

Annual Review 2000-2001





Skillshare International works for sustainable development in partnership with the people and communities of Africa and Asia. We do this by sharing and developing skills, facilitating organisational effectiveness and supporting organisational growth.





The last 12 months have been a landmark year for us in two respects: Action Health joined us, which has led us to change our name from Skillshare Africa to Skillshare International, and a long-term Partnership Programme Agreement with the British Government's Department for International Development (DFID) has been established.

Action Health formally became part of Skillshare Africa in July 2000. The combined organisation will build on the strengths of both constituents, maintaining Action Health's existing projects in India and East Africa as well as Skillshare Africa's work in southern Africa. Action Health's specialised experience of work in health in development augments Skillshare Africa's general experience.

During this period of transition, our commitment to all our partner organisations has remained strong. We continue to work with our programme partners, existing and new, to address their vision, working together to build a greater understanding of how we can have a positive impact on development in their country, be it through skills development, project support or organisational strengthening.

Skillshare International maintains its commitment to working for sustainable development in each of our countries of operation. The merger is consistent with the commitment in our Corporate Strategy 1999-2004 to explore the possibility of working outside southern Africa.

Bringing two organisations together has been a challenging process but we have almost accomplished the full operational implementation of the merger.

The recruitment, selection and pre-departure preparation of trainers joining the Action Health Programme has been integrated into the work of the Leicester office, as has donor liaison, reporting and finance administration.

The geographical area of programme activity has increased from seven to ten countries and from two to three continents.

A Country Co-ordinator has already been appointed for Tanzania. Plans for staffing arrangements in India are being developed and support for the Uganda programme is also under review.

Localisation has always been an important factor in the way the organisation works. We believe the appointment of local staff will give our programmes the necessary support for their ongoing work and provide a basis for the development of new activities.

Skillshare International's change of name brought with it the challenge of creating a new logo that would form the identity for our work across ten countries.

We took key words from our Corporate Strategy – 'sustainability', 'sharing', 'two-way process', 'equality', 'continuity' and 'unity' – and used them to form the basis of our design ideas.

The finished logo is an amalgamation of these key words. The aim was to create an identity which encompasses our values.

< Skillshare International works with the Department of Rural Roads in Lesotho. The road building project is extremely labour-intensive to create jobs, particularly for the benefit of women. As well as generating income and developing skills, the infrastructure provides improved access to markets for rural people.

Plans were made at the end of the financial year for the new corporate image to be introduced over the first few months of the financial year 2001/2002. There have already been launches in the UK, Botswana, Lesotho and South Africa.

Over the coming few months, the other country offices will officially introduce the new corporate image to partner organisations, government officials, development workers and the general public, whilst at the same time reassuring them that the vision and values of the organisation remain the same.

The merger has expanded our support base and now incorporates members of Friends of Skillshare (FOS), the Skillshare Africa supporters' association, and Action Health supporters.

Our involvement with different networks of organisations has increased, as well as our relationships with institutional, charitable and corporate funders engaged in development activities becoming more diverse.

The Partnership Programme Agreement (PPA) with DFID is one of ten such strategic agreements that DFID has concluded with international development agencies during the past year.

The PPA defines our new working arrangement with DFID and identifies the resource allocations DFID will make in support of the Skillshare International programme for the next four years.

There is no doubt that Skillshare International is growing to meet the requests from our partners. Whilst obviously desirable, it brings with it many new challenges for us as an organisation. During the last financial year, we have learnt that our commitment, enthusiasm and close relationships across countries and continents gives us the ability to embrace the new and unexpected.

I would like to acknowledge the great contribution made by everybody connected with Skillshare International, including staff, development workers and trainers, programme partners, our Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) members in Africa and our Friends, in what has been a year of significant change and evolution for the organisation as a whole.

Our appreciation also goes out to all those who have provided financial resources for our work, especially the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

Dr Cliff Allum, Director



To assist in the reduction of poverty, improve living conditions and create long-term sustainable livelihoods through support for the development process, both regionally and in each country where Skillshare International operates.

