

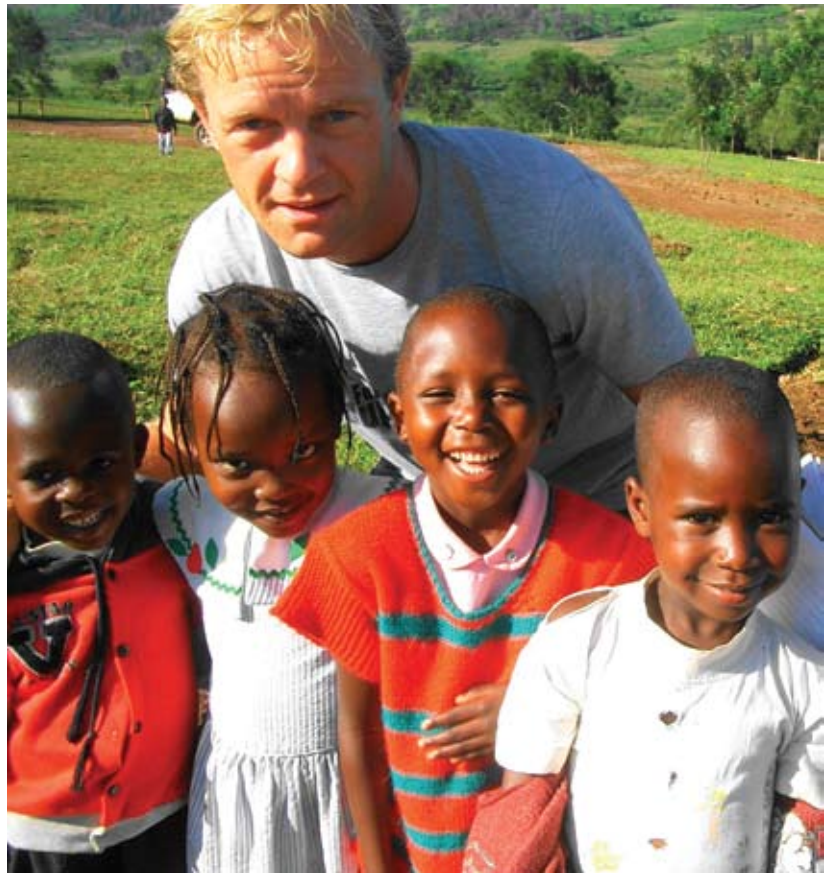
Accounting for change – volunteering in Africa

by Neil Jennings

It sounds like a cliché but I'd always wanted to make a difference and after ten long years commuting into the City I really needed a change. Volunteering in Africa with a small Rwandan non governmental organisation (NGO) was about as different as it gets. In a country of nine million Rwanda has only 70 registered accountants – a situation mirrored in many developing countries. I've seen NGOs achieve amazing results, but with little or no access to basic financial planning and management skills their survival can be precarious.

The experience inspired me to create AfID (Accounting for International Development) a social enterprise which places experienced accounting professionals with NGOs across Africa, India and Cambodia. Volunteer assignments support long-term strategies, developing the skills of local people at a sustainable pace and giving our partners access to a vast pool of talent otherwise denied them. We mainly work with small grass root projects such as street child centres, micro finance schemes and local enterprise initiatives.

CIPFA member David Black has



thrown his hat into the ring. He will be working with UK charity Cecily's Fund (www.cecilyfund.org) working with their partner CHEP (Copperbelt Health Education Project) in Zambia.

David says 'I have spent virtually my whole working life in the UK – initially in local government and then with housing organisations. I look forward to learning a lot by working in a different culture and hope to use my experience to make a positive contribution. With assignments typically lasting between

two weeks to three months, you could fit one in you annual leave or during a short sabbatical.'

Sadly funding for even the most worthy causes is tight, therefore travel costs are the responsibility of the volunteer but living costs are small and the value of this experience is truly priceless.

I cannot promise volunteering will lead to a better life but I can guarantee it will change the way you think.

For more information about AfID and opportunities to volunteer overseas visit www.afid.org.uk or call Neil Jennings on 02074077610



If you have a question or suggestion about the general professional and technical development of members contact the Members Development Panel at mdp@cipfa.org.uk