

Corporate Strategy 2005-2010



**“This strategy represents a step change.
It is much more than just a continuation
of the way we've been working.”**

Dr Cliff Allum, Chief Executive Officer

The International Context

In the first five years of the 21st century, we have seen new developments within the political sphere that have changed the course of development policies and strategies that affect global action against poverty. At the forefront has been a shift in the global power structure that has seen the rise of a unilateral approach to tackling concerns. The international focus on security and terrorism has impacted on development, not only by drawing political and media attention away from development concerns, but by influencing aid allocations and the nature of donor cooperation with developing countries.

At a global level the lack of international commitment to the redistribution of wealth, including the failure of developed countries to meet the 0.7% of GDP target and to cancel debt, combined with unfavourable trade regimes, continues to impede the fight against poverty. At the European level, it is important to consider the realities of the new European Union, which is faced with an increased number of poor people within its membership and a lack of NGO involvement in the history of several of the countries. It is also worth considering how this growth will affect the relationship of the European Union and the G8¹ and the allocation of resources to international development.

Within many developing countries the combination of lack of resources, illiteracy, the HIV and AIDS pandemic and poor infrastructure combines with the uneven distribution of the few resources available to undermine the potential for economic and social development. Where conflict is present, countries or communities all too easily move backwards in their struggle for development.

The environment in which we operate is a complex one. To be effective calls for a diverse approach with each programme of work carefully tailored to meet the needs of the particular situation.

In this context Skillshare International must be sensitive to the changing environment and how we consider our contribution to development. The process of developing this new Corporate Strategy involved close consultation with all of our stakeholders. While we have broad support for the continued relevance of our approach, there are areas which either require a change in our approach or intensity of focus.

Together we have captured a shared vision and a strategic plan for the next five years.

¹In 2004, the G8 comprised the governments of the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, France, USA, Japan, Canada and Russia, plus the EU as observers.



A mother and child supported by our partner Manav Adhikar Seva Samitee (MASS), in Sambalpur, Orissa, India.

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Vision

Skillshare International's vision is of a world without poverty, injustice, and inequality where people, regardless of cultural, social and political divides, come together for mutual benefit, living in peaceful co-existence.

Purpose

Skillshare International works to reduce poverty, injustice and inequality and to further economic and social development in partnership with people and communities throughout the world. We do this by sharing and developing skills and ideas, facilitating organisational and social change and building awareness of development issues.

Values

Self-determination

We value the right of people and communities to determine and develop their own future.

Empowerment

We are committed to collective and individual empowerment.

Partnership

We believe that working in partnership is central to effective economic, social and organisational development.

Commitment

Skillshare International will

Respond and adapt to development challenges.

Promote and protect the rights of disadvantaged people.

Support our partners to engage in policy development and debates in line with our shared vision and values.

Run increasingly effective programmes and continually improve in all areas of our work.



Samuha Primary Health Care Training Project, India.



Occupational Therapy training session at the Kilimanjaro Christian College, Moshi, Tanzania.



Basarwa San mother and child in Botswana.

Our Focus: Geography

We currently sustain international development programmes in six countries in Southern Africa, three countries in East Africa and in India. Occasionally, we have worked in similar ways in other countries on a short term basis, for example, focusing on the capacity building of UK diaspora organisations, or as part of a regionally-based approach.

In addition we run programmes in the UK which address the awareness that people have of development issues and we engage in networks at the European, African and global level in relation to furthering our purpose and values. The establishment of a Skillshare International organisation in Ireland adds a further dimension.

Where we currently work

- 1 United Kingdom
- 2 Ireland
- 3 India
- 4 Kenya
- 5 Tanzania
- 6 Uganda
- 7 South Africa
- 8 Lesotho
- 9 Mozambique
- 10 Swaziland
- 11 Namibia
- 12 Botswana



In the next five years we will

Continue to expand beyond the existing geographic boundaries into Southern and East Africa, North-East Africa, and south Asia.

How?

The basis for working in new countries will be transparent, have a clear process and clear criteria. The criteria will be based on appropriate poverty, inequality and human rights indices. We will take into account the variation within countries and the local realities. Ultimately, we would expect to work in both low and middle income countries.

Our Focus: Sectors

In the next five years we will work in the four formal sectors of **Health, Education, Environment** and **Economic Empowerment** that were identified by our stakeholders. Specifying them will help us identify, focus on and monitor our activities.