Skillshare International's work in individual countries is designed to have a positive impact on development, not just in those countries, but throughout the region.

The beneficiaries of our programmes vary according to the different regional and country-based needs, but we give priority to members of groups experiencing economic and/or social disadvantage.

Illness and poverty are closely related. People living in areas of economic disadvantage often suffer from preventable ill health. And illness can add to the poverty if people are too ill to earn a living.

Skillshare International, through its Action Health Programme, is tackling issues of poverty by helping to improve the health of communities across Africa and Asia.

One such project began in August 2000 in Orissa, eastern India. Manav Adhikar Seva Samitee (MASS) is an organisation which was developed to empower the communities that live in the forested areas of Orissa to analyse their needs and plan their own development goals.

It was soon found that the degradation of the forests was a major cause of the poverty in the area. Moneylenders were also drawing the poor into debt. MASS began working with 64 rural villages (around 25,000 people) in Sambalpur District, facilitating forest protection committees and micro credit and savings groups.

MASS came to realise that one of the main causes of concern to local people was illness, due to insufficient and inappropriate health support. The health status of the communities where MASS works is poor. There are only four government Primary Health Centres in the area and immunisation programmes are only run occasionally.

To try and rectify the problem of insufficient health support, MASS approached Skillshare International, and, in August 2000, two health trainers joined the organisation to identify training needs for MASS staff.

Neil James, one of the health trainers who is working in Orissa, explains about the aims of the projects and the benefits to the local community.

"The broad aims of this project are to improve the health of the rural poor by offering them an honest, inclusive system of basic primary care, training village women to become village health workers. Hopefully, the knock-on effects of improving health and health awareness will aid empowerment of the people and have a positive economic impact on the community. The community organisers of MASS help us implement the training programme with the village health workers who are chosen by their respective villages."

In its 1997 White Paper – "Eliminating World Poverty: A Challenge for the 21st Century" – the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) set out its aims to reduce the number of people living in poverty by 2015.

DFID emphasises that those living in poverty, particularly women, must be given opportunities to work and generate income if sustainable development is to be achieved.

Skillshare International has made a commitment to these issues in our Corporate Strategy. In Lesotho, a large proportion of our work is dedicated to vocational and enterprise training. And in Botswana, we have a number of partner organisations dedicated to providing support to women in income generation projects.

Despite the overall level of development in Botswana, there are still significant gender inequalities in employment, education, health care and political activity which contribute to greater levels of poverty among women than among men.

Kgetsi ya Tsie (KyT) began in 1997 from an initiative to assist rural women to empower themselves, both socially and economically, by organising their entrepreneurial activities, based on sustainable management of natural resources, more effectively.

The aims of KyT are to improve the livelihoods of rural women by supporting their business growth and development, facilitating training needs and networking, allowing women to work together to create new micro enterprise opportunities.

KyT's products are all based on local, natural resources. Harvesting of those resources is in line with annual surveys by KyT's Natural Resources Committee to ensure sustainable production levels.

KyT produce a range of jellies and jams from the fruits of local trees, natural oils, nuts and soap.

Their most tangible achievement so far is that KyT's 540 members have increased their annual cash income by over 500%, from an average of P440 in 1996 to P2595 at the most recent calculation.

This has been achieved through more effective storage, quality control and marketing which has secured better prices for their produce. Wastage has been reduced and new products have been developed to complement the seasonal nature of existing natural products.

Over the past two years, the members of KyT have done much to change the face of Tswapong's rural economy and their place within it. A significant number of KyT women have been appointed to serve on their respective Village Development Committees and other similar structures.

In 1999, Kgetsi ya Tsie requested the skills of a management advisor to support their work. John Pearce was placed there as a development worker and he has been providing business training for both staff and members:

"The last few months have seen significant progress on marketing. We have received initial orders from Botswanacraft and the Garden Centre at Otse for jams, jellies, morula oil and soap.

