



people and places: responsible volunteering

SPRING

2009

"Truly accountable, ethical, responsible, sustainable volunteer travel"

# Newsletter

EDITOR Nigel Pegler

we work with communities in

**AFRICA; The Gambia, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland**

**ASIA; Indonesia, Nepal and India - SOUTH AMERICA; Peru**

## One Life Show 09

I helped on the *people and places* stand at this year's show and must say what a pleasurable experience it was. It was great to see so many people helping out and it shows what wonderful volunteers we have.



It was nice to talk to potential volunteers and to be able to share first hand experience of volunteering. Quite a lot of people asked if they had to pay any money up front as another company at the show wanted £3000 to start with! As you know we ask for no money up front, but that's because *people and places* is "truly accountable, ethical, and responsible! It was also nice to have Marnie one of our local partners from South Africa on the stand as she could give potential volunteers information on the country they wanted to volunteer in. **Nigel Pegler**



First of all, Sallie and I say a huge "THANK YOU" to everyone who came to visit us at One Life Live in Olympia - previous and future volunteers; friends and colleagues. We had visitors from near and far, and everyone contributed towards an enjoyable and rewarding weekend. Bear with us whilst we award recognition for services beyond the call of duty to Anne, Deirdre, Nigel and Marnie - what can we say - you were



amazing! Marnie - one of our local partners in South Africa wins the long distance award.

But what an exhausting weekend - to say nothing of the previous week's preparations! So why do Sallie and I put ourselves through this every year - the paperwork and printing, the cutting and sticking, the filing and folding, the travelling and talking? Partly because some say we are getting good at it, but mainly because of our commitment to the projects and communities we work with, and the opportunity to meet so many volunteers - individual people who have already completed

their placements, as well as those who are thinking seriously about a placement at some point in the future. With such obvious support for the work we do, it would be impossible for us to feel anything other than optimistic about the future of the projects and communities we've come to know so well.

Each year we've seen increased interest in what we do, with more volunteers who are willing and able to commit their time, money, skills and sheer hard graft for the benefit of others, less fortunate than themselves. Now that IS rewarding!

We also see real evidence of raised awareness - more and more people are now well-informed about the potential risks in volunteering as well as the potential benefits, and are doing their research before committing themselves. Given that we started *people and places* to campaign for better volunteer experiences for all, THAT is encouraging too! This one weekend each year never fails to be rewarding and encouraging - but we're not done yet! There's plenty more to do, and we'll be back!

**Kate Stefanko**

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Thank you Sallie and Kate for inviting me to help on the One Life stand.

Having recently returned from spending 6 weeks helping children to read at Emafini primary school near Port Elizabeth; I am fully aware of how much good we can do as volunteers, but in the time we have available, we can only scratch the surface. Wouldn't it be wonderful if there were enough volunteers to provide all the teaching assistants needed until local teaching assistants can be funded. I was discussing with Lamorna how difficult and costly recruitment is for a small organisation like *people and places* who don't have the financial resources of the big companies. Do other volunteers feel as I do, that although we are back from Africa, we would still like to go on helping?

As we come from so many areas of the country, perhaps we could organise regional meetings for them. We could put them up, organise a venue and also make sure that there were people to come and meet them.

Deirdre

### Regional Meetings

Message from Lamorna 3 time volunteer.

About 18 months ago, Sallie and Kate organised a great get together for the volunteers past and future in the Faversham Town Hall.

I thought it would be a great idea if we volunteers could repeat it and maybe in different parts of the country. We haven't set a date, but some time in October / November – not too cold – might be a good idea. And if we could all contribute a fiver towards costs – town hall, village hall or whatever– small eats – tea & coffee – would be a great help....I know how expensive these things can be and Kate and Sallie can't afford to do something like this too often. If enough of you are interested this would be wonderful to do. If you think you can help organise something in your area that would be wonderful too – contact [sallie@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:sallie@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk) and she will pass on your messages to me – I don't have email.

I look forward to meeting you soon

## Volunteering in Peru

We have wanted to work in Peru for some time and we now believe that we have found a partner who is committed to the very core values to which we are committed. The empowerment of local people to help them create a better future for themselves, together with support and transparency for volunteers.