We will evaluate our specific contribution to each of these sectors at three levels: country level, regional level and for Skillshare International as a whole. We also believe that while these are priority sectors, that there is a need for variation at local level outside of these sectors.

Health

There are strong links between ill-health and poverty throughout the countries in which we work and we have developed a specialist involvement in the health sector.

We will focus on primary and community preventative health care, the health components of HIV and AIDS and responses to medical conditions related to disability (such as occupational therapy). We will promote awareness of global health issues and work with a range of institutions to improve their responses to health issues through both organisational and social change.

Education

Because many different aspects of education need to be addressed, it is important for us to define our unique contribution.

Skillshare International's background in vocational training and education means we can offer distinctive support. A second key area will be our work with disadvantaged groups to enable them to participate in education and engage with educational institutions.

Environment

Skillshare International has a history of promoting environment-friendly approaches in forestry and energy sources alongside our support for building awareness of environmental issues.

We will continue to support partner organisations working on environmental issues and implementing environment-friendly programmes.

Economic empowerment

An important focus of our work will be enabling disadvantaged groups to access incomes and a greater share of wealth. These groups could include small-scale handicraft producers, small-scale fishing communities and women who are trying to generate an income through credit unions and micro-finance initiatives.

We will also work with organisations which raise awareness of the issues faced by these groups and the consequences of discrimination.



Displaying the savings/loans scheme for women's self-help group, Majirkanda village, Uttaranchal, India.

Our Focus: Themes

In the next five years four key themes – **Gender, HIV and AIDS, Peace building** and **Human Rights** – will cut across all of our programme activity. Themes are not programme areas but added perspectives through which we will view and evaluate the development outcome of our work.

Gender

Gender roles have contributed to the discrimination and oppression of people across the world. Skillshare International recognises that this has contributed to the feminisation of poverty and injustices against the girl-child. We believe that in order to combat poverty, inequalities and injustices, all our work needs to take into account that women experience a high level of discrimination and bear the burden of poverty in many parts of the world. To address this we will endeavour to work with a gender perspective in all we do.

This means that we will work in a way that values women, men, girls and boys equally, at the same time recognising their different needs and interests; challenge the unequal distribution of power and resources that leave women and girls bearing the brunt of poverty and work to overcome the injustices caused by socially defined gender roles.

HIV and AIDS

Skillshare International has been working with disadvantaged communities for over four decades. During this period we have worked in partnership with local communities to build capacity and share in knowledge and skills transfer. We have seen first hand the devastating impact of the HIV pandemic on social, economic and political systems and structures.

At the end of 2004 there were 39.4 million people living with HIV and 4.9 million new HIV infections (640,000 of them children under 15). Therefore we recognise that poverty and multiple disadvantages cannot be effectively addressed outside the HIV and AIDS context. In all of our sectors, we will consider the impact on the infected, the affected and the community at large.

Peace Building

Skillshare International recognises that poverty can be a contributing factor to the creation of social tensions leading to conflict. We believe that peace building is essential to ensuring that communities co-exist with one another. We believe that peace building is about participation and communication as a process of prevention and not necessarily about delivering post conflict solutions.

We are committed to using tools that encourage participation, communication and peaceful co-existence in all areas of our work.