We are setting up an e-mail ordering service to make it easier to supply our many friends in Gaborone who buy regularly from us. These initiatives will make it easier to sell our products.

We are now generating some of our own income from loan interest, morula oil and soap production. We are also earning fees from other community based organisations for helping them to set up their own microlending funds."

Four Community Development Officers have developed their range of facilitation and business skills, enabling them to take on new tasks as well as new centres.

In particular, they have taken on the role of co-tutors in delivering three business training modules to all the centres. Each module has been attended by an average of 250 members.



To develop broad-based partnerships with organisations in Africa and Asia, working jointly with them to identify their needs in relation to skills and organisational development.

Development is most effective where there is coordination and collaboration between organisations involved in similar work.

Skillshare International works in partnership with organisations in Africa and Asia to enable them to deliver their objectives where they are compatible with our own strategic objectives and Country Plans.

The way we work with partner organisations differs depending on the conditions prevailing in each country and the specific needs of the individual organisations.

Our aim is to work within the values we have identified in our Corporate Strategy and to implement a model of holistic working.

We work alongside partner organisations to develop a common understanding of the context of their work, their current situation and their needs, and then together develop a joint strategy of action.

A good example of this is our work with the Aids Care Trust of Namibia (ACT).

Namibia is currently among the three countries in the world worst affected by HIV/AIDS.

The most recent (2000) United Nations AIDS Country Report officially estimates the number of HIV/AIDS cases at 160,000, representing 10 per cent of the total population. Almost 20 per cent of Namibian adults aged between 15 and 49 are infected with HIV and the number of children orphaned by AIDS is over 67,000.

The Aids Care Trust of Namibia was one of the first Namibian NGOs with which Skillshare International formed a partnership. ACT provides comprehensive support services for people living with HIV and AIDS.

We agreed on a joint strategy which focused on ACT's objective to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Namibia through a comprehensive programme of awareness raising, counselling, training for carers and home-based care services.

The strategy addresses how ACT's needs are met and the nature of Skillshare International's contribution, in order for both organisations to fulfil their common development needs. The partnership includes activities such as the provision of skills development to facilitate training needs, the enhancement of

resources through project-based activity in partnership with the Community Fund (formerly the National Lottery Charities Board), and leadership training through our Leadership Development Programme.

The reciprocal nature of this partnership is demonstrated by the Director of ACT being a member of the Programme Advisory Committee which assists and guides Skillshare International in devising, implementing, monitoring and reviewing our programme of work in Namibia.

< Skillshare International has jointly defined partnerships with a variety of organisations and institutions that provide education and vocational training to people of all ages. Our programmes include formal teaching posts in fields where there are shortages of local staff, as well as placements concerned with curriculum development.

Skillshare International provides a range of services to our partner organisations. In many cases, we work with our partners to build and strengthen their capacity, enabling them to meet their development objectives more effectively.

A major new community health project has begun as part of our Action Health Programme with the Simanjiro District Council in the Arusha Region of Tanzania to improve the health status of the semi-nomadic Maasai communities who live in the marginalised areas of Simanjiro.

The focus is on the provision and utilisation of mother and child health services which was identified as a priority needs area by the community.

We are supporting the initiative by assisting with skills development and capacity building at three levels: within the District Health Management Team; for the local health workers; and in the village communities, to establish a sustainable system for district health which includes the introduction of a mobile clinic.

Less than 35 per cent of the population live within ten kilometres of a health care unit. Most of these units have a severe shortage of essential equipment and supplies, so the quality of the services provided by them cannot be guaranteed.

In February 2001, the Community Fund agreed a grant for the amount of £460,000 to support the work over a five-year period. It is anticipated that eventually there will be four health trainers working in the region and that capital equipment will be provided within the project.

The Simanjiro District Council partnership addresses how the capacity of the District Council can be enhanced to improve essential primary health care services to the community.

We have a jointly defined partnership with the Simanjiro District Council > which focuses on the provision and utilisation of mother and child health services.



To identify varied and innovative ways in which the needs of partner organisations can be met within the context of the evolving needs of the region, drawing on and learning from examples of good programme practice.

In our Corporate Strategy 1999-2004, we identified that placing the development needs of our partner organisations as a central focus is crucial for us to be effective in our work.

By working with our partners to determine their precise needs in relation to skills and organisational development, the requirement for an innovative capacity building initiative was recognised.

The Leadership Development Programme (LDP) is a programme of three participatory workshops aimed at developing the ability of key community, NGO and civil society leaders in Africa to provide effective strategic leadership to their organisations and the wider development community in the region.

In 2000/2001, Skillshare International successfully carried out the second year of the LDP involving leaders of 20 partner organisations from southern Africa. For the first time, organisations

from Namibia and South Africa joined the programme as a direct result of the full establishment of the regional office.

The LDP was designed to introduce participants to the concepts of effective strategic management, continual process improvement and managing change.

Khosi Mthethwa, the Director of Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA), was one of last year's participants.

She said:

“The LDP came at the right time for me because I needed to implement the SWAGAA staff Capacity Development Plan. It helped me to appreciate the potential of every staff member and recognise that every individual has an impact on the organisation.

The LDP focused on all aspects of my work and I would recommend it for any director. The structure is excellent because we had the opportunity to put what we had learnt into practice in our places of work. Following this experience, the whole team at SWAGAA is more motivated and there is better productivity.

I did the LDP with three other directors from different NGOs in Swaziland. The LDP brought us together and now we are trying to fundraise for a joint project.”

The use of baseline surveys in southern Africa has generated a new and innovative type of intervention from Skillshare International.

The baseline surveys assess the present situation and identify the organisational needs of current and potential partner organisations operating in the sectors outlined in the Country Plans.

The baseline surveys focus on organisational areas where Skillshare International could make an impact and support partner organisations in their transformation process to achieve their own long-term goals during the next four years.

The initial identification of needs would then be used if both organisations agree to progress towards building or strengthening a partnership and creating a joint development strategy.

Six broad areas were identified as desirable for Skillshare International to work in partnership with partner organisations.

- Skills needs and development
- Resource development
- Systems improvement
- Leadership development
- Advocacy
- Coalition with similar organisations as a means for building capacity

So far, standard surveys have been carried out on Skillshare International's partners or potential partners in Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia and Swaziland. This has enabled us to find out where they are located, their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and what support they need.

A special baseline survey was also completed on the HIV/AIDS awareness in the Kgalagadi North sub-district of Botswana with the financial assistance of the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives.

In the last financial year, our website became a fully operational recruitment site and, as a result, there has been a dramatic change in the way people apply for jobs. More and more development workers and health trainers are applying for placements through the website.

David Harries, Head of Skills Development, explains this affects not just how we recruit but who:

“Website recruitment, coupled with the increase in recruitment activity by our country offices, has played a key role in widening the net for recruiting potential volunteers. At the end of the financial year, 40 per cent of our serving development workers and health trainers were non-UK residents.”

The website enables people who may not have been aware of us in the past to identify potential opportunities for volunteering with Skillshare International. But the pressure for change has also arisen from our commitment to meet the development needs of our partner organisations.

Establishing a new regional office and improving links across country offices has increased the emphasis on recruitment at both regional and country office level. Initially, this addressed areas of partners' needs that could not be met by recruitment in the UK or EU. However, there is now a greater sensitivity to skills strategies that can be met through the enhancement of cooperation between developing countries, alongside the value that a truly international programme can bring.

Gradually, our practice of South-to-South skill sharing is developing.

For instance:

Two Indian health workers have been working for the Action Health Programme. Dr Kannan is the health trainer at the Tribal Health Initiative, in Sittilingi, Tamil Nadu, and Dr Premila works at Ashwini, Gudalur, in the Nilgiri Hills.

A Nigerian couple, Patricia and Patrick Okinedo, are working as development workers at the Albasini Health Centre and Mavalane Hospital in Mozambique.

We have also introduced greater flexibility in the length of traditional two-year placements for our health trainers and development workers which enables us to respond more effectively to the needs of our partners.

In Vidya Sagar in southern India, a health trainer began a one-year part-time placement in November 2000 and in Lesotho, a marketing officer worked at the National Teacher Training College on a four-month placement.



Skillshare International health trainer Dr Shunmuga Marikannan conducts a health education session > on leprosy in Selambai village, near Sittilingi, Tamil Nadu, India.



To widen the understanding and awareness of the importance of international development work through the building of a broader constituency.

Recognising that we should contribute to the building of a broader constituency both for our work and for international development generally, Skillshare International has developed a strategy that focuses on initiatives to widen the understanding and awareness of the importance of development work.

The Constituency Building Plan provides a framework for activities in the UK and all countries where we have programmes through which we engage our stakeholders with our organisation.

It concentrates on building the supporters' base, development awareness, development policy, information dissemination, external relations and facilitating coalitions between organisations at inter-regional and inter-continental level.

Over the last 12 months, Skillshare International has expanded its programme of development awareness work, particularly in the UK.

Many people in the UK remain unaware of the basic facts about life in Africa and India. The images they receive about developing countries from the media are often negative and stereotypical. In an increasingly globalised world, it is vital that people in the UK understand more about the world and about our global interdependence.

For this reason, Skillshare International is working with a variety of target audiences to build understanding of development issues and to create a constituency of support – not just for our work – but for the wider international development movement. Initially, we are working with three main audiences: schools, adult learners and medical students.

In the East Midlands, we are helping teachers make links with schools in Africa and Asia. Personal contact between young people across cultures has an enormous impact in breaking down cultural barriers and in helping young people develop an empathy with those on the other side of the world.

We are also working with a number of medical schools to teach their students more about the global causes and consequences of ill health. An example of this is the worldwide pandemic of HIV/AIDS which can never be addressed unless a global perspective is taken.

We are committed to creating new constituencies of people who support the sustainable development agenda.

Skillshare International has two key resources in establishing and developing its new development awareness programme.

Our network of country offices, local staff, partner organisations and serving development workers and health trainers in Africa and Asia enables us to forge direct links with people and communities in the regions where we work.

There are numerous UK development education agencies and programmes but it is our direct connections in Africa and India that allows us to make a distinct contribution.

Our second key resource is our group of returned development workers and health trainers who offer direct experience of developing countries and issues affecting them. They are often enthusiastic to share their understanding with others in the UK.

< Skillshare International is working with CLaSH, the Association for Children with Language, Speech and Hearing Impairments, to develop links with similar organisations outside Namibia.

The merger between Skillshare Africa and Action Health broadened our support base, with both organisations bringing individual strengths and enabling the supporters to become involved in new activities.

This presents an ideal opportunity to expand our support base and develop its fundraising, development awareness and campaigning activities.

During the last year, members of *Friends of Skillshare* (FOS) and Action Health supporters assisted Skillshare staff at Global Fair and other events to promote our work.

We have organised seminars on disability and development in Africa and Asia for FOS and Action Health supporters who wish to support development activity in these continents.

Skillshare International is committed to campaigns on development issues. This year, we engaged in the multi-agency campaign, Global View 2001, for the UK General Elections in 2001.

The campaign acknowledged that domestic concerns often take priority during a general election but reminded the public, prospective MPs and the UK media that the rest of the world cannot be forgotten.

We advocated an increase in funding for international development, particularly in the areas of health, HIV/AIDS and vocational training, and we asked supporters to talk to their MPs and attend hustings, to ensure that international development concerns are high on the government's agenda.

In October 2000, the Heads of International Volunteering Sending Organisations met in Melbourne, Australia to discuss the vision for the future of international volunteering in the 21st Century.

The conference provided an excellent opportunity for Skillshare International to share our values, purpose and objectives with an international audience. It also encouraged a positive step forward in the development and promotion of international volunteering in building a more just and equitable world.

Skillshare International will continue to review the initiatives we have developed for building a broader constituency to ensure we remain focused on our corporate strategic objectives.





To develop and diversify our resource base in terms of organisational, human and financial resources, leading to the enhancement of our activities.

The most significant organisational change in the past year has seen Action Health become part of Skillshare International. As a result, the number of countries in which we work has expanded and there is greater emphasis on health development activity. This has had an effect on both human and financial resources.

We have integrated the Action Health staff within the overall organisational structure and we have also made a number of changes in roles and responsibilities.

The most significant development has been the opening of an office and appointment of a Country Co-ordinator for Tanzania. The appointment is in line with Skillshare International's policy of localised staffing in decision-taking.

It is anticipated that similar posts will be established in India during 2001/2002 and later in Uganda.

The localisation of regional support was a key factor in the development of our southern African programme in 2000. The regional office team was established to support the country offices and their activities, and develop regional and country-based programmes.

We have a strong commitment to continually improve the quality of our work and to develop our staff. Improvement of quality through a systematic approach is used in the day-to-day development of Skillshare International – our current Corporate Strategy was devised using quality tools.

Our approach to quality adopts practices such as a 'no-blame' culture and continual process improvement. We believe it is important for all staff to be familiar with these systems so they can use them in their jobs.

We continue with our training programme for all staff on quality through the Quality Experience. In June 2000, our administrative officers from southern Africa participated in the quality workshop in the UK. Their stay lasted two weeks and included training to enhance their accounting and general administration skills.

During the year, Skillshare International engaged with the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) to develop the Partnership Programme Agreement (PPA).

The purpose of the partnership is to provide support for the remaining period of our current strategic plan (1999-2004) and to build the organisational and institutional capacity of our civil society and government partners. The agreement secures funding for Skillshare International for the next four years.

The emphasis of the PPA is on what we achieve in our work and not just our inputs. The Corporate Strategy and Programme Plans are critical elements of our approach and provide a framework with DFID for the new agreement.

Fortunately, we have been moving away from a 'numbers-based' mentality with the development worker programme in Skillshare Africa for some time, and the Action Health programmes have always needed to be located in a broader, project-style framework.

We are, therefore, well placed to meet our obligations under the agreement, but it will mean that our need to demonstrate our achievements becomes more important.