The Manu project works with communities in the valley of the Alto Madre de Dios River, in Amazonian Manu. On one side lies the Manu National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the largest protected area in Peru, on the other lies the



Indigenous, Amarakaeri Community Reserve. The Manu Learning Centre is located within Fundo Mascoitania, a 600hec reserve, encompassed within the cultural zone of the Manu Biosphere Reserve (MBR).

The project seeks to support their education, livelihoods and environment. As a result of that work the benefits are felt in a much wider context through conservation of the rainforest and empowerment of people. The Manu Learning Centre is centred in this incredibly biodiverse part of Peru and works towards the conservation and development of the entire zone

The MBR is home to no less than eight Amerindian tribes as well as native highland Quechua-speaking communities and immigrant colonists (mestizos), all of whom add-up to a cultural mix of 18,000 people. A further 6,000 people (mainly foreigners) visit the MBR every year as tourists. There are several smaller settlements and communities in the vicinity; some near to the river and others further back into the rainforest which constitutes almost the entire region of Manu.

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## NEW! Volunteering in Peru

Most of the communities near to Salvacion are composed of farmers from the Andes who have only lived in the region for part of their lives. They attempt to use the same agricultural techniques as in the Andes but without success. Further down the valley is Shintuya, a settled indigenous village, who are experiencing different problems but the same effects. The work of the Manu Learning centre is holistic and skills needed are many

- Educators with experience in a classroom setting and an ability to teach a strong curriculum, in an organised manner.
- Spanish skills would be a great asset though not essential.
- English teachers and linguists to build language capacity in teachers, staff and the community
- Horticulturalists, gardeners and market gardeners
- Business administration and IT skills

The project is based in one of the most beautiful areas of the Amazon Peruvian jungle, close to Salvacion some 8 hour drive from Cuzco.

Sallie is just finalising the last details of this projects needs and details and hopes to have the project live on the site in the next couple of weeks. If you are interested or would like more details please contact

[kate@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:kate@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)



## NEW! Volunteering in India



### Education Development in Rajasthan

Rajasthan is rich with history and culture and diverse environments from sand dunes to lush forests. There is also huge need there and the first project we will be working with involves education development in schools in Deogarh – the first school we will work with is near Devgarh – typically the schools have few resources – most of the children do not have desks and teachers have few resources to assist them in their goal to educate the children to the national curriculum. Our local partners are working with a family trust run by one the owners of the stunning Deogarh palace. The Deogarh family have been com-

mitted to supporting the local community for over 40 years and are keen to build on this work through a meaningful volunteer programme.

### We are initially looking for

- basic literacy in English is essential - for nearly all of these children, school is their first exposure to English, and all exams must be taken in English
- quality educational materials are seldom available the ability to adapt and make do is essential and any help here will be invaluable
- lesson planning and teaching methodologies – these are fundamental areas of modern education in which many teachers have received little or no training
- sports, arts and crafts practitioners are needed to work with the children to build confidence and enhance life-skills
- principals are burdened with rampant bureaucracy - they have little training and even less support in appropriate administration

Sallie is visiting the schools and our local partners later this month to finalise all the details of the community's need`s - and the project will be live on the site in early May – if you would like any advance information please contact

[kate@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:kate@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)



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## Volunteering in The Gambia

### The Belshaws

"Gambia is Good" – the motto of the farmyard project and one that sums up our experience in this country which calls itself The Smiling Coast. It's a country that's easy to get to from Europe, just six hours flight from Gatwick and on GMT so there's no jet lag for us Europeans. The people are friendly and welcoming, the climate is hot and sunny from mid October to mid June with peak humidity June to October and you only occasionally need a sweater if there is a breeze in the evenings. If you are a keen bird watcher, this is paradise (over 500 species!)

There are numerous hotels and self-catering apartments to choose from in the tourist areas. A restaurant meal and drink cost about £7.50 (the value of sterling has dropped by about one third during the credit crisis). The local food is delicious, especially the fish – the shrimps are enormous! We even developed a taste for chillies. There are supermarkets selling expensive imported European food, but it's good to use the local markets, roadside stalls and shops operating from tiny premises no bigger than sheds where you can buy tapalapa (a small soft baguette) and tiny quantities of basics such as eggs and salt, you can even purchase a single teabag. Milk is UHT, evaporated or powdered.

