



## Fundraising for an NGO

*Jo Arponen is working as a fundraising assistant with Health Unlimited. An NGO that provides health services in the remote areas of countries that have been affected by conflict or political instability.*

"I met Health Unlimited at the SOAS NGO volunteering fair. I started volunteering with them while I was studying a degree in anthropology. Because it is a small NGO it was a good place to get an overview of the Development sector.

I picked up lots of skills. I had to be a multi-tasker, for example. Attending inter-departmental meetings, liaising with projects and those working in advocacy and accounts. It was also a good place for me to develop some key skills such as analytical and communications skills. We have to pitch our material at different audiences and in different ways. Donors can be individuals or businesses and a phone call has to be handled in a different way from a letter. The work also requires creativity – you really do have to think outside the box. Another important area I am developing is business awareness. Having to deal with budgets is the most obvious part of it. These are all going to be key skills as I progress with my Development career. The volunteering was really helpful with my course as well – particularly the module on NGO management.

Since I have taken the post of fundraising assistant I have also had opportunities to travel to our project areas for observation. When you are fundraising you really need to be able to speak with authority about the projects. I enjoy the diversity of the work – researching about relevant trust funds, brainwaving ideas with colleagues, investigating 'legacy funding' where we try and get people to remember us in their wills. I have learnt a lot quite quickly about this part of the sector. Not least about how vital it is for our work. The value of 'private' giving over relying on a small number of big funders and how this type of funding enables us to keep to our own agenda rather than being over influenced by the donor agendas.

While it is true that I didn't anticipate a career in fundraising and may not want to ultimately develop my career in that direction it really is valuable experience. I know a few friends who have been more 'purist' about the kind of work they want to do – and they are a bit stuck. While I feel I am inside the sector and developing my career.

I enjoy working with Health Unlimited. We are able to focus on remote areas and do not have to be so concerned with hitting the big 'impact' numbers that might be easier to do in more built up areas.

Most recently I have been working on a new 'work shadow' scheme that will offer people work experience on our projects in return for some fundraising. We have a

number of interesting projects that I think will make this an interesting proposition for people. For example we have started providing the health services on behalf of the Cambodian government. In Laos we are working with hill tribes and our work experience people will be able to visit these remote areas. In Rwanda we wrap up our health message in a popular radio soap and the work experience people will get a chance to be with our people when they are talking to local people in focus groups and observe recording and script writing sessions”

Jo Arponen