

Blue River – Slow Death

Development worker Tracy Irvine has been assisting the Lesotho Council of Non Governmental Organisations (LCN), an umbrella organisation which supports more than 100 NGOs in their development efforts, to improve communication around the country's environmental activities. Their aim is to change public attitudes towards environmental degradation and help civil society to understand and advocate against unsound environmental practices.

The textile industry in Lesotho employs more than 40,000 people and the country depends on garment production for 29% of its GDP. Global textile companies were originally attracted to Lesotho with the offer of infrastructure, a cheap but literate labour force, tax incentives, including free export tax, and provision of waste management.

The LCN recently found much flouting of the Lesotho Labour Code, with workers being denied access to unions, long working hours, poor health and safety conditions, and an average wage of just £60 per month.

However, another issue of increasing concern for the LCN is the creation of highly hazardous toxic waste from the processing of garments which is fed virtually untreated into the Caledon River. The Blue River, as it is known locally, runs through Lesotho's capital Maseru, and is a vital source of drinking water downstream in Lesotho and South Africa.

New research done by the Lerotoli Polytechnic on the status of industrial water pollution in Lesotho found strong evidence that the Blue River contains cancer causing heavy metals. High quantities of 'chromium hexavalent' which is known to be carcinogenic in humans by exposure orally, inhalation and contact, is present in the water.



▲ The polluted Blue River in Lesotho.

◀ Tracy and son Joseph.

Other compounds and conditions that exceed South African minimum standards such as the presence of salts in the water were also found. Livestock drinking water with a high salt content can suffer from diarrhoea and eventual dehydration, and, if used for watering crops, defoliation can occur. There have been reports of fish jumping out of dams to die on the bank and sheep being slaughtered with blue dye in their meat. People have stopped using the river water for watering their livestock and washing their clothes and are being forced to buy from water taps, creating an extra financial burden for many of the lower income families in the area. As a result, some local residents can no longer afford to keep livestock.

Tseliso Tsoeu who works with Skillshare International's development workers at LCN said: "Through the LCN, we have managed to create a better understanding of pollution issues by pulling together the little evidence that exists in the country on environmental pollution and human rights in the industry. The report has provided a tool for us to lobby the government about the severe health problems of local residents and the detrimental impact on the economic status of people living around the factories and by the river. The LCN is now working on a project to develop a Sustainable Production and Consumption Centre in Lesotho in the hope that government, industry and civil society can work hand in hand to reduce industrial and socially undesirable impacts of industry."

In this issue:

Returned development worker update

Human Rights Award

Nottingham doctors think globally

Ireland website launched

JARGON-BUSTER – UNFCCC:

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Over a decade ago, most countries joined an international treaty, the UNFCCC, to talk about what can be done to reduce global warming and to cope with whatever temperature increases are inevitable. In 2005 an addition to the treaty: the Kyoto Protocol, which has more powerful (and legally binding) measures came into force.

Source:http://unfccc.int/essential_background/items/2877.php

Returned Development Workers

Water Can Be Child's Play

For the last couple of years Amy Francis has been working for REASWA (the Renewable Energy Association of Swaziland) helping schools get access to the inventive 'Play Pumps'. Now she has returned to the UK with a sense of achievement and a new addition to her family, baby Dylan.

The majority of rural primary schools in Swaziland do not have adequate access to safe drinking water and do not have the funds to install and run costly fuel pumps. An answer to this problem has come in the form of the Play Pump. The Play Pump is a children's merry-go-round installed above a borehole. As the children play, water is pumped from the borehole into a 2,500 litre tank which is stored on top of a large tank stand. Roundabout Outdoor is the South African company which produces and distributes the Play Pump. They use part of the billboard space created by the tank stands for commercial advertising. The revenue generated from this is then used to cover the maintenance costs of the Play Pump, ensuring that the systems are financially sustainable. The remaining billboard space for the Swaziland systems is used for educational HIV and AIDS messages by UNICEF.

Amy Francis, who had previously been working for five years in the UK sustainable energy sector, was placed as development worker at REASWA in August 2004. REASWA managed to obtain funding to install some of the first Play Pumps in Swaziland, and following on from the success of this project received a direct request from Roundabout Outdoor to find further suitable sites for a larger programme of installations. One of Amy's jobs while she was placed with REASWA was to travel the country visiting primary schools with her counterpart Khetsiwe Khumalo, sourcing sites for the pumps. The sites had to have an existing borehole with sufficient water reserves.



▲ Schoolchildren playing on their new Play Pump.

In close collaboration with Swaziland Government Departments and other NGOs, they identified potential schools. In many cases it was found that existing hand pumps were broken, or that the water table had become too low for hand pumps to access, due to the extended droughts that Swaziland has suffered in recent years. Happily, a large proportion of the schools visited could be helped by the installation of a Play Pump and REASWA and Roundabout Outdoor are continuing with this work.