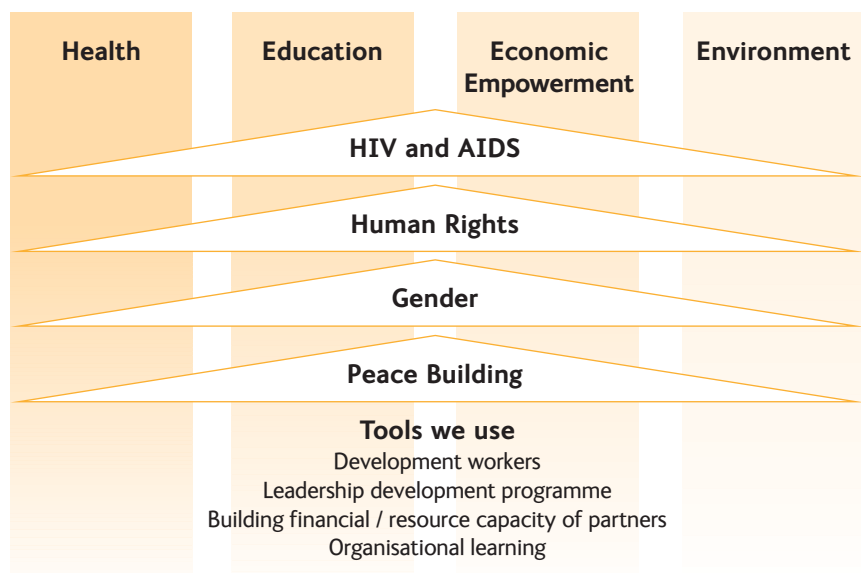
Human Rights

Enshrined in our core values is respect for the right of communities, individually and severally, to self-determination. Consequently we are committed to working with partner organisations to empower people to recognise those rights and to speak up for themselves.

In all our sectors we will work towards empowering people to address low self-esteem and to exercise their rights.



The King and Queen of Lesotho warn of the threat of HIV and AIDS.



Skillshare International: Change Agent and Advocate

In the last five years, our approach has focused on developing partnerships with the people and communities of Africa and Asia through sharing skills, facilitating organisational effectiveness and supporting organisational growth.

In the next five years we will look into supporting organisational change, broader social change and learning between organisations.

Organisational change

When Skillshare International works with a partner organisation to assist them to achieve their vision, our way of working inevitably involves change within their organisation, sometimes growth, perhaps a repositioning of what the organisation does. We call this process organisational change since it demands a range of inputs in the context of an overall perspective of change.

Social change

While our approach to organisational change has benefited individual organisations, a sector wide approach demands that we look to work beyond these boundaries. In this Corporate Strategy we set out our approach in working to facilitate broader based social change, both in supporting partners and in the way Skillshare International operates.

Our Partners

We work with a wide range of partner organisations, from international to local non governmental organisations (NGOs) and community groups to national government ministries and departments and local government bodies and parastatals. In areas of social change, we may well work with movements, not just organisations.

inside and outside Skillshare International. The benefits of strategic leadership cannot simply be seen as confined to individual organisations, but can promote and support broader agendas of change. While learning and information sharing through collaborative networks can in some areas lead to an important mobilisation and focus on to the key policy issues that need to be addressed.

Our Tools

We endeavour to help our partners achieve their vision in many ways. Our main activity involves skilled **development workers** who share their knowledge, tangible skills and valuable experience. We also **secure financial resources and channel funds** to help our partners grow and provide their services to a wider community. We deliver our **leadership development programme (LDP)** that aims to enhance strategic leadership capacity within the management of our partner organisations and we also facilitate **learning and information sharing** between organisations, which manifests itself through building networks and encouraging collaborative activities. The two-way nature of many of these mechanisms also assists the achievement of objectives in other ways, especially in social change. Development workers may well learn as much as they contribute, which then impacts on our development awareness work. Approaches to supporting resource development can also model good practice, demonstrating ways of working that can encourage learning

Our Specific Approaches:

In the next five years we will:

- **Work primarily with and through partner organisations** towards locally determined sustainable development.
- **Implement an holistic way of working** which means recognising the need to look at the whole situation and working with our partners with a range of inputs.
- **Recognise the importance and interdependence of facilitating partners' organisational change** as well as broader based social change.
- **Focus on working with partner organisations at regional, continental and global levels.**
- **Recognise that women experience a high level of discrimination and bear the burden of poverty in many parts of the world.**

Supporting Organisational Change and Development

We have clear preferences in the way we work which draws upon our values and specific approaches. Our model for supporting the organisational change and development of our partner organisations will primarily involve using international volunteering² through development workers³, working with partners to build their resource capacity, building their leadership capability through the leadership development programme and using their experiences to inform and promote wider organisational learning.

These activities focus on – and respond to – the visions of our partner organisations.

