

Face to face learning in Mozambique

by Rebecca J Vander Meulen



Rebecca J Vander Meulen

Rosa Mariano, an active Life Team member from Zambezia Province, greets her neighbours.

The Diocese of Niassa in Mozambique works through 'Equipas de Vida' (which means 'Life Teams' in Portuguese) to share learning across communities. These teams are volunteer community groups of about 18 people. Teaching happens through a network of teachers and learners. First, a 'supporter' (or field worker) receives training on a certain topic. The supporter then goes from village to village, teaching the topic to the volunteers in the Life Teams who then divide into smaller groups and go from house to house, teaching everyone who is interested in learning.

There have been challenges in our work. At first, we used the word 'campaign' to describe our work but many people thought we were running a political campaign! Even when we stopped using the word 'campaign', some people were sceptical and didn't want to talk with the teachers.

But there have also been benefits to our model. Those who are learning tend to be

much more open to asking questions in the privacy of their own home than they would be in a large public forum. Also, it is a lot easier to pay attention when the person teaching you is sitting on your front veranda than it would be if the person teaching were in front of a large group.

One community which has benefited from our work is the village of Titimane,

which is about 30 kilometres outside of the city of Cuamba. The Life Team learnt about HIV and was eager to start teaching others. They worked together with the government nurse in Titimane to make sure their information was correct. He was encouraging of their work and they were able to visit most of the houses in their community.

The chief and the church leader in Titimane said that they had never had any face to face teaching on HIV before. They had heard some information about HIV on the radio but commented, 'you cannot ask questions to a radio!'

What has the impact been in Titimane? People now know that there is no risk of developing HIV simply by eating with people living with HIV. Some people have travelled to Cuamba to have HIV tests. The nurse is now doing advocacy himself on the issue, asking the district hospital in Cuamba to allow him to conduct the tests locally and for them to provide the materials he needs to do so. Those who have learnt, can now teach others!

In this issue

- 3 Bible study
- 4 Creating a culture of learning
- 5 Editorial
- 6 Better learning for better advocacy
- 8 Choosing to learn
- 10 Learning visits: seeing with your own eyes
- 12 Feedback from around the world
- 13 Letters
- 14 Learning at a distance in Guatemala
- 15 Resources
- 16 'University by the fireside' – taking learning into the forest

Footsteps

Footsteps is a magazine linking health and development workers worldwide. Tearfund, publisher of *Footsteps*, hopes that it will provide a stimulus for new ideas and enthusiasm. It is a way of encouraging Christians of all nations as they work together towards creating wholeness in our communities.

Footsteps is free of charge to grassroots development workers and church leaders. Those who are able to pay can buy a subscription by contacting the Editor. This enables us to continue providing free copies to those most in need.

Readers are invited to contribute views, articles, letters and photos.

Editors Alice Keen and Helen Gaw
Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington,
TW11 8QE, UK

Tel: +44 20 8977 9144
Fax: +44 20 8943 3594

Email: publications@tearfund.org
Website: www.tearfund.org/tilz

Language Editor Helen Machin

Editorial Committee Ann Ashworth, Sally Best, Mike Clifford, Steve Collins, Paul Dean, Martin Jennings, Ted Lankester, Melissa Lawson, Mary Morgan, Nigel Poole, David Scott, Naomi Sosa, Shannon Thomson

Design Wingfinger Graphics, Leeds

Printed by Bishops Printers on 100 per cent recycled FSC accredited paper, using environmentally-friendly processes.

Translation E Frías, A Hopkins, M Machado, W de Mattos Jr, S Melot, G van der Stoel, S Tharp

Subscription Write or email, giving brief details of your work and stating preferred language, using the addresses given above.

e-footsteps To receive *Footsteps* by email, please sign up through the TILZ website. Follow the 'Sign-up to e-footsteps' link on the homepage.

Change of address Please give us the reference number from your address label when informing us of a change of address.

Copyright © Tearfund 2013. All rights reserved. Permission is granted for the reproduction of text from *Footsteps* for training purposes provided that the materials are distributed free of charge and that credit is given to Tearfund. For all other uses, please contact publications@tearfund.org for written permission.

Opinions and views expressed in the letters and articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or Tearfund. Technical information supplied in *Footsteps* is checked as thoroughly as possible, but we cannot accept responsibility should any problems occur.

Tearfund is a Christian relief and development agency building a global network of local churches to help eradicate poverty.

Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington,
TW11 8QE, UK.
Tel: +44 20 8977 9144

Published by Tearfund. A company limited by guarantee. Registered in England No 994339. Registered Charity No 265464 (England and Wales) Registered Charity No SC037624 (Scotland)

Pass it on

Here is some advice if you are thinking of adopting the Life Team model in your area:

PRACTISE SAYING 'I DON'T KNOW'

Teaching people new things is exciting. Sometimes we have learnt so much that the people we are teaching think we know everything. At times, when we receive a difficult question and we don't know the answer, we just guess! But this can have very bad consequences.

FOR EXAMPLE: Imagine you are doing great teaching about HIV, making really complicated topics seem really simple. Then someone asks you a question about medication. You are not sure what the right dose is, but you guess. But unfortunately, your guess is not correct. Because you have gained the trust of the person you are teaching, she believes you. Perhaps she passes what you have said on to her uncle and he changes how much medication he is taking and gets sick. Or perhaps she learns from the nurse that what you said about the dosage was incorrect and so starts to doubt everything you taught her, even though everything else was completely correct.

So, if you're not completely sure about something, say 'I don't know!' It is much better to admit you don't know everything than to give someone false information.



And if you think you know where you can find the information, respond, 'I don't know, but I'll try to find out and get back to you!'

START WITH THE BASICS

Even when teaching advanced topics, make sure you do a good review of the basic topics first. We learn one step at a time. Building a house is a good analogy for building knowledge. If the foundation and the bricks at the bottom of the house are not firm, the new bricks on top will fall. It never hurts to do a clear review of basic topics before explaining the advanced ones. You can do so in a way that does not offend people's intelligence – for example, before explaining the simple topic, you can say, 'as you probably already know...'



A group of field workers and 'Life Team' members in Nampula Province, north-eastern Mozambique, use material from Tearfund's PILLARS Guides to pass on knowledge to others.

Rebecca J Vander Meulen

EXPLAIN WHY

Because people understand and remember new things much better when they understand WHY, do not just give information, explain why this is good advice.

FOR EXAMPLE: Instead of saying 'you should use cow manure for making compost' you can explain 'cow manure is good for making compost because cows have lots of good bacteria in their four stomachs, and these bacteria help break down the other components in the compost'.

FOCUS ON WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT

Do not overwhelm people with too much information in one session. Decide what is most important to communicate and focus on that before sharing more detailed knowledge. It is better for people to understand a few things well and remember them than to understand many things poorly and forget!

FOR EXAMPLE: When teaching about nutrition, make sure that people understand the importance of eating a variety of foods, including fruits and vegetables, before teaching something relatively detailed like the benefits of eating pumpkin seeds.

DON'T WASTE PEOPLE'S TIME

If they're not interested, they will probably not listen very well. Teach what is relevant and what people are interested in.

IF POSSIBLE, PROVIDE A MEMORY AID

If finances allow, giving learners pamphlets with key points can be very useful. It can help them to remember and to study the most important topics. These pamphlets can be very simple, ideally including pictures and written in the local language.

Rebecca J Vander Meulen is Development Coordinator at the Anglican Diocese of Niassa

BIBLE STUDY

Learning from Jesus

by Roland Lubett

Learning and education were highly valued in first-century Jewish society. Every village and community had a synagogue, which served as the place both of learning and prayer. The learning of the synagogue was considered to be an important part of its worship, as its schools functioned every day.

At the time, only boys received formal education. A synagogue usually had its own schools, where boys studied the Hebrew Torah until the age of 12 or 13. Studying meant committing to memory large amounts of material – Scripture passages and commentaries on Scripture written by leading scholars. After that age most boys left school and went to work but a few of the more promising students would stay at the school. The most able eventually left home altogether, in order to study with a famous teacher. A talented boy would seek out a Rabbi (meaning 'master') as his personal teacher and mentor.

The Rabbis had become those who explained God to the Jews. God was a mystery, but he could be observed and followed through the laws he had given in the Torah. These laws could be obscure, and it was and remains the job of the Rabbis to try to interpret them and decide what they mean for the community. Having such a role gave the Rabbis a very high status in Jewish social and political life.

