

Volunteer STEPHEN MARSHALL

Partner organisation International Refugee Trust | UGANDA

After successfully completing his training contract with KPMG, ACA Stephen Marshall wanted to travel the world and experience 'something different'. Stephen approached Accounting for International Development (A f I D) before he departed to arrange a 'worthwhile and challenging' volunteer assignment using his newly acquired skills and experience. After much consideration Stephen chose an assignment in Northern Uganda, an area badly affected by a prolonged rebel war, supporting the grassroot NGO partners of UK charity International refugee Trust (IRT). These include a local development project, Obaya Community Association (OCA) and two orphanages run by the Sacred Heart Sisters, a community of Catholic Nuns; Moyo Babies Home and the Redeemer Children's Home. All three organisations are doing amazing things for their community, but sadly all are unable to access essential professional skills training for their staff.

THE ASSIGNMENT

When Stephen started at OCA it quickly became a question of how to increase their financial management capacity and extend their reach rather than alleviate minor weaknesses. The most obvious area for development was their accounting system, as they were using MS Excel ledgers. Whilst the system was not bad, it had some inherent weaknesses. Stephen recommended and implemented simple accounting software and then worked 1-2-1 with each of the accounts staff using his own basic training programme. Moyo and Redeemer children's homes were both in a similar position to OCS and Stephen was able to roll out his training programme in both organisations as they too switched their accounting system from a written form to a computerised system.



"Volunteering has given me not only a wonderful experience, but work experience that I could never have been exposed to in the UK at this stage in my career i.e. heavy responsibility where I was the 'expert' on all matters."

"The assignment in Uganda has genuinely been one of the best experiences of my life. I had travelled extensively but this experience gave me something entirely new- adventure and experience of a different way of life."

Stephen Marshall

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

By the end of his placement at OCA, Stephen had installed new accounting software and trained accounts staff to use it as they performed their normal day to day tasks. He even returned several months later see how things were progressing and sort out any teething problems. When Stephen left the software was up and running properly and the staff were confident in its use. He also trained the CEO on the budgeting functions, crucial for their donor reporting. At the children's homes, the work was more focussed on the paper based systems and introduction of best practice controls, a fundamental weakness prior to his Stephen's arrival. Significant improvements were made in a short time and combined with the introduction of the new accounting software, a notable success.

LOCAL IMPRESSIONS

Stephen: After a week or so I started attending the local church. Mass on Sunday mornings is a serious affair, the whole town turns up. It gets really animated developing into a festival atmosphere with lots of clapping, dancing and singing. They asked if I'd join the choir! I turned up in traditional dress every Sunday much to the joy of the locals. Apparently I looked great in it, and was often met with the comment "you are SMART!"