In the next five years we will	How?
Develop new flexible models of international volunteering appropriate to today's reality which are not unnecessarily restrictive.	Our flexible approach will include development workers working across different programme partners in support of a particular theme and being increasingly placed within regional and global thematic programmes. Additionally we will enable development workers to work alongside our staff and trustee/Programme Advisory Committee ⁴ members as part of Skillshare International's team and not just with their designated partner organisation. We are likely to see an increase in on-line activities and the growth in the use of varied periods of placement.
Work with our partners to build their resource capacity.	Supporting the resource needs of partner organisations, usually through working with them on project style proposals . There is scope for expanding this type of work, but to do this, we will have to consider how we meet the considerable demands on our own resources. We also believe there is scope for finding different ways of working with donors to support the work of our partners.
Work with our partners to build their strategic leadership capability.	The Leadership Development Programme continues to be in high demand from our partner organisations. We intend to look at ways we can expand this area of our work and our capacity to deliver this programme on a larger scale.
Facilitate and promote organisational learning of partners through networking with other organisations.	Establishing linkages and support for access to networks is an area in which we can add value as an international organisation. This has been an area of innovation which we now believe needs to be recognised and resourced as an important area of capacity building.

²This term is used as the framework in which our development workers and health trainers operate.

³Development worker includes health trainers and development workers.

⁴PACs consist of between six and ten experienced professionals and people from all walks of life whose work is related to developmental activities and who are committed to the activities of Skillshare International. PACs advise the Skillshare International Board of Trustees and Management on policy, programmes and projects.

Supporting Social Change

In recent times organisational, not social, change has been the main focus of our work. But during the previous Corporate Strategy we expanded into development education and development awareness work. We also undertook innovative work such as enhancing the capacity of southern-based NGOs to participate in the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

We received overwhelming support from our stakeholders to look beyond the objectives of supporting our partner organisations into areas of enabling a broader social change. In order to do so we will focus on four interrelated areas:

- Development awareness
- Our organisational capacity
- Our partners' capacity
- Civil society



Africa Stands Tall. Marching on July 2nd 2005 in Pretoria, South Africa for the Global Call to Action Against Poverty.

In the next five years we will	How?
Engage in building an awareness of development issues and the need for change.	By building awareness of international development issues and engaging current and returned development workers in this global process. There will be an expansion of our work in the UK and Ireland and we will emphasise the connections between our work across different countries and take a global view of development awareness.
Engage with partner organisations to strengthen their capacity in policy intervention.	<p>Development workers within their placements with partner organisations may well work with partners on issues of policy intervention. However, we believe that addressing the issue of poverty must involve building the capacity of partners whose prime purpose is to influence policy.</p> <p>We believe this is an important and valuable area for us to operate within. We see this as consistent with and rooted in our priorities in cross-cutting themes and priority sectors.</p>
Redefine and strengthen Skillshare International's role in policy intervention.	As an international organisation, we will seek to increase our engagement in policy issues in the field of international development. Since we will be drawing on the experiences of our partners, this will mean strengthening the capacity of our partners to identify policy issues as defined by their experiences and to support the development of partnerships with northern counterparts to build collective representation and influence policy makers.
Develop and strengthen the capacity of civil society to influence policy change within their societies.	We will contribute to raising the capacity of communities by encouraging the participation of civil society in decision making processes, promoting local knowledge and building learning opportunities acquired through networking. We will support coalitions from the local to the global level and facilitate engagement with policy makers wherever possible.

Getting Better At What We Do and How We Do It

Improving our effectiveness

Skillshare International is an organisation that embraces change alongside the regular requirements of routine programme delivery. For our vision of five years time, we intend to move to a higher level in developing an organisation that is socially entrepreneurial in its approach, while sustaining high standards of delivery.

We believe this means concentrating on four main areas:

- Governance
- Organisational culture
- Human resources
- Corporate development

Governance

We have undertaken a wide-ranging review of governance and have already made some positive improvements. We intend to develop this further in the next five years.

We are committed to progress towards establishing country and regionally based structures that can provide a framework for stronger governance at these levels, which in turn will provide a framework for increased autonomy in our activities.

We will strengthen governance and local autonomy across Skillshare International within a framework of common systems, practices and policies.

Organisational Culture

To achieve our new five year plan will demand:

- A flexible and responsive approach to the challenges our partners face.
- Integrating our work in organisational and social change.
- Generating an increased level of funding from new sources and new places.

Our challenge is to ensure that we have an organisation that embraces change, nurtures innovation and is socially entrepreneurial in its outlook.

We will create a flexible and enabling environment and develop an organisational culture which encourages innovation and implementation of ideas, alongside a rigorous approach to improving quality and ensuring high standards of delivery to our partners.

Human Resources

The basis of our success rests to a significant extent on the people who contribute to our work, whether as staff, development workers, or trustees. The new strategy will demand an investment in training and development in a variety of ways.