We see from the Gospels how Jesus learnt, and how he taught. In many ways, Jesus taught like other Rabbis of his day. The Rabbi would gather around him a group of students or disciples, asking questions of them, and getting them to wrestle with the scriptural texts. When Jesus was a child, his anxious parents discovered him in the temple 'sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions' (Luke 2:41-51). This sounds remarkable, but in fact Jesus was simply doing what the Rabbi's students would do, discussing the scriptures to explore every possible understanding of the text.

The people were familiar with teachers: but Jesus was different. It was evident to everyone that he had something that the others did not.



Read Matthew 7:28-29 and John 3:1-2

- *What made Jesus' approach different?*
- *From your knowledge of Jesus' ministry as a whole, what methods of teaching did Jesus use to share his message?*
- *What can we learn from Jesus' approaches to improve our own teaching, modelling and discipling?*

There is much that we can learn from the way that Jesus taught. Jesus' life modelled his words; he lived what he preached. This contrasts with the scribes and Pharisees who were full of fine words but whose actions did not live up to them (see Matthew 23:1-4). Because he spoke the words the Father gave him to speak, he spoke with absolute authority, conveying the truth of God to all who heard him. The words of Jesus were life, and gave life to those around him. And they still give life to those of us who hear him speaking to our hearts. Often those who heard him were surprised by his teaching and it made them ask questions. Jesus also varied his style of teaching to suit the context. He had a gift for communicating with the ordinary person through stories.

Read Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-7; 2 Timothy 3:16-4:4

- *What do these passages say about teaching and learning?*
- *What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus today and to make disciples as Jesus did?*

Being a disciple is about learning from Jesus, learning to depend on him and to obey him. It is like being an apprentice who spends time with his master, observing him and learning to do what he is doing. As disciples of Jesus we are also called to disciple one another. Walking with Jesus, we become more like him and are more able to show one another what it means to have a 'life with Jesus'.

Roland Lubett is Lecturer in Development Studies at All Nations Christian College, Ware, UK. Website: www.allnations.ac.uk

Creating a culture of learning

by Astrid Foxen

The world is changing constantly and in order to respond to the many challenges facing the people we are seeking to serve as an organisation, we need to be continuously learning and adapting.

At Tearfund we have done a lot of thinking about how our learning and experience can help us to improve our organisational performance, and achieve our shared vision which is to see 50 million people being released from material and spiritual poverty through a network of 100,000 local churches. We are also committed to helping individuals to learn, grow and develop into the people God intended them to be.

How we learn

Children start to learn from the moment they are born, and often they learn in their own way. They learn by copying the behaviour of other children and adults. They learn from their parents and teachers, and by asking lots of interesting questions. They learn from their mistakes and failures, and by practising new skills and talents. They use their imagination and creativity to extend what they have learnt.

As adults we continue to learn in very similar ways. We can learn on our own or with others, but learning together is an



Listening to others at a workshop in Ivory Coast.

exciting opportunity and challenge for any organisation, church or community. Learning with others can help us to be more imaginative, to dream, innovate and create new things. Often, by sharing our ideas and the things that we are passionate about with others, as well as the things that we are worried about, we can develop a much better solution to our shared challenges.

Asking good questions

We are on a journey of discovery as we try new approaches to organisational learning. Groups of people learn in lots of different ways, but asking questions is an

important part of learning, both together and as individuals. It helps us to challenge ourselves and others about what we do and the way that we do it. Here are some of the questions we have been asking:

- What are the things that we need to know in order to have the greatest impact?
- What are the activities we need to get better at doing?
- Should we stop doing some activities?
- What are the problems or challenges that we are trying to solve?
- Where can we find the right information to help us?

Learning reviews

Learning reviews take place at the end of a project, event or piece of work. They usually gather together everybody who was involved in a project. However, in some cases, there might be more honest discussion without a manager or leader present.

A facilitator asks the group to think about two questions:

- What went well during the project, and what do you think should be repeated next time?

- What could have gone better, and what do you think should be improved on next time?

At the start of the meeting, the facilitator should remind participants that everybody has an equal voice, and that the meeting is not about blaming anybody. Participants need to feel confident that their point of view will be listened to, and that they will not be blamed for their mistakes or failures. They need to understand that the learning review is a safe space.

After the discussion, a list of recommendations can be identified. They need to be as specific as possible and include actions that can be taken if a similar project is planned in the future.

At the end of the meeting someone needs to agree to take ownership of the recommendations agreed, and store them in a place where others can find them. This will ensure that the organisation's work becomes more effective.

