Black and white or colour pictures accepted. Please include a caption for each submission and your contact details. The judges' decision will be final. By entering this competition you are giving Skillshare International permission to reproduce the images you submit to us in our publications and publicity. You are also confirming that you have complied with the Skillshare International Guide to Taking Photos (available from editor editor@skillshare.org). Always ask the subject's permission before taking their photograph. Respect their right not to be photographed.



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