*Faces and Places* is the Gambian local partner of *people and places* which arranged our placement. Adama Bah and his wife Lisong are an inspiring couple who work in the fields of sustainable tourism and nursery education. Adama set up the Association of Small Scale Enterprises in Tourism (ASSET) which brings together groups working to bring the benefits and rewards of tourism to the people of the country. They have set up an institute to train young Gambians to work in all branches of the tourist industry. They have links with two universities in the UK involving student exchanges. There is a model farm producing vegetables and working with local women to provide vegetables for the hotels, instead of importing them from Europe. The group has close ties with those working to improve the environment, eco lodges and hotels, beekeepers, tailoring workshops, solar powered ovens and craft workers making recycled paper products and alternatives to wood for urban stoves. As you can see the opportunities for volunteering are many and various, education, accountancy, marketing, administration, to name but a few.

Nursery education covers the age group 3 – 7/8. The facilities range from good in the international school, not bad in the schools where there is sponsorship from a link school in the West, or an NGO, to almost non-existent. It's quite heartbreaking to look into a classroom and see a bare room with nothing but chairs, a blackboard, chalk and a few pencils. Outside in the playground, there is nothing but the bare sandy surface, not even a place to draw an area for hopscotch. Your contribution in giving the teachers ideas on how to use available free resources and low cost items is invaluable. A number of beanbags filled with baobab seeds, skipping ropes made from tubes found on the beach threaded with rope, and three metres of elastic joined up for the elastic game gave great enjoyment to teachers and children alike.

I spent my time helping Lisong to set up her Early Childhood Development resource centre, visiting schools, observing and holding workshops for the teachers. I shared ideas with them on story telling, classroom management and making simple educational toys using such things as shells, leaves, etc. Anything to get away from the endless rote learning. The sad thing is that there are no education toy suppliers here. Coloured sugar paper was impossible to find!

Hugh worked with the GiG farm project, the Institute for Travel and Tourism of The Gambia, and the founders of the Sandele Project helping them with various financial aspects of their work. He held workshops on the use of Excel, simple accounting systems and other financial matters.

We had a great time. We were looked after extremely well, nothing was too much trouble and we can thoroughly recommend the experience. Our skills were matched to the task in hand and we encourage others to go and help.



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### **Dianne Ashman - a note on arrival The Gambia Early Childhood Development.**

I arrived safely in The Gambia last Friday and spent the weekend being shown round the local area. The flight was good - cloudy over Europe but amazing views over the Atlas Mountains and the Sahara desert. I was met at the airport and taken to my apartment, which is fairly basic - only cold water for example - but clean and will be fine. It's in a typical Gambian street, sand not tarmac with beautiful flowers over the walls and a tiny shop directly opposite. In the evening I was taken for a meal with, among others Lisong who I am working with and Bill, the other volunteer.

On Saturday we were taken around the whole area, seeing everything from the supermarket and bank to the beach which looks just like pictures of the Caribbean. We went round two markets which was an amazing experience - very crowded, with people selling everything from dried fish to live chickens, as well as fruit and veg of every sort, and beads, pots and textiles. Yesterday I went to the Methodist church in Banjul with Lisong, which was a much livelier experience than services at home. It lasted for an hour and a half, shorter than I had been led to expect, and the service was taken by the Chairman of the Gambian District, who turns out to be an Englishman called Norman Griffith. Gambians dress up for church - the hats made it look like a society wedding - and sing very enthusiastically. The minister asked them to sing The Lord's my Shepherd very quietly but they only managed to sustain quiet singing for the first line, then absolutely filled the church with their voices.

Today I went into the office to start work. We spent the day looking at the resources and sorting out exactly what we aim to do. The resources I took were very much appreciated - Lisong asked me to pass on her thanks to those of you who gave me things to take, so the struggle to fit everything into my suitcase seems to have been worthwhile. She has outlined a new training course for teachers of young children, and we aim to make this more detailed, write at least part of a course booklet for the course, present it to other people who will then deliver the course and write a bid to get it accredited. At the moment nursery teachers who have completed the course at Gambia College are paid as unqualified teachers, earning only 750 dalasi a month, which is about £22, so it's important to get the course accredited if possible.

I'll need to stop now - I'm in an internet cafe and have nearly used my time. It's a good thing I can touch type as quite a lot of the keys on this computer are in the wrong place so I have to guess at a lot of the letters!

### **NAXAL ORPHANAGE, KATHMANDU supported by OCCED charity**

#### **Volunteer Naomi Kemeny, Midwife and post natal doula. February 2009**

As I had seen some pictures of the orphanage before my visit I already had some idea of the conditions to expect. As I approached it I was impressed by the smart exterior. It is a solid brick building with a very impressive gold OCCED sign. As I was shown around the back it was a completely different story. The building was quite derelict in areas and badly dilapidated in places. I understand that funds are being collected and the search is on for new, larger premises. My experience of caring for babies in the UK has been in immaculately clean maternity units or in clean, well equipped homes.



I imagined before arriving in Nepal that I would enter a situation that was perhaps not coping so well. I pictured myself being given responsibility for 'lots' of small newly orphaned babies. The situation was different... There were 43 children. The youngest infant was 9 months in a group of 10 toddlers up to approx 2. Many arrive there only weeks old; mothers commonly die in childbirth or babies are unwanted or illegitimate and therefore rejected. There are 2 'didi's' [women who care, as mothers, for the orphans] in charge of the 10 little ones, they are with them 24 hours a day and have full responsibility for their needs. There is a resident nurse and a doctor checks them weekly. My initial reaction was 'what can I do here?' They are so capable and cope admirably. So for the first few days I observed their routine and tried to find ways that I could 'help' or lessen their load. I saw how they washed them with wet cotton wool, never bathed, and then massaged all over, very vigorously with mustard oil. The babies appeared to really enjoy this firm touch compared to the very light massage performed on our babies in the west - I imagine it made them feel secure. At first I felt uncomfortable as my way was so different and I saw the 'didi's' giggling at my delicate touch. So I decided to follow their method realising that it was an effective technique which the babies thoroughly enjoyed. In my 'work' with babies I always instinctively give my all i.e. cuddling, hugging, calming and settling. This experience was immediately challenged when it was explained to me that the didis prefer if we don't favour one child.

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They can become very quickly attached and then when the volunteer leaves the babies are more demanding and unsettled. So I soon learnt to 'unpeel' them from me and share the attention. Once they got to know me they would 'bomb' me as soon as I entered the nursery, this was really unsettling so I discovered that if I brought with me something new and distracting, like a basket of bricks borrowed from the older kids, they would play really happily.

It is tradition and quite normal to use cut up cotton fabric for nappies unless you are wealthy and can afford disposables. They used old sheets and even old clothes cut into squares. These were tied with a knot and the baby then dressed. No pins or plastic pants were used. They used no wet wipes, cleansers or creams ever... compared to our over sanitised use of products. I never once saw a nappy rash. However, the babies were wet through very quickly and needed changing continuously, this created mountains of laundry. As a result of the poor nappy situation I often got soaked and was often stepping in pee on the floor! I was very intent on achieving a mission of change by introducing a thinner fabric.

Another VERY noticeable difference was the early introduction to potty training. Every morning they were placed on a potty and left there until they performed. I was totally amazed to only see 2 poo's in nappies in 4 weeks!

Although I believe it is good to encourage babies to play alone they do need a certain amount of stimulation. The didi's are often too exhausted or busy to play with them. I found they loved the extra singing, playing and clapping which encouraged them to be more active.

In the mornings the babies would play on the roof area. To get there they had to negotiate dangerous chipped steps, open banisters and uneven ground. Some of them were only barely walking, however they were all so careful and given this opportunity had learnt to be sure footed. On arriving at the roof area they would constantly be leaning over and trying to climb the low wall. I was initially shocked and wondered why they didn't make it safer. When I suggested this [through a translator] they were shocked and said 'why?' as they were there to constantly watch over them. I felt a bit bad, as if I had insulted their responsibility. This highlighted our health and safety paranoia in the west.



Another observation here was the smaller children had nothing to play with compared to the abundance of toys provided to most children in the west who are over stimulated with so many mechanical, electronic toys, vibrating chairs etc. Again my immediate thought was 'These children need some toys'. But I kept quiet and immediately saw how they played happily together like a pack of cubs, tumbling, chasing, finding specks of dust etc to amuse them

When they did fall on the hard concrete floor they nearly always picked themselves up and carried on. This was another example of how the didi's would only intervene if a baby was clearly in danger.

If they were fighting over a toy they were left to sort it out themselves and I was amazed to see them actually swapping toys!

I have total respect and admiration for OCCED the charity that runs this orphanage. I KNOW that these children are the lucky ones. They are alive, healthy, thriving and most importantly loved, compared to the many little ones out on the street.

In conclusion I really hope that I did make a difference and introduced some positive practical changes.

Amongst these; with the generous donations from friends and family I bought:

A big supply of Baby bottles, so they had one each. I was very shocked to see them having to share and take turns with only 4 bottles. They were always screaming. When I left they were all happy and settled with their own bottle at nap time. A training beaker each which by the time I left they were all using very well. Completely re equipped the sparse and frugal kitchen with new knives, buckets, bowls, bins, cooking utensils, glasses etc

30 metres of Thomas Tank Engine cotton to make new bed sheets.

Contributed to the coach cost and extra snacks for an outing for all the children to a botanical garden, where they played joyfully on grass, skipped, played and had a picnic. This was a rare treat as apart from the older ones going to school; the children rarely leave the orphanage.

Some towels which the didi's were delighted were thick enough to use as nappies.



### Practical tips introduced;

Teaching babies to drink from trainer cups. This also meant that they now have water twice in the day instead of only at nap times. Fruit once a day, instead of sweet biscuits twice. Putting them on potty more often. Introducing more stimulating toys each day.

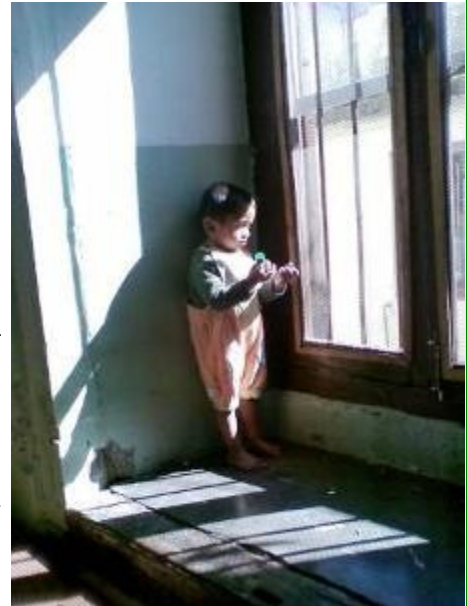
Things I did to lighten the load for the didi's; folded cloths for nappies, folded laundry, washed cups, bottles etc, kept an eye when they left the nursery, got babies ready and up from sleep

I also compiled some helpful guidelines for new volunteers to read before they start.

### Other experiences

Despite being at the orphanage every day I managed to have a huge variety of other memorable experiences. I chose to stay with a Nepalese family, not the hotel option, which I know by far enriched my experience. I lived and ate their food, tolerated the Nepalese style toilet, shared their lifestyle, culture, religion, yoga. I was invited to a wedding, traditional dance performance, got taken to the best local shopping markets. Thanks to Social Tours I was shown many sites and went on a trek with my own personal guide, witnessed one of the largest Hindu festivals and lots more... I was also very honoured to be invited by the presidents of the charity to travel to 3 remote areas where their charity is running a literacy project for women. I was a 'guest' speaker and was overwhelmed by their commitment and determination. I also trekked 3 hours to a remote community where OCCED were providing an eye clinic. They invite all local people in the surrounding area to be screened for cataracts. They are then provided with transport to the eye hospital in Kathmandu where they have the operation (no charge) An incredible life changing opportunity for these people.

The Nepalese are the most kind, generous and loving people I have ever encountered. I had the most wonderful and rewarding time and was showered with gifts, garlands and thanks on my departure. Although I tried not to get too emotionally attached to the babies I still wept when I left.



## Sallie`s report on her visit to South Africa.

It`s exactly 3 years since we placed our first volunteer. The first projects we worked with were all in South Africa and boy have we come a long way since then! It was wonderful to visit our partners and the projects in The Eastern Cape and up in Gauteng.

The schools programme in Port Elizabeth <http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/ProjectView.aspx?id=123> goes from strength to strength and all the principals and teachers I met with asked me to thank every volunteer and send them their very best wishes.

The literacy programme is working very well – helping to enable struggling children to catch up with their classmates – essential and very difficult when class sizes are as large as 70! More able children are being identified too – again something very difficult for hard pressed local teachers to identify.

When we first started working in the schools local teachers found it difficult to work with volunteer teachers as peers – that`s all changed – volunteers and teachers are working together in the classrooms and local teachers are actively seeking the advice and assistance of volunteers. The baton passing is working – returning volunteers are attesting to the continuance of teaching methods introduced by earlier volunteers.

### volunteer Anne Brown and teachers at Henry Nginza



One of the most exciting developments for me was the leaps ( small steps for us but leaps for the township schools) in the art classes and the development of art teaching in the schools. Art is now part of the curriculum – but there are no resources and no teachers with art training.

Barry Hinchliff has worked so hard over the last two years ( on 3 trips ) to develop a meaningful and achievable programme and for the first time art is being taught in the schools. We desperately need more art teacher volunteers to continue his work. I arrived in PE early in Barry's placement, he showed me with great pride (well merited I add) the first portrait work done by the students – some was very gifted and it would be a shameful waste if these talents could not be developed. Arts and crafts in schools are essential to develop creative thinking – the very skill crushed by the Bantu education system.

"Still thinking about the past six weeks - This years results are just starting to sink in for me, it has been good, for the programme , and for the children. The basis for all my art teaching, in UK or in Africa has been built round the belief that all the creative arts, visual arts literature, dance, drama music architecture evolve from the process of....looking, seeing, i.e. understanding, feeling, thinking, followed by making, or doing. I started every topic with that statement in each school, and linked it to the national curriculum in South Africa, because it is all in there, except that there are not enough resources to follow it fully."



**Barry also ran a side line in doll surgery**

Barry 2009



Our local partners in Port Elizabeth, Calabash, are working with the schools and funding computers and local lab technicians and this means we can now send more IT volunteers who will be able to transfer their knowledge.

**Isaac Booi -grade 1**

At Missionvale <http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/ProjectView.aspx?id=164> I met Peter - a new management member who is responsible for developing the education and orphans and vulnerable children programme. The first volunteers to work with him arrived just after my departure and they have helped Peter identify the priorities for future volunteer input – particularly working with the orphans and vulnerable children – over 850 of whom arrive at the centre each day!

Due to the support for the Missionvale care programme we have been able to extend the volunteer community care programme in The Eastern Cape and we are now working with the Emmanuel Care Centre <http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/ProjectView.aspx?id=191>. I met Polly the manager and we spent some hours discussing where she hoped the volunteer programme could help their work. Emmanuel works with nearly 2000 families in the outreach programme as well as running feeding programmes, wealth creation and advocacy programmes and pre schools. Jean Eaton a volunteer health professional is the first volunteer to work with them she has already volunteered with us twice on another community healthcare project ( Missionvale ) so her insight into the needs of the project will be invaluable.



So all in all I visited 5 schools and the two community projects in The Eastern Cape – met up with 9 volunteers in situ and spent a lot of time with Paul and Marion and the team from Calabash – if only there were enough hours in the day to action all the plans we have!

I then flew up to Gauteng to visit Mapoch <http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/ProjectView.aspx?id=114>

The first thing I noticed at Mapoch was the number of bicycles!

The Bokamoso programme <http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/ProjectView.aspx?id=179> in action! I bumped into David who was on his way to pick up some fruit from a village woman to deliver to a man who was going to press it for juice – so David's nascent delivery business was generating an income for 3 people – fantastic!



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I gave Peter a letter from Nigel and he asked me to please say thank you to all the volunteers who have helped the community in so many ways – he is full of humour, optimism and determination to improve the lives of his community.

I visited with Rose and Lesego-our first home stay hosts at Mapoch. They await the May arrival of their first guest, Kevin, with great excitement.



I saw Sibongele's new vegetable garden and saw just how well used all the facilities at her pre school are and I admired her new kitchen bought out of savings from the income from the pre school. <http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/ProjectView.aspx?id=112>

Yenzani children's home is a real haven. The children living there are all victims of child trafficking, abuse or abandonment This is a new project we are working with and will be up on our site in the next couple of weeks. Yenzani is a real home for the children and though the home desperately needs to expand ( they are turning so many children in crisis away) they are determined that it will be done on the home model – i.e. a new house will be built and children will live in this with a house mother. Rather than extending the current building – a generous donation to buy surrounding land will enable them to do this. When I asked the children what sort of volunteers they hoped we would send they cried " Someone to teach us computers...someone to do speech and drama...someone to play soccer....someone who knows about pop music! Someone to talk to..."



The team have more prosaic needs " building skills to share with the older boys and our staff – computer skills – fundraising skills administration marketing counselors to mentor the house mothers to assist the children"

I love the, all too little, time I spend with projects and volunteers. There are so many incredible people out there doing incredible work – people who don't let the huge need cripple them into inaction – I am reminded constantly that if we all take small steps together then we can take giant steps together.

So much more positive a thought than...

"when you are up to your arse in crocodiles it's difficult to remember that the objective was to drain the swamp"!

[hot off the press from Missionvale.....](#)

THE founder and director of Port Elizabeth's Missionvale Care Centre, Sister Ethel Normoyle, has been named as a recipient of one of the country's top awards. Other recipients will include former Cuban leader Fidel Castro, top SA businessman Cyril Ramaphosa, key Codesa member Roelf Meyer and former cabinet minister Kader Asmal. Sister Ethel, a former The Herald Citizen of the Year Award winner, will receive the Order of the Baobab from President Kgalema Motlanthe tomorrow. "I am humbled to be among great South African leaders who will receive the Order of the Baobaob in Silver. I dedicate the award to the board of trustees at the centre and the other people who work there," she said last night. Sister Ethel is being given the award for her excellent service to society and caring for vulnerable and poor members of her community. This will be the 13th awards ceremony since the inception of the new system of national orders. These orders contribute towards unity and reconciliation and represent the symbolic building of the nation.

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## VOLUNTEER INSURANCE-BEWARE

**Tourism Society Journal- March 2009-by Professor Harold Goodwin, Chair of our Advisory Committee**

Over the last 10 years there has been a rapid growth in the sale of volunteering opportunities abroad. Some of these opportunities are sold to gap year students, some to people taking a career break and some to those who are retired but still with the energy to put something back. Increasingly there are holiday volunteering opportunities where volunteering is tacked on to a holiday or a volunteering opportunity is built into the package.

In some cases volunteers seek out their own insurance, others purchase their travel insurance from the operator supplying the volunteering experience. The volunteer's requirement for insurance is different to, and often greater than, that of a traditional tourist. Organising and selling volunteering opportunities abroad is a specialist activity and it requires specialist management in placing the volunteers and ensuring that both sides in the transaction – the volunteers and the communities they assist – get real value from the encounter. The obligation on the provider to take responsibility for the quality of the opportunity and its delivery also applies to the insurance.

Very rarely does travel insurance cover people who are working whether they are being paid or not. It is holiday insurance. Business policies do not generally cover the kinds of activities which volunteers may engage in. Generally speaking backpacker, holiday and business travel policies will not be adequate. Policies which cover dangerous activities generally do so by listing them – this cover will not protect a working volunteer. Policies which cover "all kinds of adventure sports and activities" are unlikely to cover volunteering.

Those volunteers who are teaching in schools may be covered by travel insurance but it would be wise for volunteers to check. Companies which are selling travel insurance to volunteers need to take responsibility for the quality of the cover and to be clear and explicit in writing about what it does and does not cover including any liability issues which may arise for the volunteer. Volunteers purchasing travel insurance to cover volunteering activities should be advised to check that they have cover for all the activities which they intend to undertake. They should insist on having it in writing that their activities will be covered, and be aware of what will not be covered. I know of only one policy in the market place designed explicitly to offer volunteer insurance abroad.

If companies or organisations are selling or advising on particular policies then they need to take responsibility for ensuring that the policies are explicit about what is or is not covered and that both the volunteers and local partners and organisers share that understanding about what volunteers can do and what they should not. For example it is very difficult, if not impossible, to get cover in the UK for physical building work above 2 metres or the use of power tools. Volunteers need to be very clear about what risks they are insured for and the limits of that insurance before they travel. Organisers should take responsibility with their overseas partners for undertaking risk assessments and ensuring that volunteers are appropriately covered and briefed.

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## At last— a marketing leaflet!

Many volunteers have asked us if we have any literature for them to pass on to potential volunteers or to hand out at fund-raising events. To date we have had to say no, we do not spend money on glossy brochures – well we still don't spend money on glossy brochures BUT we have produced a leaflet and we now have it in electronic form. So if you are kind enough to plan on spreading the word please go to [Http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/News.aspx](http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/News.aspx) where you can download a pdf. of the leaflet.

**Highly commended-Virgin Responsible Tourism awards**