EDITORIAL



Alice Keen
Editor

I recently returned from a trip to Central Asia where I visited a silk factory. The secrets of making this beautiful material first travelled with the merchants along the famous 'Silk Road' from China in the 5th century AD, as one person taught another and production spread to new regions of the world. Having been transmitted across cultures, this knowledge was also transmitted across time, as generation after generation learnt, and then taught others, this skill.

On my visit, I learnt many things. I learnt about the history of this factory and where its products are sold around the world. I learnt about the process of tie-dyeing which creates the distinctive fabric of this region. I also learnt an amazing fact: each

silk worm weaves a cocoon which contains 1,000 metres of silk thread!

In one workshop, I talked to a master craftswoman who was weaving carpets. She had a young apprentice who had been with her for six months. It takes years to become a skilled carpet weaver but this young lady was on her way. She spent her time watching her teacher, practising her own skills and trying new and more challenging patterns. Along the way she made mistakes and undid them. Sometimes she noticed these errors herself and sometimes her teacher had to point them out. But little by little her work improved.

It made me reflect on the way we learn from Jesus as we work alongside him and watch his perfect ways. As his disciples, we need to have an attitude of learning; being

humble in heart, admitting our mistakes, asking for help and then living changed lives!

In this issue, there are articles on learning from others through visits (page 10) and stories and advice from the DRC (page 16), Mozambique (page 1) and Guatemala (page 14). I know that *Footsteps* readers are people who like to learn new things so I am sure that you will enjoy 'learning about learning'!

Alice

We have already chosen the next issue to cover in Footsteps: Maternal Health. Helen Gaw is well-placed to edit this edition having just returned to work after maternity leave. We will be sharing the Editorship from now on, so I will be back to do Issue 92.

- Who can help us?
- What do our staff need in order to help them do their jobs better?

Stimulating learning

We are experimenting with different approaches and tools to help us to answer these questions and learn:

- Learning reviews (see box on page 4 for more information).
- Coaching: one-to-one conversations that develop a person's skills, knowledge and ideas, to help them grow and be more effective in whatever they want to do. The coach does not need to have any specialist knowledge, they just need to ask good questions which help the person being coached to reflect and find solutions to their challenges.
- Communities of practice: groups of people who are interested in a particular topic and want to explore it together. They share learning, enable better decision-making, look ahead to opportunities coming in the future, make a space for innovation and create good practice information.

- Storytelling: sharing stories with each other which help to inspire, inform and spread innovation. They can be about a project, process, event or relationship.

We have chosen these approaches because they reflect the importance that we place as an organisation on strong relationships.

Learning from mistakes

We are also recognising that it is challenging to admit that we have made a mistake, or that we are finding it hard to do something. But the important thing is to learn from our mistakes and failures so that we can do things differently next time. We can learn to change what we do and how we act in the future by asking ourselves what worked well this time and what needs to be improved. We have used learning reviews to help us with this process.

If we choose not to learn from our mistakes, and therefore fail to change as an organisation, there are serious risks. Bad practices will be repeated and damage the quality of our work and relationships in the long term. Staff will become ineffective and demotivated, lacking the latest

knowledge to do their jobs. Ultimately, our impact as an organisation will be reduced.

Space to learn

Creating a culture of learning in an organisation requires introducing initiatives which will help people to reflect, discuss and make changes. Whatever the size or type of organisation, you can introduce opportunities for people to learn. You could start a team storytelling time where staff share something that happened that week and what they learnt. You could introduce learning reviews for all your projects. You could commit to learning as a group about a topic relating to your work. Be creative!

Learning in the workplace will help individuals and organisations to grow. At Tearfund we are enjoying the journey of discovery as we learn to learn more effectively!

Astrid Foxen is Head of Knowledge and Learning at Tearfund.

Better learning for better advocacy

by Joanna Watson

Advocacy is all about influencing the decisions, policies and practices of powerful decision-makers, usually in government. It is done in order to address the underlying causes of poverty, bring justice and support good development. Learning about an advocacy issue (eg access to healthcare or the right to graze animals on common land) is important because all advocacy work needs to be based on correct information, which comes from a source which those in power can also access.

There are many stages to an advocacy project. You need to start by identifying, researching and analysing the most appropriate issue to address through advocacy. Next you need to develop and implement an advocacy action plan. You can then monitor progress and review the impact you have made.

Usually, the success or failure of an advocacy initiative depends on the research and analysis you do before you start approaching decision-makers.

