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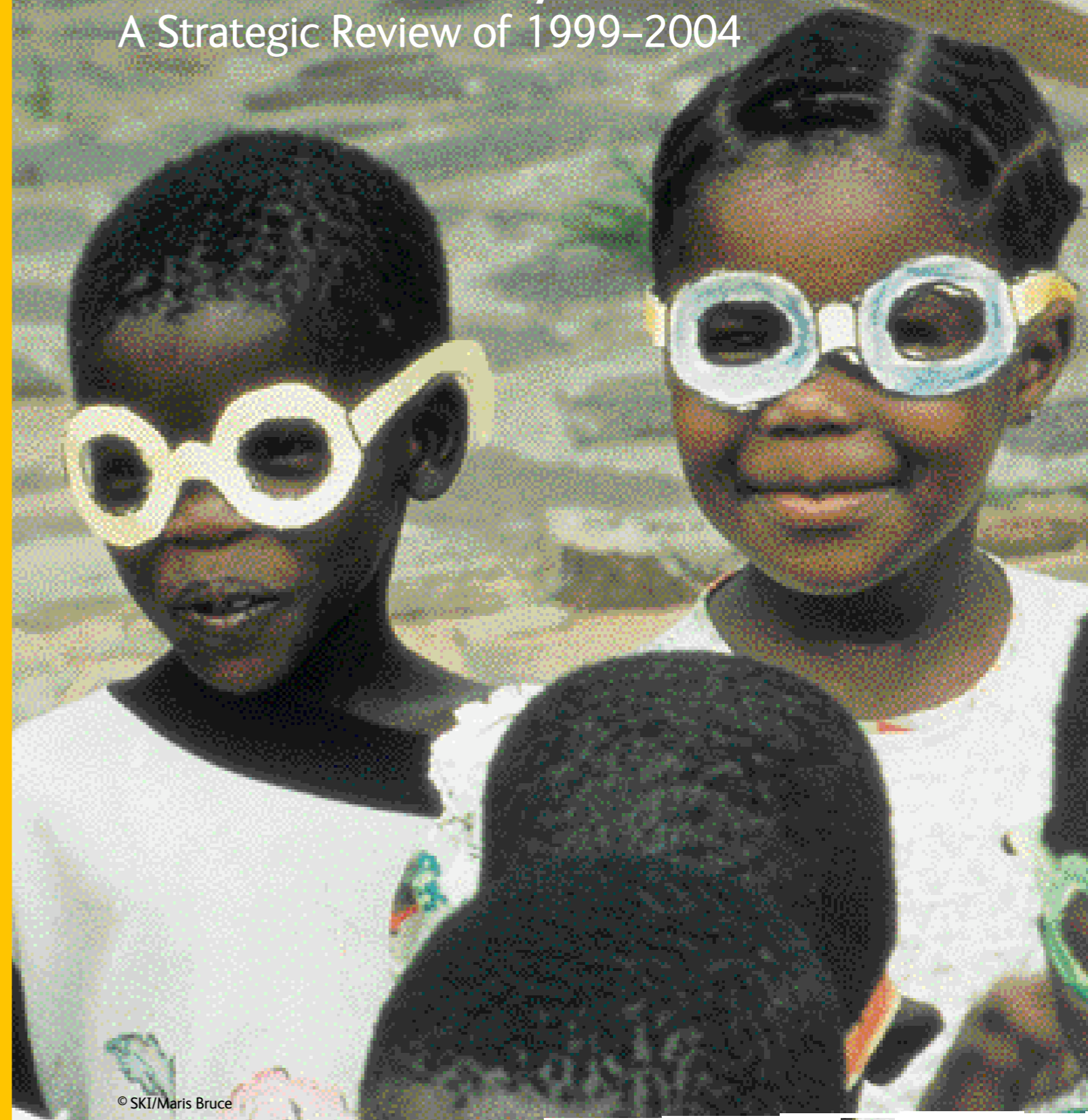
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Under Scrutiny

A Strategic Review of 1999–2004



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Conducting this review has shown us all at Skillshare International just how many hundreds of people have been touched by our work and how many hundreds of people have touched our lives, either directly or indirectly through our partners.