We will invest in the development of all employees, trustees and others involved in the governance, management or delivery of our programmes creating the strong skills base needed to fulfil our purpose.

In one specific area, our approach of employing local people in the countries where we work has successfully enabled us to build programmes driven by locally determined objectives. We now need to recognise the changing nature of freedom of movement across countries, regions and continents and the opportunities that this brings.

We will develop an approach to employment appropriate to a global organisation in an increasingly globalised world, balancing the value of local staffing with the potential contribution of international staff and development worker teams.

Corporate Development

To achieve our objectives, we must continue to expand our financial base. While we have a major source of funding through the Department for International Development, we now have increasingly significant and regular contributors for both strategic and project based work. We intend to build on our existing capabilities to gain access to other sources of strategic and activity funding.

We will establish alternative models of funding for key areas of our work including undertaking income generating activities and corporate level partnerships.

One key internal development will be the introduction of a five year business plan which will enable longer term activity and financial planning, and so provide an improved framework for both generating resources and their efficient and effective utilisation.

We will strengthen our financial management capability and our internal audit systems across the organisation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We are committed to the effective monitoring of our work which needs to address how well we have put our strategy into practice. The principles that will underpin our approach will be

- **Transparency** in our monitoring process to enable our beneficiaries and other stakeholders to hold us accountable for our work.
- **Consistency** of the scale of our monitoring and evaluation systems with our organisational size, favouring simplicity over complexity.
- The importance, as an organisation, of learning from **good practice** and where we can improve.



Regional Director Oliver Kantai delivers a session in the LDP.

Vice president

Richard Caborn MP

Patrons

Richard E Grant

Sir Trevor MacDonald OBE

Chief Executive Officer

Dr Cliff Allum

Board of Trustees (2005)

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Shilpa Patel

Sarah Spall

Diana Tottle

Andy Wynne

Reviewing our strategy

We will review our Corporate Strategy twice – at its mid-point (so we can assess its continued relevance and address significant changes that we need to make) and in its final year (to evaluate our performance with a view to improving how we operate in the next period of our work).

Where we are:

PO Box 471

Gaborone

Botswana

Tel: + 267 395 2284

Fax: + 267 395 7784

Email: botswanainfo@skillshare.org

B6/86

Safdar Jung Enclave

New Delhi

110 029

India

Tel: + 91 11 261 77111/ 77117

Fax: + 91 11 516 30926

Email: indiainfo@skillshare.org

29 Gardiner Place

Dublin 1

Ireland

Tel: + 353 1 874 8188

Fax: + 353 1 874 8960

Email: irelandinfo@skillshare.org

PO Box 34679

GPO 00100

Nairobi

Kenya

Tel/Fax: + 254 20565511

Email: eastafrcainfo@skillshare.org

P.O.Box 269

Maseru 100

Lesotho

Tel: + 266 22 314 202

Fax: + 266 22 310 156

Email: lesothoinfo@skillshare.org

CP 2634

Maputo

Mozambique

Tel: +258 2 621 5571

Fax: +258 2 621 5571

Email: mozambiqueinfo@skillshare.org

Snyman Circle

Corner of Nachtigal and Merensky Street

ERF – R1B\352 W

Windhoek

Namibia

Tel: + 264 61 255 966

Fax: + 264 61 248 81

Email: namibiainfo@skillshare.org

Postnet Suite No. 429

Private Bag X15, Menlo Park 0102

Hatfield, Pretoria

South Africa

Tel: + 27 12 362 5116

Fax: + 27 12 362 1834

Email: regionalinfo@skillshare.org

PO Box A129

Mbabane

Swaziland

Tel: + 268 404 3476

Fax: + 268 404 3128

Email: swazilandinfo@skillshare.org

AICC Ngorongoro Wing

2nd Floor,

Room 215a

P.O Box 6231

Arusha

Tanzania

Tel: + 255 27 2509984

Fax: + 255 27 2509985

Email: tanzaniainfo@skillshare.org

126 New Walk

Leicester

LE1 7JA

UK

Tel: + 44 116 254 1862

Fax: + 44 116 254 2614

Email: info@skillshare.org

www.skillshare.org

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Front cover photo: ©SKI/Murray White: Three girls at a wedding celebration in Magadini village, Simanjiro district, northern Tanzania.