Case study from Nepal

Nepal has a national planning law that is meant to be inclusive, allowing local communities to contribute to local and district plans and budgets.

While central government is still able to develop its own priorities, the law provides a mechanism to empower local communities to assert their own priorities and have their concerns formally heard. Unfortunately, commitment to this process has been low. Many communities are not even aware of this opportunity and decisions are often made by a small self-selected group of politically influential men.

One Tearfund partner, United Mission to Nepal (UMN), heard about the law and



NGO staff interview young people about their HIV/AIDS awareness in Southern China.

It is like building a house: you need to build strong foundations to make sure it doesn't fall down! Therefore, it is important to ask:

- Have we identified the most relevant issue to advocate about?
- Have we done enough research and analysis?
- Have we learnt as much as we can about the issue before taking action?

Research and analysis

Often, knowledge about the issue can only be gained through research, which involves the focused collection of information and data, and analysis, which involves thinking about what this information and data mean for your work. What you learn will then help you to make a plan of action.

It is good to start by gathering information that is both quantitative (ie facts, figures and data) and qualitative (ie stories and

realised that it related to the work they were doing with local communities around issues of good governance. As a result, they did some research about the law, using the internet, contacting government departments, and asking other agencies what they knew about it. This helped them understand why commitment to the law was weak, and enabled them to think of ways to ensure its implementation.

They also decided to raise awareness about the law, in order to facilitate community input into the local planning process and to improve local government transparency and accountability. They did this through community meetings involving community

members and leaders, representatives from political parties and the media as well as through training workshops.

After learning about their right to participate in local planning, communities were supported to develop proposals which reflected community needs and priorities and to present them in accordance with the law. These participatory meetings ensured that all voices were heard and that the proposals selected truly represented the community's concerns. They also led to the community members, newly empowered, continuing the process themselves after the support had finished.

quotes from people affected by the issue). Research may be primary or secondary:

- **PRIMARY RESEARCH** comes from original sources. You get information directly from those involved in or affected by an issue. This can be through interviews, surveys or informal conversations.
- **SECONDARY RESEARCH** comes from trusted sources that have already gathered information on your issue. It is often called 'desk-based research' because it can be done using websites, books, reports or sets of statistics. These can be found on the internet or in newspapers as well as through libraries, universities, government departments, NGOs or research institutions.

Analysis involves asking questions about the information you have gathered and identifying patterns and themes which can easily be communicated to others.

Research questions

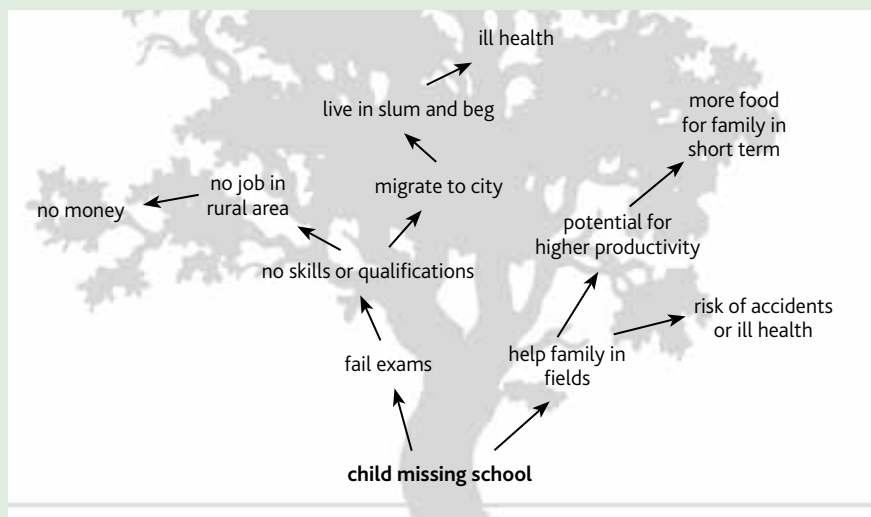
To help with your research, here are some questions to ask yourself:

- **EFFECTS:** How is this issue affecting poor and vulnerable communities?
- **CONTEXT:** How is the issue viewed where we are working? What is the wider situation in the country, in terms of social, cultural, economic, religious and environmental factors?
- **CAUSES:** What are the causes of the issue? What factors are making it worse?
- **ROLE OF GOVERNMENT:** What is the role of the government in the issue? What laws, policies and practices relate to it? What budget information is available in relation to it? What formal strategies, official action plans, statements of intent or draft proposals exist?
- **TARGETS:** Who has the power and authority to bring about change? Are they able to actually act on this issue? Do they agree they have responsibility for change? How will we access them? Are they open to discussion?
- **SOLUTIONS:** What do we think needs to be done to resolve the problem? What are we going to propose? Are our proposals realistic? What will we say if

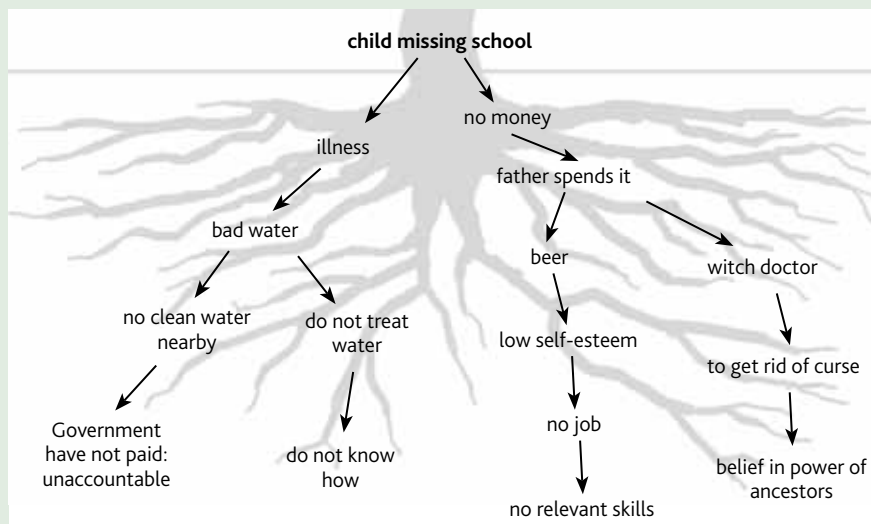
Problem tree

One powerful and popular visual mapping tool is the problem tree. It can be useful for analysing a core situation and all the related issues, including the causes of a problem, the factors making it worse, as well as the effects of a problem and how they are impacting poor and vulnerable communities. This can be developed into a 'solution tree', which is a valuable tool for working out what needs to be done, and what needs to be proposed, for a problem to be overcome.

Example of effects in a problem tree



Example of root causes in a problem tree



people disagree with us? Do we have a clear vision for change, and a clear plan for how change will come about?

- **INVOLVING OTHERS:** Who else is interested in the problem? If they are in favour of what we are asking, how can we work with them as allies? If they are undecided, how can we persuade them to help us? If they are opposed to what

we are asking, how can we address their objections?

- **RESOURCES:** What resources might be available (including money, equipment, volunteers, building space etc) to help us do our advocacy?

Joanna Watson is Advocacy Adviser at Tearfund.

Choosing to learn

We may think that we do not learn much in our everyday lives but when we take time to reflect on what we have learnt, it can be surprising and encouraging. It can also help us to plan learning goals for the future. Below is a worked example for you to copy and fill out, which will help you to reflect on the past and plan for the future. On the opposite page, we have suggested some alternative ways of learning which might help you to achieve your learning goals without expensive resources or formal training.

STEP 2

Think about how you learnt this skill or lesson. We learn in many different ways. There are some suggestions below for you to choose from or you can add your own.

STEP 1

Think of things you have learnt over the last month. They could be practical skills like family budgeting, recognising the symptoms of a disease, speaking a foreign language or facilitating a group discussion. Or perhaps a life lesson like how to handle difficult people or how to be effective in the workplace.

What I learnt	How I learnt it
1. How to use a bio-sand filter	from Footsteps
2. How to make a budget	through distance learning
3. How to do basic first aid	from a book
What I want to learn next...	How I could learn it...
1. How to cook more nutritious food for my family	from a friend from the internet from a television programme
2. How to facilitate group discussions	at a training course at church with a group of peer learners

STEP 3

Now, think of something you want to learn in the future. What do you want to understand better? What new skill would you like to have?

STEP 4

Think about how you can learn this skill or lesson. What resources or people can help you to learn what you want to know?



One-to-one learning

A lot of learning happens through a one-to-one conversation. It can involve someone passing on their knowledge and experience of an issue, or if they know very little about a topic, listening and asking questions which make you think about things in a new way.