The last five years have been about support, growth and sustainability, about diverse partnerships, innovation, networking and reaching out. By involving people at every level from the grass roots skywards, this review has given us a chance to recall our successes and achievements, identify the challenges and scrutinise our shortcomings.

Thank you to every single person who took the time to sit down, think hard, fill in our questionnaires, participate in focus group meetings and express honest opinions for our benefit. We hope you know that your voice has been heard.

Consequently, we approach the next five year period feeling re-energised, realigned and sharper- ready to do much more and better work.



Dr. Cliff Allum, Chief Executive



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Why review?

"Our Way Forward", a five year plan, was published in 1999 and lasted until 2004. We stated our goals and made many promises, including one which led to a concluding review in 2004.

This process has lasted almost six months and involved over 150 people across the globe. People inside and outside Skillshare International assessed our organisation; they judged how faithfully we have followed our purpose and evaluated the extent to which we have worked within our stated values and stuck to our objectives.

Skillshare Africa + Action Health = Skillshare International

Skillshare Africa and Action Health, two organisations with compatible agendas, merged in September 2000. Skillshare International was born and Skillshare Africa's corporate strategy called "Our Way Forward 1999-2004" was modified but kept the same direction and intent.

Skillshare International and International Development:

Our plan, set out in "Our Way Forward 1999-2004," identified five main areas of international work:

We said we would:

1. Assist the reduction of poverty, improve living conditions and create long-term sustainable livelihoods through support for the development process.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Widen understanding and awareness of the importance of international development work through building a broader Skillshare International constituency.
5. Develop and diversify our resource base in terms of organisational, human and financial resources, leading to an enhancement of our activities.

How we did it:

1. The Development Worker/ Health Trainer Programme (DW/HT) – we sourced, recruited and trained qualified personnel for specific needs identified by our partners.

2. The Leadership Development Programme (LDP) – we provided effective leadership training courses for NGO, civil service or community leaders in Southern Africa.
3. The Resource Development Programme (RDP) – we accessed and channelled funds to help our partners grow and provide their services to a wider community.

What happened?

Tasks: All groups were asked to comment on how well we achieved our purpose and to what extent we have worked within our stated values.

Selected groups were also asked to evaluate our performance against specific objectives and commitments.

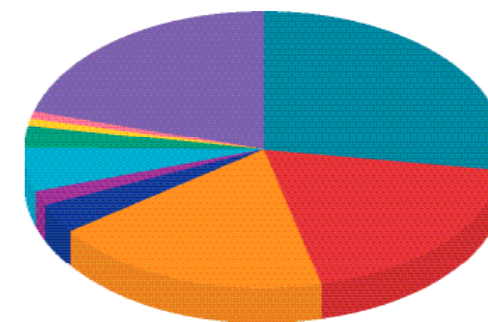
Tools: Focus groups, interviews, questionnaires, team-based assessments, self-assessments, desk-based research and documentary evidence.

Challenges: *Language barriers:* Responses from Botswana were weakened due to material not being translated into Setswana.

Information influx: The high number of responses meant that the collection and evaluation took much longer than anticipated.

Inconsistent approach: Some of the guidance issued by the review coordinators was not followed, making some evidence unreliable.

Voices: Who reviewed us?



Staff (32%)	Board of Trustees (BT) (4%)	Government Agency (1%)
UK partners (22%)	Programme Advisory Committees (PAC) (2%)	Donor (1%)
Current/returned development workers and health trainers (DW/HT) (22%)	International Partners (6%)	Unknown (7%)
	Supporters (3%)	

For some people, joining in the consultation process enabled them not only to share their feedback on our performance over the last five years, but also to learn more about Skillshare International's work.

The bigger picture

"I am proud to say that I am part of an organisation that has a strong commitment to empowering people to determine their own future. We've got a long way to go, but we have definitely chosen the right path."
(Staff, UK)

Purpose

Skillshare International 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.

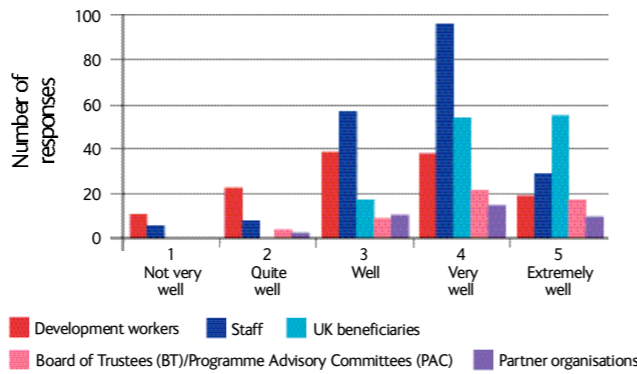
Voices: On average, people thought we achieved our purpose very well.

"Some developing countries need guidance and advice from Skillshare and others in determining and developing a new future. Skillshare should be ready to speak out, when/if they feel things are going wrong."
(Supporter, Swaziland/UK)



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How well do you think we achieved our purpose between 1999-2004?



"I have no doubt that the commitment to the values and objectives is there, but the resources are not big enough to make the ambitions reality."
(Development worker, Botswana)

Values: Skillshare International recognises the right of people and communities to determine and develop their own future. We are committed to organisational and individual development and we believe that working in partnership is central to effective economic and social development.

Voices: On average people said we worked within our values very well.

"I think that Skillshare as an organisation is strongly committed to its values – I don't believe that actions taken are necessarily underpinned by those values."
(Development worker, Swaziland)

Our comment: The feedback regarding our achievement in working in line with our purpose and within our values was given at high levels across all stakeholder groups (trustees, staff, international partners, donors etc). In summary, the results give an affirmation of what we are trying to do and how we are trying to do it, but indicate there are areas for improvement in bringing some aspects of our practice more into line with the values underpinning our work.

What we said and what we did

1. SUPPORT - SUSTAIN - GROW

We said we would:	What we did:
Sustain our commitment to Southern Africa.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Maintained development worker occupancy throughout the period. – Set up a regional office in Pretoria. – Linked up with four new partner organisations in 2003-2004.
Identify the potential of regionally-based programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conducted vital research into the needs and capacity gaps of people living with HIV/AIDS in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland. – Organised regional workshops for organisations dealing with HIV/AIDS. – Managed study tours for five Lesotho partners to learn about the HIV/AIDS hospice concept in South Africa and Swaziland.
Establish the potential for working beyond Southern Africa.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expanded from 6 to 10 countries. – Moved into India and East Africa in 2001. – Provided support for programmes in Yemen. – Continued to conduct research in Sudan and Ethiopia.
Introduce a process of assessment to evaluate the need for our involvement in any given country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Piloted an evaluation tool in Kenya and Zambia which we've since applied across all our programmes.

Leading leaders:

"In the past, whenever I came from other leadership training sessions, I would put the file away and go on with life as usual. However, this was not possible with the LDP... it's a very practical course and easy to implement."

Mrs Keboitse Machangana attended the Leadership Development Programme in 2001-2002.

Our comment: Skillshare International now funds fewer projects but at a higher level. We don't spread ourselves as thinly because we recognise that larger projects provide a more sustainable and efficient use of our resources.



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2. DIVERSE PARTNERSHIPS - THE HOLISTIC* APPROACH

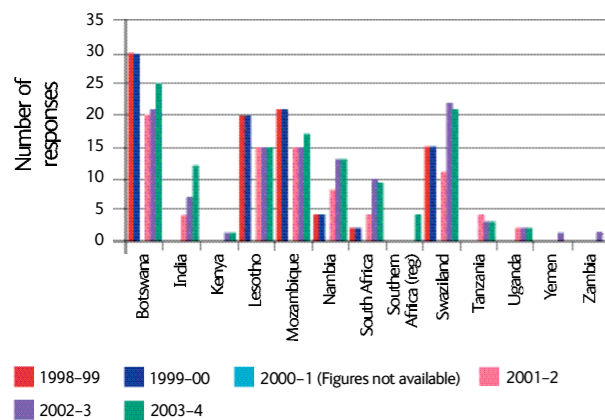
We said we would:	What we did:
Respond to the needs of our partner organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Widened our range and type of intervention. Two particular programmes marked this period: the Technical and Vocational Department (TVD) programme in Lesotho and the Southern Africa regional LDP which grew from 16 partners participating from 4 countries (1999) to 104 partners in 6 countries (2004). – Helped partner organisations tap into other support.
Implement a holistic working model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Championed the holistic approach throughout the organisation by training staff, educating stakeholders and implementing the approach in new programmes.



Skillshare International's holistic project proposal with UNCODET

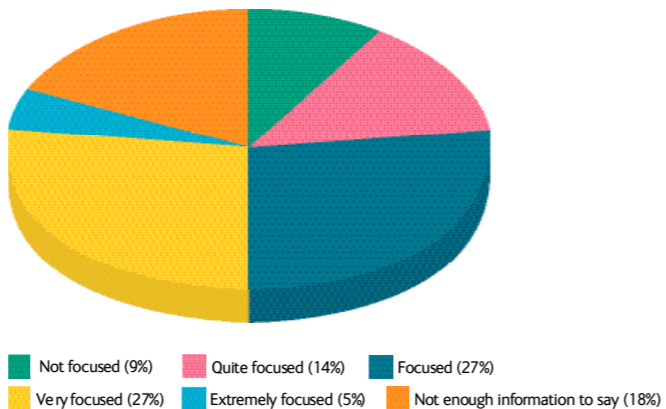
We conducted a needs assessment and then drew up a holistic project proposal with Uru North Community Development Trust (UNCODET) in Tanzania. We agreed to "provide project funding, a development worker, and host the management of UNCODET in the Skillshare International Leadership Development Programme when it is implemented in East Africa." (Consultant's report, Tanzania)

Number of partner organisations by country



How focused are we on our partners' needs?

What the partner organisations and development workers think:



"At a strategic level I think we are very focused. On the ground it seems that the needs of the organisation are focused on what a development worker can do – rather than on the needs of the organisation as a whole." (Development worker, Swaziland)

Our comment: Staff have been trained in the implementation of a holistic approach, however, experience in these approaches is still growing within the organisation.

3. INNOVATION - VARIETY - EVOLUTION

We said we would:	What we did:
Increase our range of inputs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Carried out a consultancy on the capacity of organisations and networks of People Living With HIV/AIDS in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland. – Altered the programme focus in Botswana from traditional provision (e.g. foresters) to marginalised groups and international/local fundraising.
Develop and implement a partner development programme through the LDP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expanded the Leadership Development Programme.
Identify our professional volunteers as 'facilitators of change'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Introduced extra training for all new development workers and health trainers.
Introduce greater flexibility in the length of the current two-year placement model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Actively encouraged South-South volunteering amongst southern partners. – Provided short-term or secondment placements.

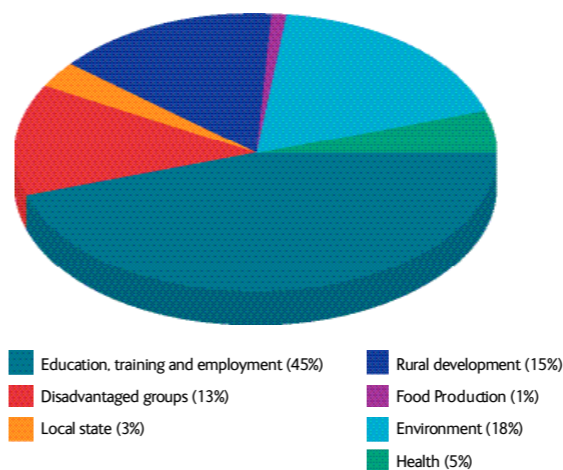
"We have been able to find the right people more quickly by recruiting more of our development workers and health trainers in the countries where we work." Skillshare International.

"If they did it, why can't we?"

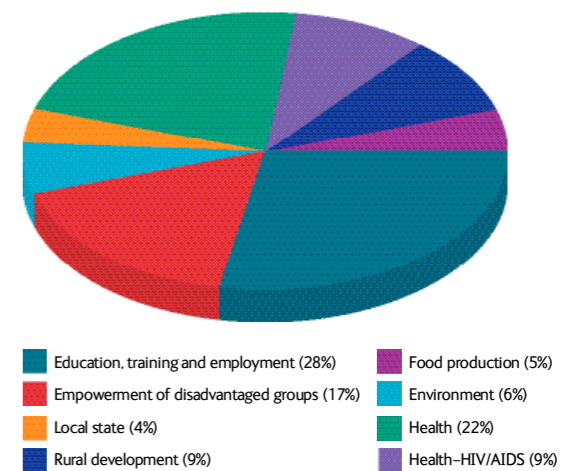
Not only do development workers recruited within Africa bring specific skills and an understanding of the issues and constraints of working in a developing country, they also inspire hope.

"We relate better to their experiences and they give us the belief that things can be done." M'e Mapeseka Kolotsame, Director of Lerotholi Polytechnic in Lesotho.

Distribution of development workers/health trainers by sector 1998/99



Distribution of development workers/health trainers by sector 2003/04



Our comment: Training for development workers varies between countries and regions. We need to ensure a consistent approach to training for pre-placement preparation in the future.

5. NETWORKING - CAMPAIGNING - REACHING OUT

We said we would:	What we did:
Continue to build a Skillshare International supporters' association and develop it internationally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Engaged 400 active supporters who have raised over £200,000 since 1999. – Launched a supporters' association in Lesotho.
Represent Skillshare International in external activities, contributing to international development and related issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ran the annual conference of the International Volunteer Sending Organisations in South Africa in 2002. Individual staff have: chaired the BOND network of NGOs (until Nov 2004), accepted presidency of the international FORUM on Development service (in 2002), sat on the BOND executive committee (since Nov 2004), represented BOND at CONCORD meetings, acted as the FORUM treasurer (until 2002) and CONCORD treasurer (current).
Develop a development education programme in partnership with other organisations, utilising Skillshare International supporters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Played a vital role in establishing and hosting the East Midlands Network for Global Perspectives in Schools. – Embarked on the Special Study Module with Leicester University Medical School, UK.
Support relevant campaigns, including initiating our own campaigning in line with our charitable objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Encouraged partners and supporters in UK, India, Southern and Eastern Africa to be active in local, regional and global campaigns, eg: the 0.7% campaign, Jubilee 2000, Department for International Development (DFID) Policy Forums, Global Development Forum debates, World Aids Day.
Review and improve the ways we publicise Skillshare International and the context in which we work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reviewed and revamped our publications. – Produced the BBC Lifeline Appeal film and cards.
Boost civil society's role and its national, regional and global influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Helped representatives of six countries in Southern Africa participate to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in their respective countries.



Why become a supporter?

"It's given me a focus for my interest in international development, kept me in touch with current development issues, and provided the chance to interact with like-minded people and attend events. It all increases my understanding of world issues."

Jan Mayers, a health specialist who participated in a World AIDS Day workshop.

Our comment: We have learnt that we must tailor our publications better to local audiences and make translations more available. We will seek to nurture and expand our supporter base in all Skillshare International countries.

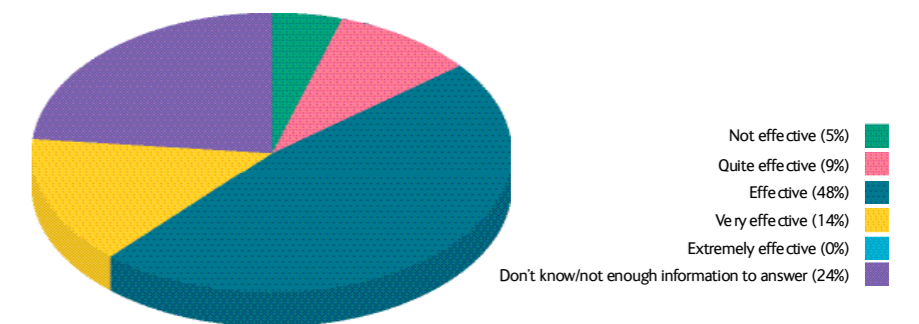
5. PEOPLE - MONEY

We said we would:	What we did:
Continue to develop our systems and governance structure, possibly devolving powers to regional and country levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conducted a governance review in 2002–3. – Established Skillshare International Ireland. – Established closer Board – Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) links. – Recruited six new trustees to the main board.
Ensure that our trustees and PAC members have a clear understanding of their roles, responsibilities and nature of our work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wrote/distributed the Trustees Handbook. – Gave clear terms of reference and guidelines to PAC members.
Review and optimise Skillshare International staffing resources across different countries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increased team diversity and shared learning between offices. – Achieved the Investors in People award for our UK operations. – Completely re-structured the International Programmes team.
Review the current training provision for development workers and health trainers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tailor-made pre-placement orientation and preparation courses. Supported returning development workers and health trainers through de-briefing and feedback sessions.
Deepen our relationship with DFID, especially at regional and country level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Agreed a core-funding Partnership Programme Agreement with DFID UK. – Developed effective partnership with DFID in Botswana. – Maintained our relationship with the Information and Civil Society Department in East Kilbride.
Vary sources of programme funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Raised 26.1% of our total income (2002/2003) from sources other than DFID (11.8% in 1998/1999). – Secured new sources of funding at country level.
Develop models of financial practice to reinforce autonomy at the regional or country level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developed a new business planning model.

Our Comment: Progress has been hampered in some areas e.g. developing the Programme Advisory Committees, finding new trading activities, completing financial models and staff finance training for achieving country and regional autonomy. These will all be dealt with in the new Corporate Strategy 2005–2010.

How effective are our systems in meeting development workers' needs?

What development workers think:



What people said

“Complexity undermines the potential benefits of a decentralised financial system. Limited availability of local resources does not give a sense of autonomy.”

A staff comment on Skillshare International’s financial models. (UK)

“Training was a two edged sword: the role and how to deal with it made a lot of sense to me, but they are also in the process of making me highly unpopular in my organisation.”

Returned development worker.

“The work was so well done by the District Support Occupational Therapist that policy makers in Uganda have now recognised occupational therapy as a profession.”

Representative of the Kaabong Hospital, speaking about a Skillshare International occupational therapist (Uganda)

“Skillshare International’s approach is holistic, yet dependent upon the partner’s willingness to change.”

Development worker (Botswana)

“The Leadership Development Programme provided an opportunity for self reflection on why I became a leader and a re-examination of my personal contribution within my organisation and the community. I initiated changes that did not require big financial inputs (cleanliness, security, reporting and communication) but improved relationships within the organisation.”

Senior staff member from a partner organisation. (Namibia)

“I think that, in general, Skillshare International is focused on its partner’s needs. I think the organisation understands the problem in country and more generally in development very well.”

Returned development worker (Mozambique)

Other countries where we work

- Ireland
- South Africa
- Lesotho
- Tanzania

“The Gudalur meeting was a very rich experience for me. We felt a sense of ownership for the whole process as partners.”

S. Iyengar, Director, Samraksha (India)

“Skillshare International is sensitive to partners’ needs and how their development workers can make a contribution. The assistance provided is as a result of our needs, not what someone at Skillshare proposed.”

Michael Muragu, Director, Coalition for Peace in Africa (Kenya)

“The mere existence of Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse is highly attributable to international development workers.”

Thobile Dlamini, Director of SWAGAA (July 1997 – May 2003)(Swaziland)

What next?

The New Corporate Strategy 2005-2010

We will channel all the comments, remarks, assessments and findings revealed during the review into our new Corporate Strategy 2005-2010.

This guiding document will represent a step-change in Skillshare International’s work north and south of the equator and we hope to bring you along with us.

Thank you to everybody who played a part in this exhaustive review process and thank you to all our partners, funders and generous donors who have teamed up with us over the last five years.

Project Funders 1999-2004

- Allied Dunbar
- APSO, The Irish Government’s Agency for Personal Service Overseas (DCI, Development Cooperation Ireland)
- Ardwick Trust
- Besom Foundation
- Big Lottery Fund
- Burdens Charitable Foundation
- CfBT and the English Speaking Union
- Christadelphian Meal-a-day Fund
- City of Carlisle Overseas Aid Trust
- Comic Relief

- Community Fund (formerly the National Lottery Charities Board)
- Department for International Development (DFID)
- Elton John AIDS Foundation
- European Commission
- Guidance Control Systems Ltd
- Leggat Trust
- Maurice Laing
- Miriam Dean Fund
- New Zealand High Commission
- NM Rothschild
- North South Travel Development Trust
- Nuffield Foundation
- Paget Trust
- R Farquar – Oliver Trust
- Royal College of General Practitioners
- SADC Health Co-ordinating Unit
- Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation
- State of Guernsey Overseas Aid Committee
- The Baring Foundation
- The Clothworkers’ Foundation
- The Edward Cadbury Charitable Fund (Incorporated)
- The Hilden Charitable Trust
- The Laing Trusts
- The Maurice Laing Foundation
- The Radley Charitable Trust
- The Trust House Charitable Foundation



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