



# SKILLING UP IN AFRICA

INTERNATIONAL AID AGENCIES AND CHARITIES DESPERATELY WANT PROFESSIONAL FINANCIAL EXPERTISE. NOW YOU CAN HELP CHANGE LIVES ABROAD WHILE STILL MANAGING YOUR OWN

**W**hen Neil Jennings volunteered in Africa, helping a small Rwandan children's charity to run sustainable development projects across the country, his goal then was to 'rebuild confidence, unlock potential and instil a strong sense of direction' in local staff.

Today, those are also the goals at the heart of his new social enterprise, Accounting for International Development. Supported by a grant from the Millennium Awards Trust, AfID places experienced accounting professionals with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across sub-Saharan Africa.

Placements of anything from two weeks to six months support long-term projects to strengthen financial management and planning among small, grass-root community-led organisations. Projects include, for instance, micro-finance schemes, rural cooperatives, education and street child centres.

'In the past, so many skilled people have said

to me they'd love to volunteer abroad but can't spare the time from their business or family commitments,' says Jennings. 'Our approach to short-term placements overcomes those barriers.'

Jennings is not only aiming to match volunteer skills properly with NGO needs. Unusually, he is also setting out to actively promote partnerships between a number of NGOs within a local area so that they can share resources, including the expertise of AfID's volunteers, and reduce costs. Such collaboration is not as common as you'd expect.

For all these reasons, AfID's website will be very important, and not least in ensuring efficient handovers between volunteers and progress monitoring by NGOs and their UK sponsors. Full project details and updates, photos and Google map locations will be accompanied by daily blogs and work-diaries. 'The idea is to champion best practice, accountability and the continuity of

projects,' says Jennings.

Volunteers get to meet and undergo a full day's induction including on the cultural issues it's necessary to understand. As for costs, volunteers or their employers will pay – 'local accommodation, food and transport is cheap at around £15-£20 a day' – but Jennings is negotiating hard, with airlines for instance, to get long-term discounts.

Thirty-five NGO partners in the field are ready to receive volunteers, with some 50 who are signed up just finalising details. With thousands of NGOs operating in Africa, Jennings believes this is just the tip of the iceberg.

AfID's ultimate goal is make communities self-sufficient – 'capacity building led by local people'. Jennings hopes too that one day local adults will be able to take an internationally recognised accountancy qualification domestically. 'Accounting skills are a globally accepted language that transcend all barriers,' he says.

## VOLUNTEERING IN RWANDA



**Glyn Edbrook piloted AfID's model of volunteering with Rwandan NGO Children's Care and Protection, formed by orphaned refugees from the Rwandan 1994 war and genocide.**

At first I was apprehensive. I mean, qualified accountants have their uses, but in a small town in Rwanda? Surely they can do their book-keeping without my intervention? What they need is doctors, engineers and water technicians. Wrong!

Yes, there is no shortage of ability among Rwandans. But sometimes the lack of a little expert knowledge can hold them back. If I know one thing, I know accounting, and I was going to help them get their accounts shipshape. It was like going back to first principles and passing it on.

And it was first principles: sorting neatly arranged but random piles of invoices into order, cash books, bank reconciliations, trial balance and a rudimentary revenues and expenses schedule. Every penny counted.

Going back to my roots like this was satisfying. I could view the whole operation from start to finish. I knew the price of petrol in the capital, where to get a local builder, the names of the kids the invoices for beans were feeding. Some of them had seen things no child should ever see. I could see my efforts might actually have some sort of legacy.

At the end, my host thanked me. 'You have a big heart,' he said. 'Think nothing of it,' I replied. 'For everything I have given you, I have received back tenfold.'

# WAR CHILD

For more than 20 years, northern Ugandans were caught in a war between their government's military and the rebel Lord's Resistance Army. The violence killed thousands of civilians and left over 1.5m displaced internally within the country. It was only in late 2008 that relative peace came with concerted dispersal of the rebels.

Rebel leader Joseph Kony had abducted civilians and at least 25,000 children over the last 10 years, to use them as soldiers, human shields and sex slaves. This legacy of horror among the most vulnerable is what the charity, War Child, seeks to overcome.

Today, many children are living in camps, either orphaned or separated from their families and caregivers, which leaves them vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and neglect. War Child is putting in place community-based child protection and education programmes to help safeguard them.

The charity is creating 12 centres to provide basic educational activities for young children, including sports, dance and drama, as well as



Education to mend and inspire a damaged generation

access to healthcare and child protection.

Because formerly abducted children spent a lot of time with the rebels (sometimes a few years), they are too old to go back to primary school. War Child offers literacy and numeracy courses to help them catch up. And a Comic Relief funded initiative is providing not just accelerated learning but also entrepreneurial skills.

The charity aims to reach 15,000 children

directly and an extra 135,000 members of their communities. The Padar district, where accountants' help is being sought, is remote. Many of the neighbouring NGOs are emergency services which are now closing down their operations. The need to start capacity building locally is urgent.

Read more about War Child's work at [www.warchild.org.uk](http://www.warchild.org.uk)

# GO SISTERS!

If you are a girl in Zambia, you are four times more likely to become HIV positive than a boy. Widespread sexual abuse, traditional practices, lack of access to education, low social status – these all continue to disempower successive generations of Zambian women.

The Go Sisters programme, run by the EduSport Foundation in the capital city of Lusaka, uses sport to empower a new generation of girls to fight discrimination and challenge traditional gender perceptions.

The girls are taught coaching, refereeing, team building and playing techniques in soccer, volleyball, basketball and netball. These skills help them to become competent and often inspiring leaders and role models. They give the girls the confidence to help educate their peers beyond sport – across communities – and become champions on the key issues of HIV awareness and women's rights.

Encouraging girls to stay in education is also

a key objective. EduSport provide scholarships to enable coaches and players to complete their school education – last year 131 young people were awarded scholarships, 91 of whom were girls.

Sports tournaments have become hugely popular and deeply competitive. The project even has its own premier team which has entered the Zambia Women's Soccer League and a number of players have gone from community programmes to represent their national team. Despite inadequate sports facilities and equipment shortages, such has been the programme's success that demand has greatly increased.

Over 1,000 girls in 22 disadvantaged communities have benefited. And EduSport is now looking to create broader, mixed sex programmes within other parts of Zambia.

Find out more at [www.edusport.org.zm](http://www.edusport.org.zm) or [www.uksport.gov.uk](http://www.uksport.gov.uk)



## WHAT SKILLS AND COMMITMENTS ARE WANTED?

Charities are looking for your expertise and guidance to help them gain the skills to create a sustainable, cost-effective future.

These include:

- Basic financial guidance including financial benchmarking health-check against long-term development strategy; short and long-term financial planning and budgeting.
- Coaching and developing local talent in accounting and financial control basics, building self-confidence and commitment to transparent and consistent reporting.
- Supporting donor relations with independent overview, proposal preparation and credit risk strategies for micro financing.
- Championing best practice and a practical resource sharing culture within local communities.
- Championing online transparency, accountability and regular reporting and feedback.
- Non-financial skills from leadership, entrepreneurship or fund raising to football refereeing!

For more information and details of these and other available placements visit [www.afid.org.uk](http://www.afid.org.uk) or call Neil Jennings on +44(0)207 407 7610, email: [neil@afid.org.uk](mailto:neil@afid.org.uk)