These conversations may be unplanned and often happen informally. We listen to someone else and what they say makes us think and realise things we had not known before. If you find someone who is particularly good at passing on their own knowledge or is able to ask good questions that help you think for yourself, you could agree to meet regularly, perhaps once every couple of weeks for a few months. It is wise to agree what it is you want to learn through these more formal conversations so that you can reach your goal together.

Role-play

Children are very effective learners. Indeed, they are often better at learning than many adults! One of the reasons for this is that, as we grow up, we often stop using one of the most powerful learning mechanisms we have – play – because we think it is only appropriate for children. But play can be a very effective learning tool because you are practising a skill in an environment where there is little risk if it goes wrong.

FOR EXAMPLE: You could use role-play to 'practise' what you might do as a community if there are heavy rains and the river floods in your village. You use your imagination to pretend it has happened – and decide what needs to be done and by whom. After you have done this, assess how effective your actions and choices were: what could you have done better? What surprised you? This is learning through a combination of play and collective reflection.

Learning in a group

Is there a group of people in your community who want to learn about a specific topic? Or others across your region who want to explore a new area of learning? Examples of possible topics include issues such as children's rights, water and sanitation or farming practices. You could gather an informal group to share learning and encourage one another. You could meet regularly and take turns to share what you have been learning in order to benefit the whole group.



Skills sharing

You might have a skill which you can teach someone and someone else might have a skill you want to learn. Why not arrange to swap your skills? Perhaps you play the drums and you want to learn how to speak a local dialect. On a wider level, you might want to do a 'skills audit' of your community: ask who knows what and how can others learn from them? Look for someone who can teach you the specific skill you want to learn. Think about what skills you can offer to teach others. Start with a small number of sessions and see how the 'skills swap' develops.

With thanks to Tim Almond, Learning and Development Adviser, Tearfund.

Learning visits: seeing with your own eyes

Reading case studies can be a very useful way of improving our own work in the community. We can learn about innovation, copy successful models and adapt them to our context as well as being inspired by others' successes. But imagine being able to interact with a case study and ask questions! Many organisations are taking up the idea of 'learning visits' and choosing to travel in order to gain learning which will enrich their own work at home. 'Learning visits' can be international or in your own neighbourhood – the principles are the same. Below we have gathered a selection of types of visit with case studies from around the world.

National visits

WHO?

Organisations that work on similar issues in the same country visit each other to share knowledge.

CASE STUDY

In May 2011, Tearfund partners from across Chad received training on environmental sustainability where they learnt the importance of care for God's creation and how to improve food production using natural methods such as agroforestry and composting.

Eight months later, a follow-up visit was organised by the trainer for five partners from the north to see how the learning from the workshop had been put into practice by two partner organisations in the south. The group visited villages and fields to find out how learning from the workshop is passed on and applied to the farmers. Discussing practical details with the southern partners gave the northern partners insight and advice which enabled them to improve their own work.



Learning happens in the cabbage patch, as Chadian Tearfund partners visit a demonstration plot.

Individual visits

WHO?

Entrepreneurial individuals who have developed expertise in a field and who are willing to help others to apply this knowledge in a new context.

CASE STUDY

Joel Tembo, a member of Tearfund's Inspired Individuals programme, recognised a social need and developed a business solution to the growing problem of waste disposal in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo. He established a waste and services company whilst mobilising the church and community to engage with environmental issues. He visited Sierra Leone to share his knowledge and experience with local organisations and churches who were interested in waste management. Those in Sierra Leone were inspired by Joel's work, but what surprised both sides was how much Joel felt he learnt from the experience himself. 'Before I went to the field, I didn't see the link between environmental sustainability and development work on the ground. When I saw what was happening in the villages, I was very impressed', he commented.

Planning your own learning visit

BEFORE YOU GO

- 'Learning visits' will require careful budgeting and planning. A local visit will be lower cost than an international trip. If travel and accommodation are required, research the best options well in advance to reduce costs.
- Select the participants carefully, choosing those who will gain the most and be able to share and use their learning when they return.
- Match the projects and locations thoughtfully. The group from Myanmar gained more from their visit to Bangladesh because their environment and disaster types were similar (See 'Jump-start' visits on page 11.).
- Be clear about the purpose of your visit. What does the visiting group want to get out of their time?

Peer to peer evaluation visits

WHO?

Organisations that are willing to evaluate a peer organisation and be evaluated themselves in return.

CASE STUDY

Three organisations, two in India and one in Bangladesh, wanted to improve the quality of their Disaster Risk Reduction projects and decided to use evaluation as an opportunity to learn from one another. Not wanting to employ an expensive outside consultant, they decided to try a peer evaluation model.

To ensure that the evaluation was consistent, a set of questions were developed in advance and used in each evaluation. An evaluation team, containing members from all the participating organisations, spent two weeks visiting the project sites of each organisation in turn. By the end of the process, all three organisations had been evaluated and had had the opportunity to evaluate others, sharing learning and building relationships for the future.

'Jump-start' visits



A visiting group from Myanmar hear how villagers in Bangladesh prepare for disasters.

WHO?

An organisation that wants to start working on a new issue visits an organisation which already has experience in this field.

CASE STUDY

Following Cyclone Nargis, a group from Myanmar wanted to help communities to be better prepared for disasters. Bangladesh has frequent floods, and an organisation there with experience in

Disaster Risk Reduction offered to host a visit. The Myanmar group visited villages which had developed early warning systems, search and rescue drills and education programmes for local schools. They had even written folk songs and created dances to spread messages about preparing for disasters. Because the two groups worked in similar geographical contexts, the group from Myanmar were able to return home and start Disaster Risk Reduction projects in their own organisations.

- Communicate clearly with the hosts about your expectations. Agree together what you can learn from each other.
- Where possible, become informed about the area and the type of work before you visit. You will get more out of your time if you can ask good questions.
- Pray! Ask God to prepare you and your hosts for the visit. Ask others at home to support you by praying whilst you are away.

ON THE VISIT

- Allow enough time for each project site. Plan more time than you need in case there are unexpected challenges or opportunities.
- Make sure that you are able to talk with those doing work on the ground as well as project leaders and officials. Often the best

insights will come from discussion with project staff.

- Ask about the early stages of their work. You may see a mature project now but it is likely that a lot of lessons were learnt at the start. Finding out what went wrong, as well as about successes, is very important.
- Assign a member of your group to write down key names, facts, recommended resources and contact details. It is easy to forget these if you don't keep a record. You could also use a camera or a video recorder if one is available.

AFTER THE VISIT

- After each day of visiting, take the time to discuss with others what you have learnt and what new questions you have. What impressed you? What surprised you?

- Think about how you can apply these lessons to your own work. What might you change?
- Decide who you are going to share this new learning with and communicate it to them. When we are blessed, we should pass it on!
- Before the visiting team departs, it is good to ask everyone to write a list of things they would like to carry out when they return home. If individuals are sole representatives of an organisation, they can choose to share this with their colleagues.
- Keep in touch with your hosts, as well as others from your visiting group. You can continue to encourage one another and share your experiences of developing your project with your new found learning.

If you have experience of undertaking a learning visit, why not share it with other readers by e-mailing a short letter to publications@tearfund.org

With thanks to Liu Liu, Disaster Management and Environmental Sustainability Officer, and Andrew Bulmer, former Church and Development Adviser, Tearfund.

Feedback from around the world

One way of learning and improving your work is to ask for feedback from others. These can be people you serve, or your peers, who can give insight into areas you need to change and encouragement about what you are doing well. Asking for feedback requires humility and a choice to listen to and value other people's views, even if they are difficult to hear. But requesting structured feedback allows people to be honest with us and enables us to evaluate and make changes based on what we hear. This also prevents criticism being delivered to us in anger or when we are not expecting it.



At *Footsteps*, we are committed to producing a magazine which serves its readers well. We are always looking for ways to hear your views and welcome all suggestions of areas you want to have covered in future issues, articles you found helpful or difficult to understand and stories of how *Footsteps* is being used where you are.

In January 2012, we started a review of our mailing list in order to be good stewards of the resources which God has given us. We wanted to check that those receiving ten or more copies of the magazine still wished to

subscribe and were registered at the correct address. We also took the opportunity to gather information and views from our readership. Over the year we have sent out three questionnaires to bulk mailing recipients and have been analysing the responses. We are very grateful to those who have responded. Next year, we hope to ask for feedback from readers who receive fewer than 10 copies.

We asked people how they heard about *Footsteps*, how they used it now, who they distributed their copies to and whether

they promoted *Footsteps* to others. We also asked for any stories, photos or other feedback they would like to share. