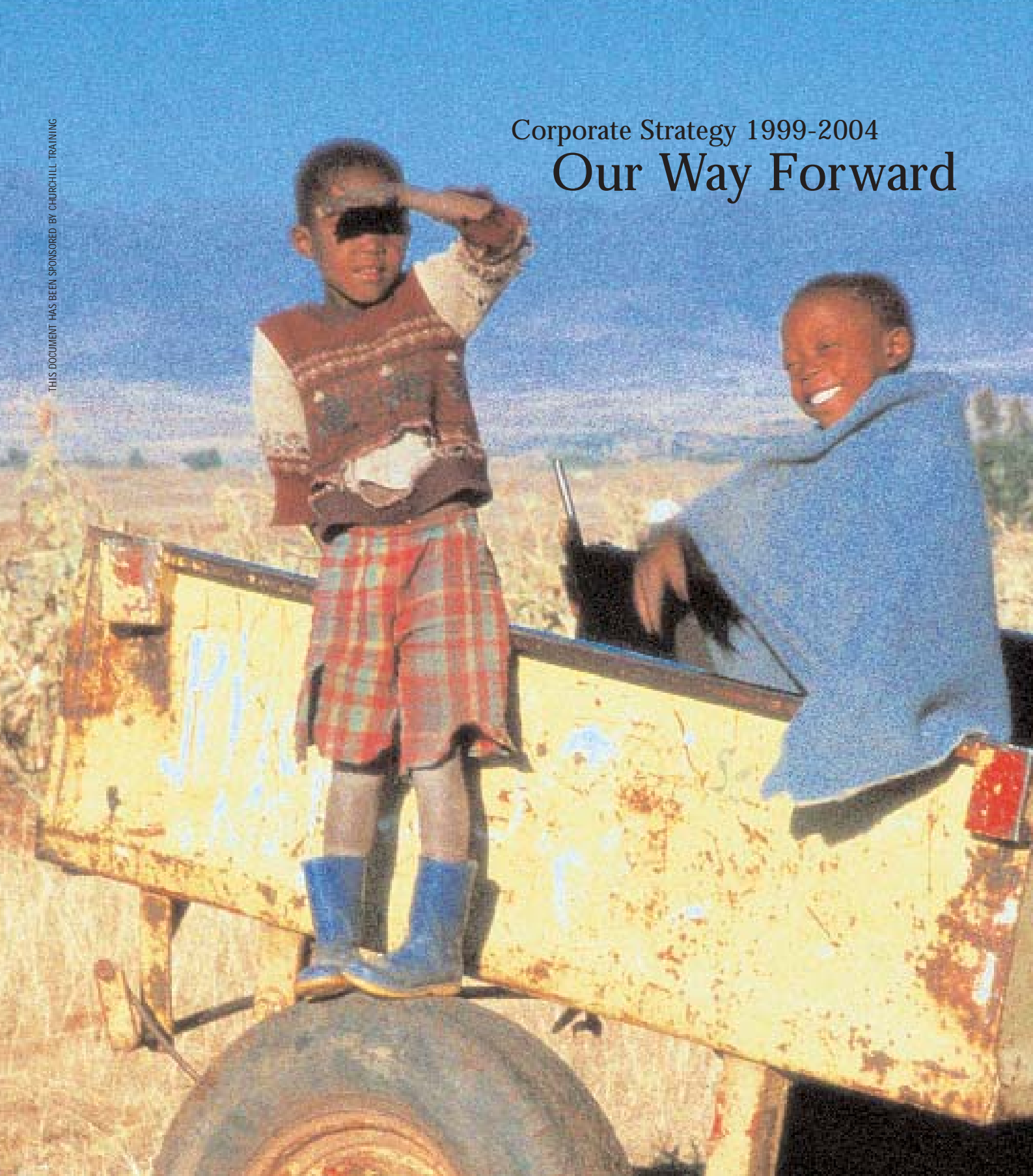


Corporate Strategy 1999-2004

Our Way Forward

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This document sets out Skillshare Africa's statement of purpose, values and strategic objectives for the five-year period 1999-2004.

At Skillshare Africa, we are continuously seeking to improve how we operate. We see this as central to our effectiveness in meeting the changing needs of our programme partners in southern Africa. Over the past two years, a tremendous amount of work - involving people both inside and outside the organisation - has gone into developing Skillshare Africa's new Corporate Strategy for beyond 2000.

In July 1997, we began a comprehensive process of review and consultation that considered Skillshare Africa's performance against the strategic objectives we had originally set ourselves in 1994. This process ultimately revealed a clearer picture of our strengths and weaknesses, and pointed to the way ahead for Skillshare Africa.

The challenge was to be imaginative in formulating a future vision for Skillshare Africa, including reviewing our approach to development and looking at increasingly effective ways of working with programme partners. This represented the starting point for the drafting of the new Corporate Strategy, a process of research, consultation and market testing. This is shown by the flow chart on page 4 of this document. It also informed the parallel process of preparing Regional and Country Plans which detail specific development activities.

In addition, strategic programme objectives were identified at both regional and country level which reflect particular needs and priorities across the region as a whole and from country to country. These objectives provide an important link between the Corporate Strategy and the Regional and Country Plans.

The challenge is to now put our new Corporate Strategy into practice over the coming five years. We view the objectives that we have set ourselves as demanding but also realistically attainable, and look forward to a period of significant change and development at Skillshare Africa as we move into the new millennium.

As the countries of southern Africa continue to undergo social and economic change, so too must Skillshare Africa evolve to meet the challenge of working for sustainable development in the region.



Dr Cliff Allum, Director
May 1999



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

Values

We have identified overall values which will guide our work.

Skillshare Africa:

- recognises the right of people and communities to determine and develop their own future.
- is committed to organisational and individual development.
- believes working in partnership is central to effective economic and social development.

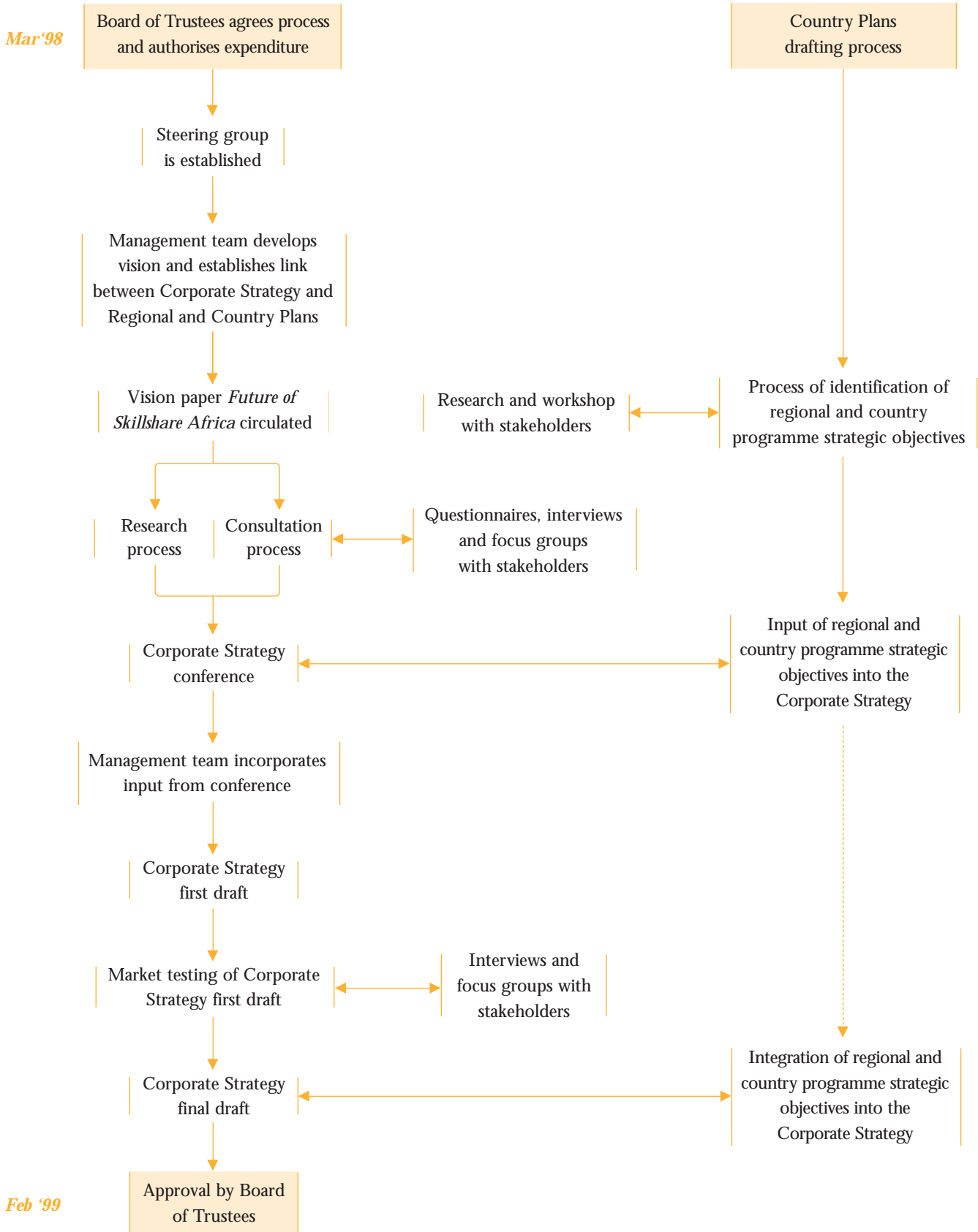
Strategic objectives

We have identified five key strategic objectives:

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

- To widen understanding and awareness of the importance of international development work through the building of a broader constituency.
- To develop and diversify our resource base, in terms of organisational, human and financial resources, leading to an enhancement of our activities.

How we developed Our Way Forward



Assisting the reduction of poverty, improving living conditions and creating long-term sustainable livelihoods through support for the development process, both regionally and in each country where Skillshare Africa operates.

Development priorities

Our statement of purpose emphasises the importance of working towards sustainable development in partnership with the people and communities of southern Africa.

The corporate strategic objectives focus primarily on the way in which we work rather than specific needs. To complement them, we have developed programme-related strategic objectives at both regional and country level, linking with the Corporate Strategy, to inform specific development activities.

These regional and country level objectives (enclosed at the end of this document) provide the basis for the Regional Plan and Country Plans, which have been produced through a process of consultation in southern Africa. The individual Country Plans reflect the particular needs and priorities in respective countries. Where issues go beyond national boundaries and demand a regional focus, our Regional Plan addresses them at both a strategic and practical level.

While we aim to set clear objectives in the Regional and Country Plans, we recognise needs may change and therefore these plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed as necessary.

Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of our programme will vary according to the different regional and country-based needs. Furthermore, in practice, how partner organisations undertake their activities will impact on who are the beneficiaries of any specific programme.

This diversity of beneficiary groups indicates the importance of criteria for the situations in which we will be prepared to work. We will give priority to members of groups experiencing economic and/or social disadvantage.

Where Skillshare Africa works

Global

Skillshare Africa has a longstanding commitment to southern Africa. We currently work in six countries in the region: Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland. We are able to draw upon considerable local knowledge and experience.

While we expect the main focus of our work to remain within the region for the duration of this Corporate Strategy, we believe it is important to be sensitive to potential involvements outside of the region. Therefore, we intend to review the potential for working beyond southern Africa. The basis for this will derive from identified needs and Skillshare Africa's potential in meeting them.

Regional level

There are key historical features which influence our continued focus on the region of southern Africa:

- Supporting the process of moving beyond the legacy of apartheid in the development of the region.
- The consequences of decades of war, only recently resolved in some areas and still continuing in others.
- The underlying economic position of the region compared to areas of the world with greater productive capacity and commercial advantage.



Throughout southern Africa, Skillshare Africa will continue to work with many organisations that help women to achieve economic independence by supporting their efforts to become self-employed.

In defining southern Africa we have taken into account the growth of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The geographical focus of our programme will be within the SADC boundaries.

The potential for regionally-based programmes drawing on common sectoral themes, eg HIV/AIDS, is in our view considerable and an area of priority development.

Country level

Our approach to development at country level is underpinned by the following values:

- Our work should contribute to development at a national level. We are committed to a country planning process which enables our activities to be assessed against the development needs of the country as a whole.
- Development is best served where there is coordination and collaboration between organisations involved in similar work.

In principle, we are committed to work in any country within the SADC area, providing we can contribute towards meeting the needs of that country. In determining whether we commence or sustain a programme in any given country, we will take into account relevant indices, such as the United Nations Human Development Index, and seek to prioritise our involvement on this basis.

We are, however, aware of the limitations of country level, 'snapshot' indices. The ranking of a particular country in any given year says little about the sustainability of the economic position of that country in the future. We therefore intend to introduce a process of assessment as an ongoing and regular part of our work, which will enable us to evaluate the need and basis for our continued involvement in any given country.

There are also considerable differences within countries in terms of wealth and resources. We are aware that even relatively wealthy countries contain communities that experience significant levels of poverty and/or economic and social sectors that are not sustainable.

Within any given country, the communities we work with and the way we work with them will reflect the availability of resources to those communities and the potential benefits that Skillshare Africa can bring.

During the next five years we will:

- *sustain our commitment to working in southern Africa.*
- *introduce a process of assessment to evaluate the need for our involvement in any given country.*
- *identify the potential of regionally-based programmes.*
- *establish the potential for working beyond southern Africa.*

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

Our approach to development

Our approach to development at an organisational level is underpinned by the following values:

- Skilled and motivated staff and a positive working environment increase the effectiveness of organisations.
- A collaborative and equitable relationship between Skillshare Africa and our partner organisations strengthens our work.
- Support and encouragement for initiatives based upon the perspectives of our partner organisations is essential for sustainable development.
- The need to always enable the self-sustainability of partner organisations.
- Long-term partnerships enable effective and sustainable development.
- The importance of learning from our own experiences and those of other organisations.

Working with our partners

We will work in partnership with a range of organisations to enable them to deliver their objectives where they are compatible with our own strategic objectives, Regional Plan and Country Plans. Partner organisations in this context are likely to vary from country to country depending on the conditions prevailing in each country, but are likely to include community-based organisations, country-based NGOs, and national and local government bodies, including parastatals.

In many cases we will work with partner organisations to build and strengthen their capacity, enabling them to meet their development objectives more effectively. The precise relationship will vary according to needs.

Meeting the needs of our partners

Skillshare Africa already provides a range of services to its partners and to other organisations.

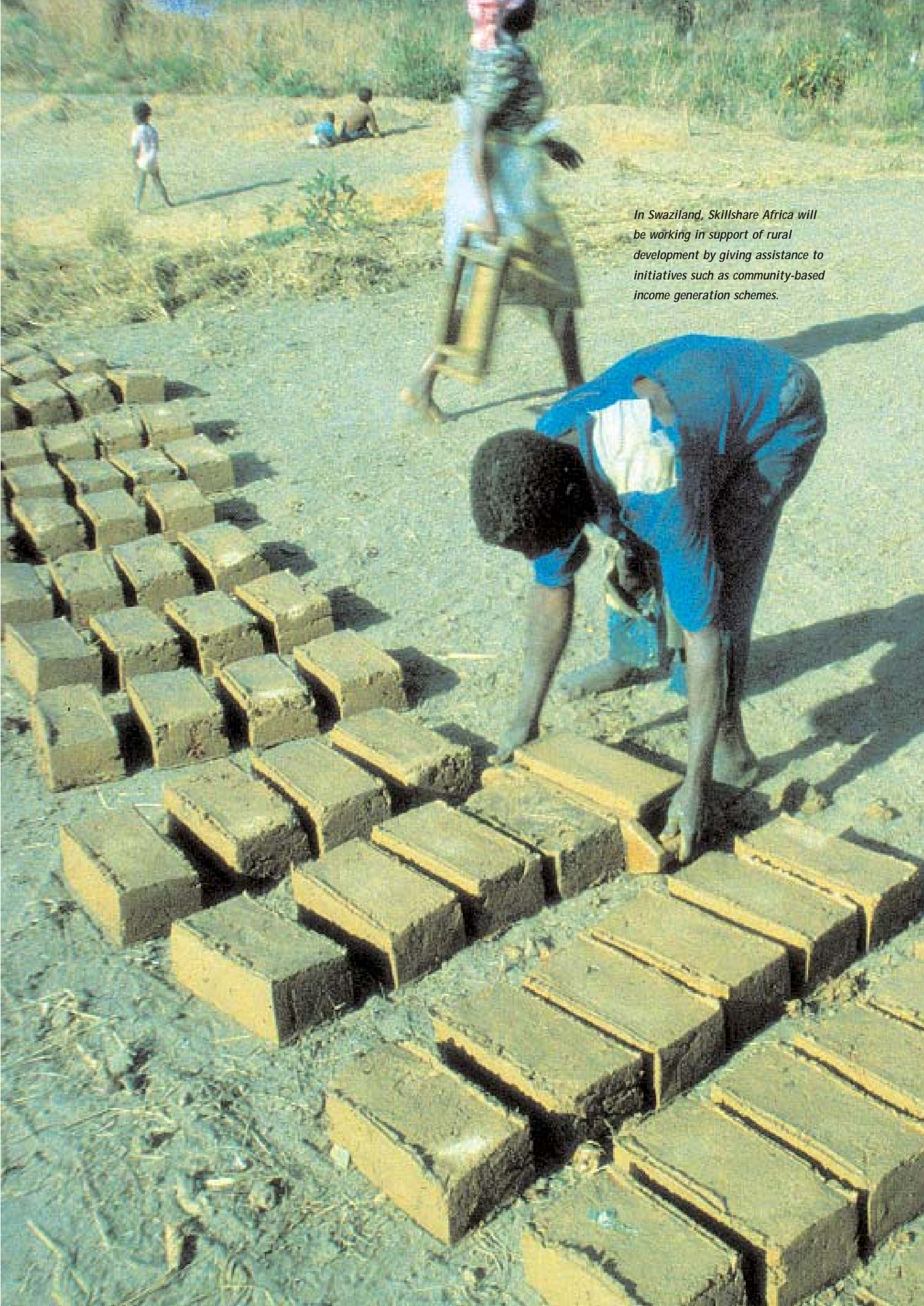
We intend to move to a position where we are able to take a more holistic approach to our work in line with our strategic objectives.

We will offer to work in the following way with an increasing range of partner organisations:

- Working with the partner organisation to develop a common understanding of the context of their work, their current situation and their needs.
- Establishing a joint development strategy which would form the basis of future cooperation between Skillshare Africa and the partner organisation, including at what point such cooperation would finish.
- Supporting evaluation processes within the partner organisation and providing evaluations of the impact of our work.

During the next five years we will:

- *seek to work within the values we have identified.*
- *implement a model of holistic working as a regular practice.*

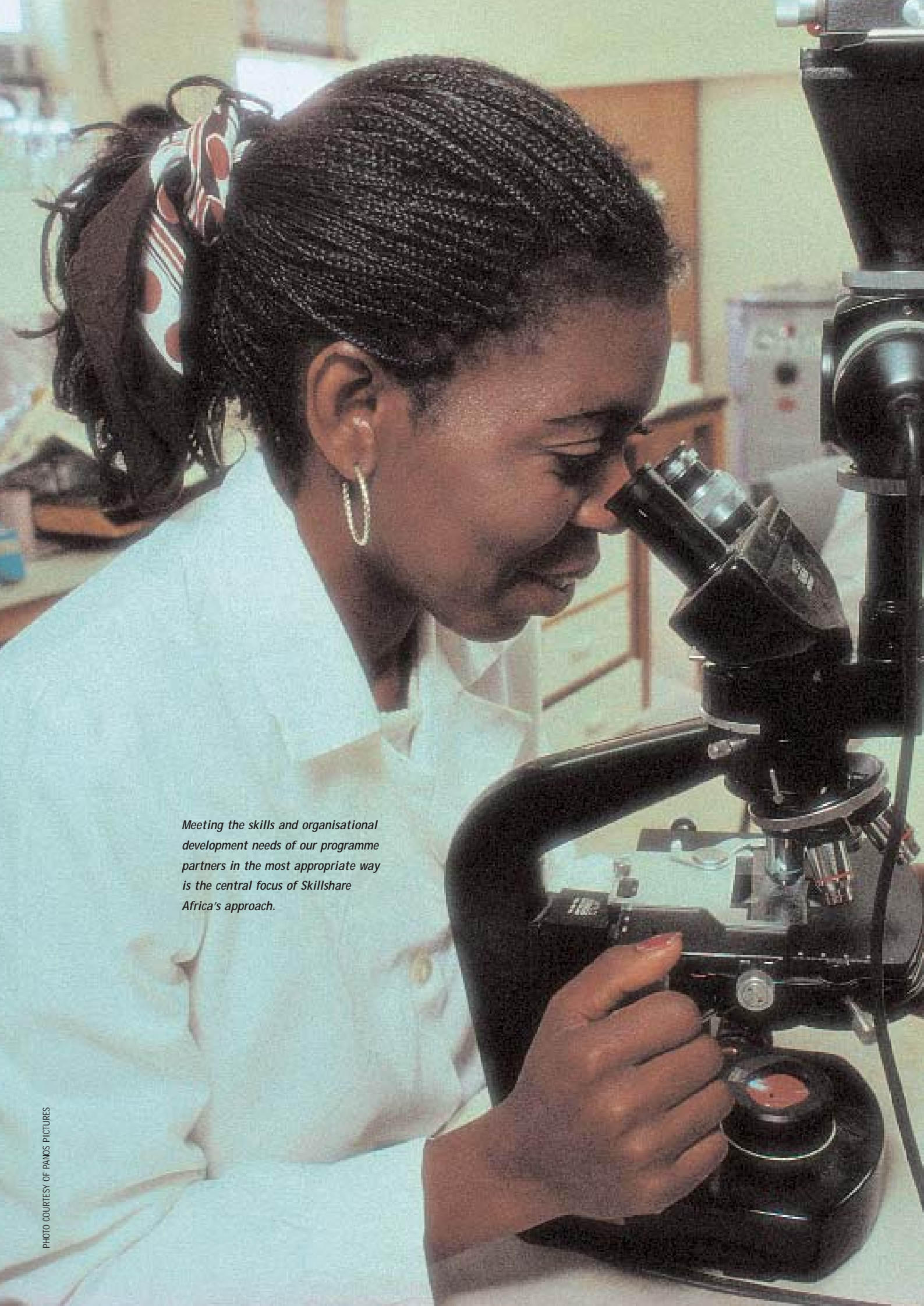


In Swaziland, Skillshare Africa will be working in support of rural development by giving assistance to initiatives such as community-based income generation schemes.





Skillshare Africa's objectives in Namibia include helping to improve training and employment opportunities for women and other disadvantaged groups, especially in rural areas.



Meeting the skills and organisational development needs of our programme partners in the most appropriate way is the central focus of Skillshare Africa's approach.

Identifying 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 previous Corporate Strategy, we emphasised the need for greater flexibility in our approaches to skills development and the linking of project initiatives and development worker* placements. Our experience has now led us to conclude that placing the development needs of partner organisations as a central focus is crucial in being effective in our work.

Potential inputs from Skillshare Africa

We anticipate building partnerships with identified partners which may be of a long-term nature and cover a range of inputs:

- Skill sharing and skills development through the provision of development workers.
- Leadership and organisational development through the establishment of a Partner Development Programme, focusing on:
 - resource and organisational development, including elements of income generation and capacity building.
 - systems development through the provision of workshops and other inputs focused on tools and techniques for the continual improvement of processes.
- Assistance with the provision of personnel on local terms and conditions.

We may also have partnerships of a more limited nature, which do not form the major part of our work. In such cases we will offer a range of services to other organisations whose aims and values are compatible with our own. These services would be in areas where we have expertise, for example, selection, training or organisational development.

There will be instances where Skillshare Africa and the partner organisation identify needs which we are unable to resource or which require inputs outside our area of expertise. In these situations we will offer guidance and work with the partner organisation to identify ways of resourcing those needs.

Voluntarism and development

Skillshare Africa draws on a long-standing tradition of voluntary enthusiasm in meeting our objectives, usually, but not exclusively, from the UK to developing countries. We believe that voluntarism has, and will continue to have, an important part to play in development. Skillshare Africa remains totally committed to supporting development activity which utilises this spirit and enthusiasm.

One challenge is to define the ways in which development workers will most effectively contribute to the development needs of our partners.

Within the approach we have outlined, development workers may find themselves in situations that demand not just skills development, but organisational development as well. We will take account of the likely impact of these changes on the role of development workers and how this needs to be addressed.

During the next five years we will:

- *widen the range of inputs that we provide, and/or work with partner organisations to access support from other sources.*
- *develop and implement as a regular part of our work a Partner Development Programme.*
- *identify the role of development workers more closely within the framework of organisational and skills development as facilitators of change.*
- *introduce greater flexibility in the length of the current two-year placement model.*
- *pilot programmes of cooperation between developing countries.*

* Throughout this document we have used the term **development worker** to describe people recruited by Skillshare Africa to work in southern Africa, traditionally on a two-year agreement with a local employer. Different organisations use different terms, eg volunteers or project workers, and in recent years Skillshare Africa has used the word cooperante.

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

Skillshare Africa recognises that, if we are to work in accordance with our purpose and values, we should contribute to the building of a broader constituency both for our work and for international development generally.

Our approach recognises two important factors: firstly, that our partner countries, communities and organisations are a significant constituency for our work; and secondly, that our historic roots in UK society offer an opportunity and challenge to engage with both the UK Government and civil society, working in cooperation with other organisations.

Friends of Skillshare Africa

In 1995 we launched a new supporters association, *Friends of Skillshare Africa (FOS)*, with the purpose of enhancing the work of Skillshare Africa. This was in response to people expressing an interest in the work of Skillshare Africa and wishing to give support, but in ways we had not previously enabled.

Since that time, *FOS* has grown to a membership of nearly 200 and has seen the formation of local groups in the UK. *FOS* members have been involved with development education, fundraising and publicity activities.

Currently, most *FOS* activity is based in the UK. However, interest has been shown from people in other parts of the world, including southern Africa, and the opportunity for *FOS* to become an international network is now apparent.

During the next five years we will:

- *continue to build Friends of Skillshare Africa as a supporters association for Skillshare Africa.*
- *develop Friends of Skillshare Africa at an international level.*

Development education

We believe the exchange at an interpersonal level between development workers and their colleagues has significant value in developing understanding and respect across cultures.

We also believe that returning development workers can and do contribute to development education in their own community.

Beyond this informal model, we do not currently have a systematic programme of development education. However, the growth of *FOS* and its external role are two factors which open up new opportunities.

We believe this is an important area of work where we can make a contribution, ideally in partnership with other organisations.

During the next five years we will:

- *develop a programme of development education in partnership with other organisations.*
- *work with Friends of Skillshare Africa to promote development education as an important area of activity.*

External role

Developing broad-based support for our work and development issues demands a clear and strategic focus on our external role.

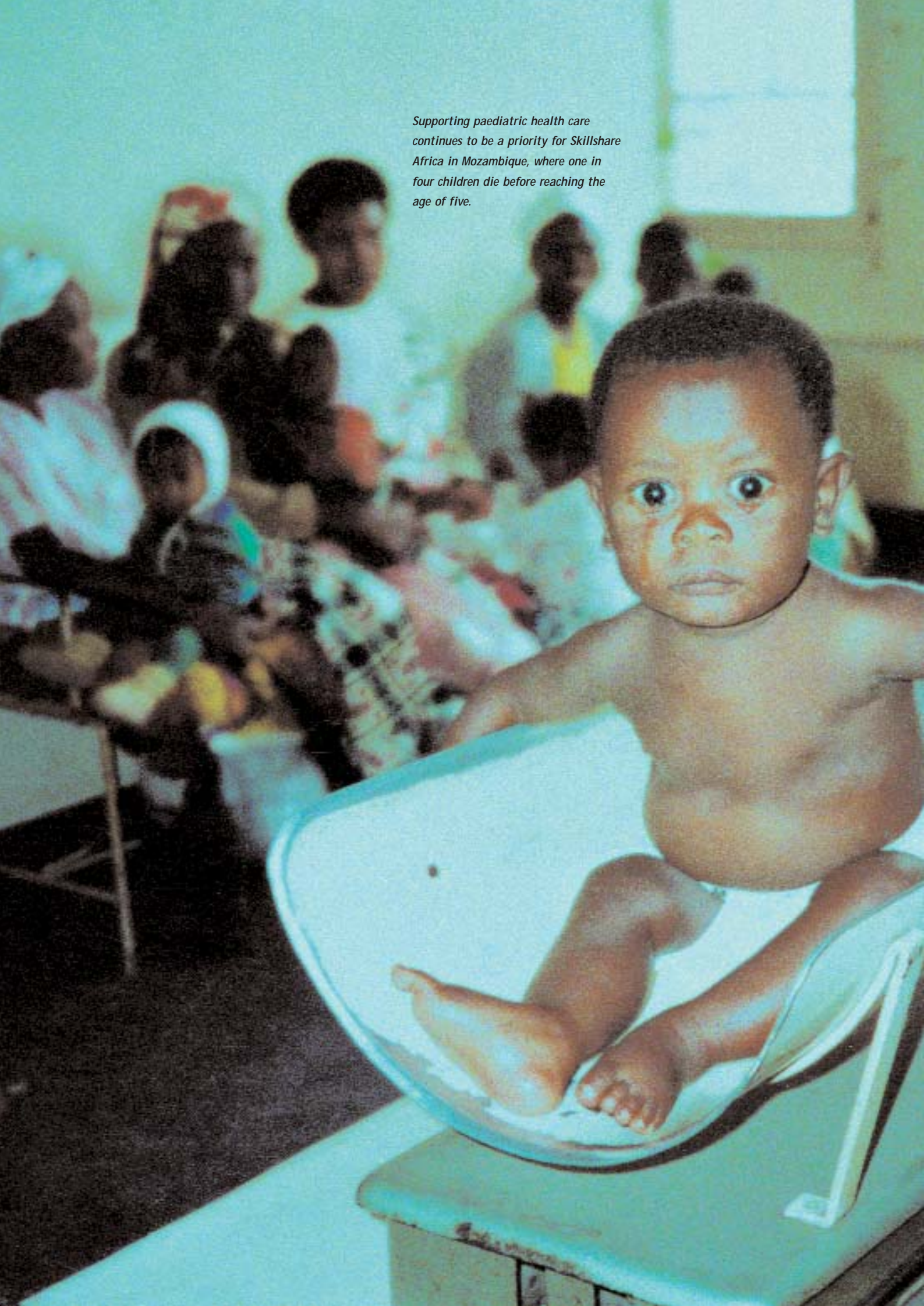
During the next five years we will:

- *engage in external activities, including active participation in representative bodies, which enable us to contribute to international development and related issues.*
- *review and improve the ways in which we promote and disseminate information about our work and the context in which it takes place.*
- *support relevant campaigns on development issues, including initiating our own campaign work in line with our charitable objectives.*

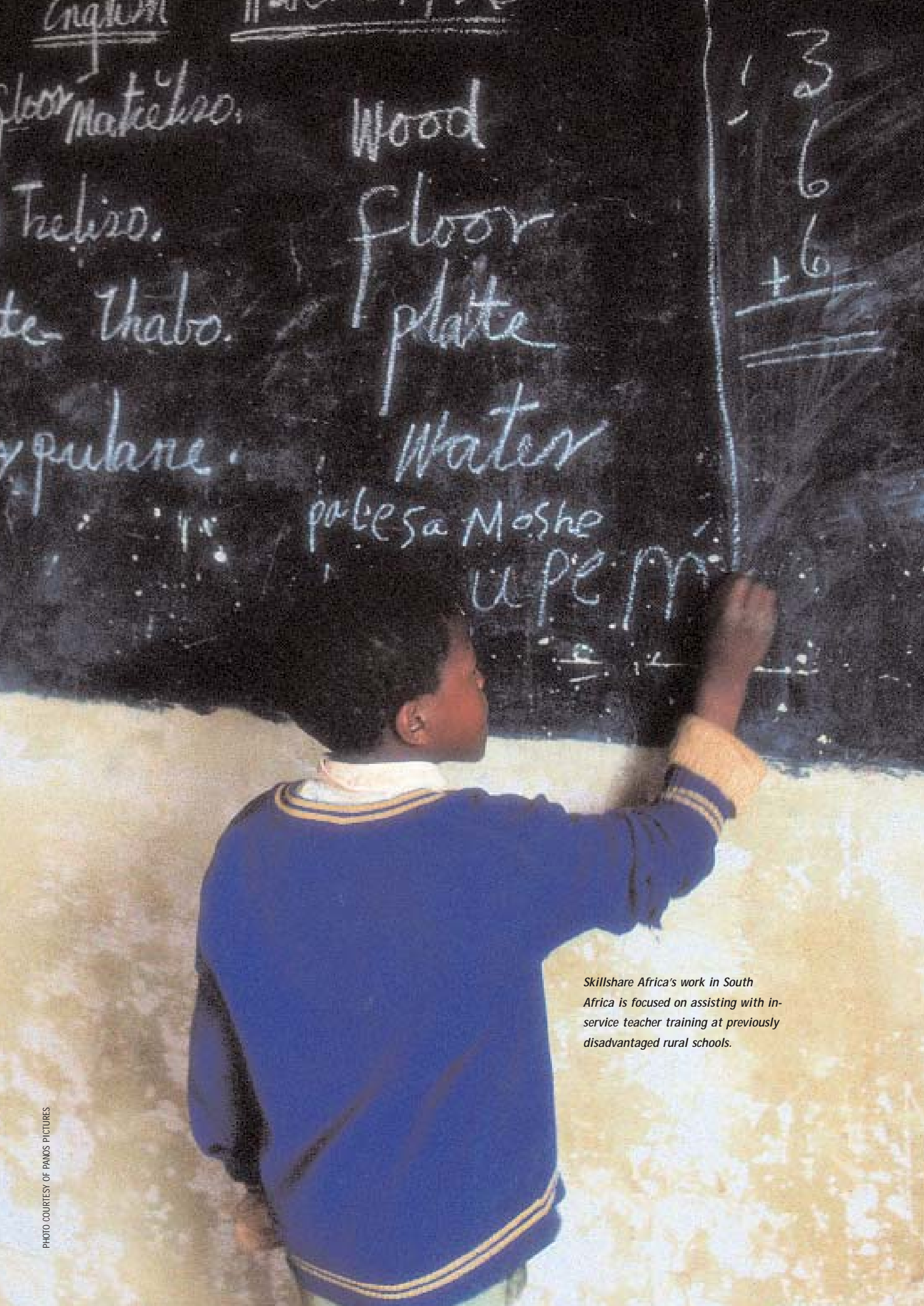
In Lesotho, Skillshare Africa will give increasing support to a national programme of technical and vocational training, aimed at improving people's employment prospects and building the skilled workforce needed to support economic growth.



Supporting paediatric health care continues to be a priority for Skillshare Africa in Mozambique, where one in four children die before reaching the age of five.







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Skillshare Africa's work in South Africa is focused on assisting with in-service teacher training at previously disadvantaged rural schools.

Developing and diversifying our resource base in terms of organisational, human and financial resources, leading to an enhancement of our activities.

Sustaining and developing the activities of Skillshare Africa demands that organisational, human and financial resources are optimised.

Organisational resources

Quality

In 1994 we set ourselves the task of becoming an organisation committed to quality. We have made a substantial investment in improving our systems and ways of working, resulting in significant organisational change.

During the next five years we will:

- *continue to develop our systems and ways of working, resulting in an improved service for our partners and further improved relationships with development workers and other stakeholders.*

Localisation, Programme Advisory Committees and governance

Over the past four-year period covered by our previous Corporate Strategy, we have considered ways of enhancing the role of Programme Advisory Committees (PACs). These bodies, which comprise local people from NGOs, government and the private sector, provide an important contribution to the work of Skillshare Africa by advising on country programmes and supporting the Country Offices.

PACs have been encouraged to take on an increased level of autonomy, in line with our commitment to localisation, while we have also sought to bring together representatives of the PACs and the Board of Trustees to share their views and advise on policy formulation. We intend to further this process.

During the next five years we will:

- *continue to review the powers and potential of PACs with a view to increased autonomy at a local level.*
- *review how local participation in decision-making can be increased in countries where PACs do not currently exist.*
- *identify mechanisms by which the regional programme can be subject to similar mechanisms of guidance as country programmes.*
- *review our approach to governance, building on our work in the period of our previous Corporate Strategy, and consider ways of further devolving powers to regional and country level.*

Human resources

Our approach to development at an individual level is underpinned by the following beliefs:

- The continuous development of the skills, abilities and confidence of individuals improves their ability to contribute to the organisation they work for.
- The participation of stakeholders in decision-making and process improvement strengthens the quality of work.
- Openness, mutual respect and equality in relationships, both inside and outside the organisation, is the foundation of a positive working environment.

We believe that each of the above values applies to our own staff, the development workers we recruit, and to the people we work with, both in the UK and in southern Africa.

Skillshare Africa recognises the importance of the contribution of both voluntary commitment and salaried staff in what we have achieved.

We have attempted to develop the skills and awareness of staff, trustees, PAC members, development workers and partner organisations through an increased emphasis on training and personal development. We recognise this is a continuous process and that the vision of this Corporate Strategy demands that we must sustain our commitment in this area.

During the next five years we will:

- *sustain our commitment to staff development throughout the organisation.*
- *provide necessary training to ensure that our trustees and PAC members have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities as well as knowledge of the work of Skillshare Africa.*
- *review how staff resources are allocated between the different countries in which we work and take the necessary steps to ensure this is optimised.*
- *review the current training provision for development workers in the context of the new Corporate Strategy, including the need for ongoing training during their period of placement.*

Financial resources

The UK Government, through the Department for International Development (DFID), has been a major provider of resources for our work for many years. Currently, DFID provides between 70% and 80% of our income through the volunteer programme budget.

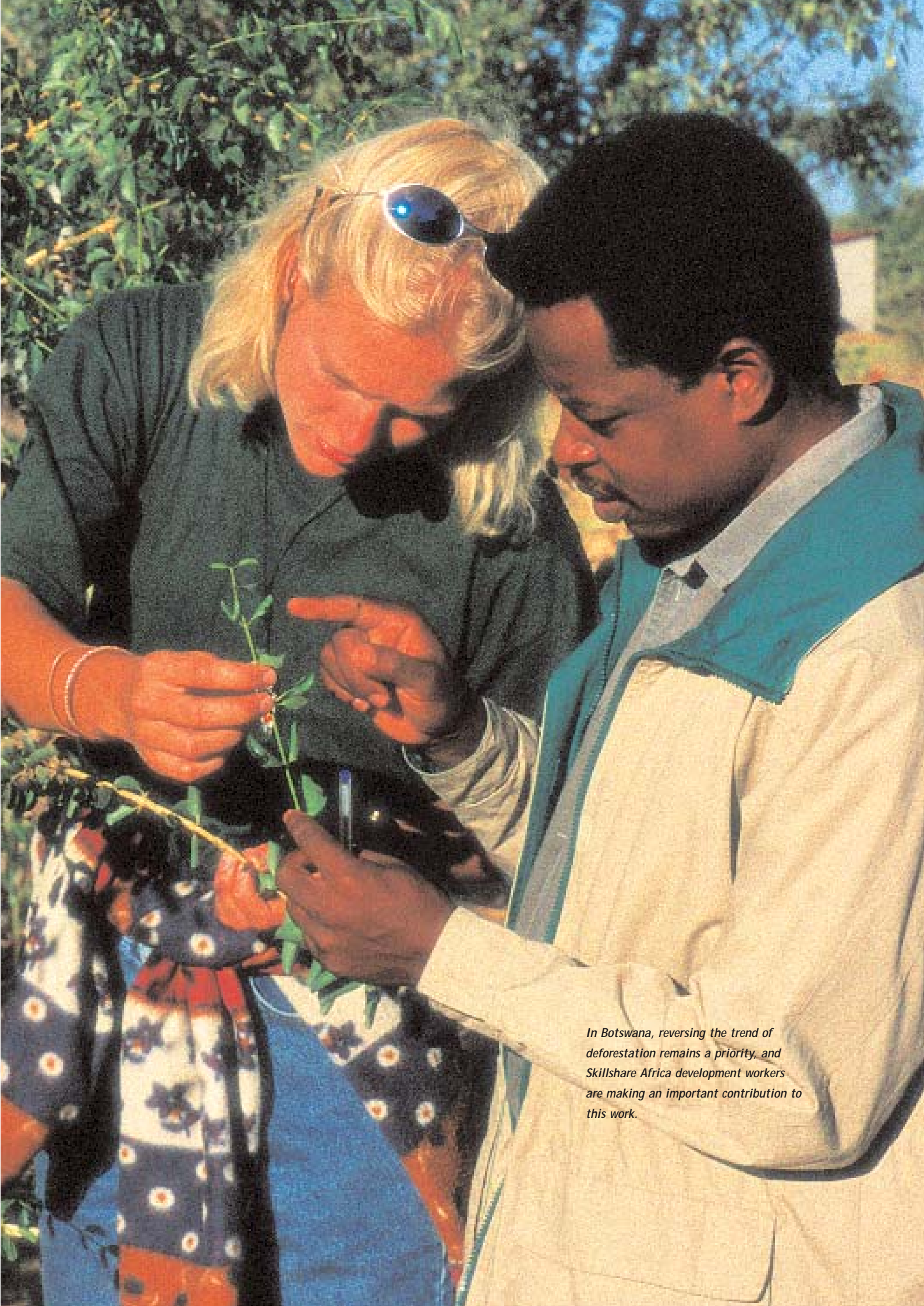
We have built a close and valued relationship with DFID and we will seek not only to sustain it, but to identify new opportunities for Skillshare Africa to work closely with DFID in the future. We intend our relationship with DFID to be effective at UK, regional and country level.

At the same time, we recognise the strategic importance of partnerships with other resource providers and the opportunities they can bring. We will build on recent successes to diversify our financial resource base.

We also recognise that we have yet to realise the potential of securing resources for our work deriving from trading activities. We are concerned that such activities should in no way detract from our main activity.

During the next five years we will:

- *deepen our relationship with DFID, especially at regional and country level.*
- *diversify sources of financial support for our programme, including seeking resources within southern Africa.*
- *review resourcing within the programme, with the intention of increasing the contribution of partners where they have the ability to pay, and so enable the programme to meet more needs.*
- *identify and develop trading activities to support our main programme of work.*
- *develop models of financial practice in accordance with increasing autonomy at the regional or country level.*



In Botswana, reversing the trend of deforestation remains a priority, and Skillshare Africa development workers are making an important contribution to this work.

Evaluation

We recognise the importance of monitoring our work and the need to evaluate against our strategic objectives. We see this as important at the level of individual initiatives and Country Plan level as well as at the corporate level. In respect of our previous Corporate Strategy, we introduced new systems of monitoring and undertook a full evaluation, with external support, of the Country Plans and the Corporate Strategy itself, which has been made publicly available.

In summary, the evaluation of the Corporate Strategy and Country Plans will take place on the following basis:

- We will evaluate the implementation of the Corporate Strategy against the strategic objectives set out at the beginning of this document, as well as against the detailed objectives set out in each subsequent section.
- In addition, we have set strategic objectives at regional and country levels. We will continue to evaluate our performance against those objectives, using the framework identified in the Regional Plan and Country Plans.

This document has been sponsored by Churchill Training, which is pleased to support the work of Skillshare Africa.

Churchill Training has been involved with education and development-related clients in over 20 countries, and has become a recognised specialist in international procurement management, as well as in negotiation training and consultancy. Churchill sees itself as helping to work towards bringing best practice to the commercial activities of non-profit-making organisations.

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