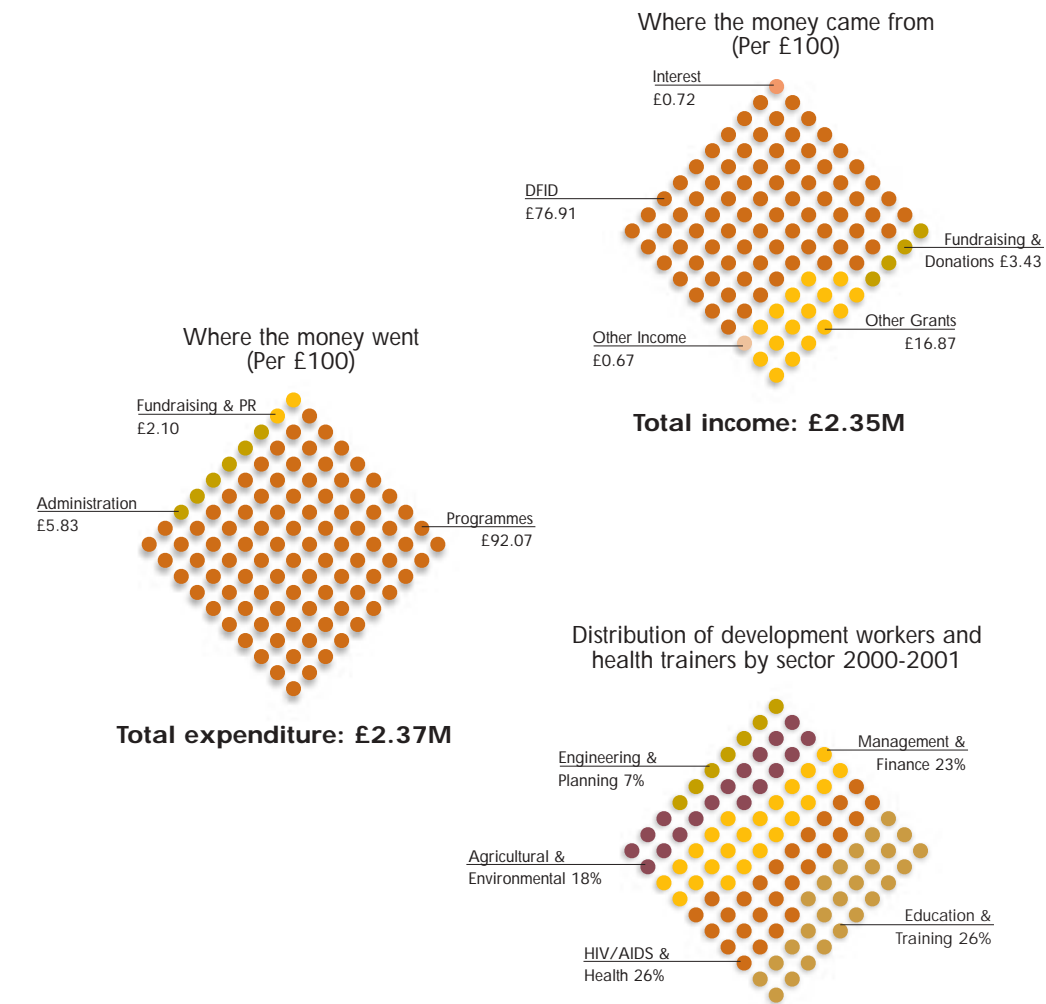
Our Corporate Strategy has also been the basis for the business planning approach which was developed for implementation in 2001/2002. Budget holders now have to think in more detail about their goals for the coming few years rather than just their financial needs for the next 12 months.

A total of 91 per cent of our expenditure is directly related to our charitable objectives, namely meeting the costs of running our programme in Africa and Asia.

Skillshare International's involvement with projects in Africa and Asia is often a means for those projects to secure additional financial resources for themselves.

Skillshare International also receives benefits in kind. For example, the governments of Botswana and Lesotho make office premises available to us rent-free, and our partner organisations in Africa and Asia provide housing and other support for our development workers and health trainers.

Our reserves are such that we are able to ensure adequate working capital and meet capital expenditure needs for the year ahead. We also maintain sufficient reserve as cash or short-term deposits to meet immediate needs: for example, to respond to political or natural emergencies in the countries in which we work. Overall, our financial position is sound.



These figures have been taken from the audited accounts of Skillshare International and Action Health for 2000-2001. For more financial information contact our Leicester office.

Our current funders include:

APSO, The Irish Government's Agency for Personal Service Overseas

The Baring Foundation

CfBT and the English Speaking Union

Comic Relief

Community Fund – formerly the National Lottery Charities Board

Christadelphian Meal-a-day Fund

City of Carlisle Overseas Aid Trust

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The Laing Trusts

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How you can help



"There are two reasons why I became a Friend of Skillshare. Firstly, I was brought up in Swaziland and I know how people there are struggling to escape poverty. Secondly, by sharing skills and supporting local initiatives, Skillshare International is helping people in southern Africa and Asia to address their greatest needs, and this approach makes sense to me."

Richard E Grant
Actor



"I know how people can be trapped by poverty and that, given the right opportunities, most people will work hard to free themselves from that poverty. The chance to learn a practical skill can make all the difference and that is why I decided to support the work of Skillshare International by becoming a Friend."

Sir Trevor McDonald OBE
Broadcaster



Express your support for the people of Africa and Asia by joining our supporters' association Friends of Skillshare. To join, or make a one-off donation, simply fill in your details below (you may use a photocopy) and return to: Skillshare International, FREEPOST MID 16922, Leicester LE1 7ZU, United Kingdom.

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