Prior to the Play Pump installations, most of the schools had to pay for water to be delivered via tankers, or simply relied on rainwater collection leaving no water or money to cultivate gardens or vegetable patches. Now, many schools have set up gardens and the students water and tend to the plants and vegetables. The children also have access to play equipment, something not seen before in the schoolyards of Swaziland's primary schools. When asked if there was a problem getting the children to play on the roundabout in order to pump water, Amy replied, "there is not a problem at all; in fact the only trouble is getting them to stop playing."

Amy described her greatest achievement whilst on placement as, "accessing funds to keep the organisation going and helping to make it more stable," but those were not her only achievements during her placement. Amy's partner Jean-Yves Cherruault joined her in Swaziland, as a development worker placed at the Swaziland Environment Authority. After the first year of their placements Amy and Jean-Yves came home to the UK to get married, before returning for their second year. Amy then had a baby boy, Dylan (or Sibusisu as he was named by their Swazi friends, meaning "blessing"), born in Swaziland shortly before the couple finished their placements.



◀ Jean-Yves and Amy with baby Dylan.

Editors Note

Welcome to the first themed edition of Skillshare News. This time we have chosen to focus on one of our programme sectors, Environment...

We will be doing more themed editions, next time we will be looking at health, and would appreciate your feedback on this edition and ideas for future themes/articles – feel free to address your responses to me at the UK office, or by email to editor@skillshare.org.

Best wishes

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Skillshare International
News in brief...

Human Rights Award



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In December 2006 Jon Snow presented the International Service Human Rights Awards at the House of Commons. Skillshare International nominated partner organisation the Phomolong Support Group for the 'Defence of the Human Rights of Children' award. They won, receiving £3,000 towards their projects and an expenses paid trip for their Chair, Mathuso Moroeng, to receive the award.

The Phomolong Support Group specialises in improving the lives of impoverished orphans and vulnerable people who have been affected by HIV and AIDS in Maseru, Lesotho.

Ireland Website Launch

Skillshare International Ireland has launched its new website at www.skillshare.ie. Featuring information about its programmes in Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland. Director Fran Flood explains: "Funding from Irish Aid and an IT company here in Dublin enabled us to develop the site. Please visit it and let us know what you think!"

Thanks Econet Ezigell

Econet Ezigell, a telecommunications company in Lesotho, has generously donated food and a mobile phone with airtime to Basali 'Moho (women working together against HIV and AIDS) day hospice, one of Skillshare International's partners. The donation was received after Skillshare International supporters distributed appeal letters to companies in Maseru, Lesotho.

Peacebuilders' Forum

In October the Integrating Development and Conflict Transformation (IDCT) project co-funded the first Asia Peacebuilders' Forum devoted to 'Exploring Asian Approaches to Peacebuilding'. Organised by Action Asia, the forum was hosted by the Balay Mindanaw Peace Centre in the Philippines and brought together more than 50 peace practitioners from 15 countries in Asia, Africa and Europe. The aim of the forum was to distil approaches to building peace that have been used successfully throughout Asia in education, interfaith work, advocacy, disaster relief and development. Find out more on Action Asia's website: www.actionasia.org and at www.skillshare.org/idct.htm



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BVALG Workshop

In January Skillshare International facilitated a workshop on development awareness for the British Volunteer Agencies Liaison Group (BVALG). The event, was attended by representatives from the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID), International Service, Students Partnership Worldwide, Progressio, Voluntary Service Overseas and Skillshare International. It was a successful event for sharing initiatives and identifying key strengths and opportunities for working together in the future.

Nottingham doctors think globally

Last year, Skillshare International agreed an exciting new partnership with the medical school at the University of Nottingham. This enabled us to develop a further Special Study Module on Global Health and Development (SSM) which was offered for the first time in August 2006 to 14 fourth and fifth year medical students. The module, coordinated by both Dr Anne Bridgewater from Nottingham medical school and Dr Raúl Pardiñaz-Solis from Skillshare International, brought in guest speakers from within the medical faculty, Skillshare International returned development workers, other experienced professionals in the field and members of the Best Practice Network on Global Health Education which is currently coordinated by Skillshare International.

Course content for both the Nottingham and the existing Leicester SSM includes subjects such as the role of the pharmaceutical industry, indoor air pollution and the impact of worker migration. The new Nottingham course also covers issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers, and infectious diseases. The teaching methods range from problem based learning and case studies to debates, participatory learning and presentations. Raúl Pardiñaz-Solis, Skillshare International, explained that, "it can take a while for the students to get into the participatory learning as they are used to more formal learning." Once students warm to the idea they can find it a refreshing change. Kiran Chauhan, a fifth year student from Nottingham, said the module had, "very effective teaching methods. It is important to have some variation rather than just five lectures a day."

