

Establishing Occupational Therapy as a Profession and Service in Tanzania

People with disability make up about 4% of the population of Tanzania. However, for a long time no indigenous occupational therapy profession in Tanzania existed. The clinical services that did exist were performed by expatriates on short-term contracts.



Long term psychiatric patients at the Lunguo village near Moshi re-learn everyday tasks, including personal care and housekeeping, in a socially stimulating environment.

In response to the lack of indigenous occupational therapists (OT), the Government of Tanzania and Kilimanjaro Christian Medical College (KCMC) established the School of Occupational Therapy in Moshi. Due to a lack of suitably qualified Tanzanian tutors, Skillshare International worked in partnership with KCMC and recruited health trainers as tutors, as well as to support the trainees in their clinical work on qualifying. The Tanzania country plan review (Nov/Dec 2003) notes that 16 OTs have been trained with one sponsored further to become a qualified OT tutor.

Skillshare International's input has also been to nurture the development of the national professional body, the Tanzania Occupation Therapists Association (TOTA). TOTA has networked regionally and internationally and is now a member of the Occupational Therapists Africa Regional Group (OTARG) and the World Federation of Occupation Therapists (WFOT).

Skillshare International health trainer, Cecile Cantraine, tutored students at the School of Occupational Therapy and supported staff at the Lunguo rehabilitation village for psychiatric patients.

The village, which is staffed by nurses, a psychiatrist and occupational therapist, provides a natural environment for long term patients. The daily routine of work, housekeeping and self care stimulates healthy living and promotes mental health by creating a sense of satisfaction and giving structure to the day.

Skillshare International will continue to support the Tanzania Occupational Therapists Association (TOTA) in developing an active professional body which has the ability to support its members and advocate for the profession. The aims of the OT programme are:



- To provide professional support for newly qualified OTs and in-service training to improve clinical practice for all qualified OTs in Tanzania.
- To support OTs in the setting up OT services in districts and to raise community awareness of the benefits of OT so as to encourage use and development of OT service provision.

This will be done through the provision of both a Skillshare International HT and the recruitment of a Tanzanian OT support officer to TOTA. In addition, learning from the OT establishment programme in Uganda, in place since 1997, will be fed into the Tanzania programme particularly with regard to the setting up of OT district services, with best practice shared between the two country programmes.