The Leicester SSM on Health and Development, coordinated by Dr Adrian Hastings from Leicester medical school and Raúl, has already been a great success. The module has now been available to third year students for the past three years. In December the nine students



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▲ Alice and James show the spread of germs art SSM Leicester.

enrolled on the Leicester SSM had a day presenting their work. They produced health posters and gave presentations on malaria control in Mozambique, access to safe water, and empowering women to defeat childhood malnutrition. After the formal presentations, the students used role-play to show how, as development workers, they might communicate health issues to the communities they were working in. They came up with some very inventive methods for communicating difficult concepts, such as red powder being transferred from person-to-person showing how germs can spread.

Kate Cocker, a fourth year medical student who took the SSM in Nottingham, summed up what she had got out of the module. "I have learned how important it is to make use of the resources around you and not go into projects with unrealistic expectations. There is a lot more to working in development than handing out a few vaccines."

New to Nepal

In November 2006 Kopila Rijal and Chandrika Bhattarai become Skillshare International's first development workers to be placed in Nepal. Kopila is working with UNIFEM Nepal to promote gender equality and Chandrika works with Homenet Nepal towards the preservation, promotion and protection of home-based workers. Both development workers are citizens of Nepal.

Our third and most recently recruited development worker in Nepal started in January 2007. Sameer Zuhad, from India, is undertaking a short-term placement for three months as an organisation development specialist to build the capacity of three local organisations for organisational and financial sustainability, Saathi, Shakti Samuha and ABC Nepal. Saathi works for the elimination of injustice and violence against women and children in Nepal. Shakti Samuha helps trafficking survivors and passes on the message about the dangers of trafficking and ABC Nepal works to improve attitudes toward women, with a particular emphasis on issues like trafficking, violence against women and forms of exploitation.

Look out for our
Health themed
newsletter in
May 2007

Development Workers

NEW

- Lerio Latumbo
Finance & Fundraising Officer
at ACTION, South Africa
- Thakur Dhakal
Volunteer Research and Documentation
Officer at ACTION, South Africa
- Kelly Murphy
Marketing and Business Adviser at Somarela
Tikologo in Botswana
- Pietro Beradi
Renewable Energy Officer at REASWA,
Swaziland
- Francesca Scott
Regional Capacity Building Officer
at the Ministry of Health and
Social Welfare, Swaziland
- Kopila Rijal
Fundraising and Communications
Adviser at UNIFEM, Nepal
- Chandrika Bhattarai
Management Adviser at UNIFEM, Nepal
- Dereck Jakobi
Organic Farming Adviser at Manav
Seva Sansthan Seva, India
- Sameer Zu
Organisation Development Specialist at Saathi,
Shakti Samuha and ABC Nepal, Nepal
- Sophie Meredith
Fundraising Strategist at ACT
(CHASE Programme), Cambodia
- Stephen Bennett
General Surgeon at Kiwoko Hospital, Uganda
- Peter Warner
Primary School Teacher with Kairali Mahila
Samajam in India
- Lynette Jackobi
HIV and AIDS counselor at Manav
Seva Sansthan Seva in India

COMPLETED PLACEMENT

- Harihara Mopatra
Micro-finance Adviser at IMBITA, Swaziland
- Christa Meyers
Occupational Health Trainer at
KCMC School, Tanzania
- Ian Plaskett
Adviser to Managing Director at RSDA, Lesotho
- Phil and Philippa Grant
Organisational Development Adviser
at Irkiramat, Tanzania
- Bratislav Mijovic
Massage Therapist at Thuso Lutheran
Rehabilitation Centre, Botswana
- Dr Subrata Majhee
Doctor at SLADS, Jharkhand, India
- Dwijendra Mandal
Health Co-operative Trainer
at SLADS, Jharkhand, India
- Dr Rajeev Sodashiv Ingle
Doctor with India Society for
Life Development in India
- Dr Jeslin Justus
Community Health Trainer at
Coastal Educational Cultural Trust, India
- Francis Lopez
Disaster Management Adviser at Coastal
Educational Cultural Trust, India
- Tracy Irvine
Environmental & Information
Adviser with Lesotho Council of
Non Governmental Organisations
- Chris Hodder
Project Coordinator at Majakathata
Development Trust first and then
Okavango Polers Trust in Botswana
- Bwana Mujahid
Consultant with Early Childhood Care
and Development in Lesotho
- Donal Conlon
English Lecturer at Eduardo
Mondlane University in Mozambique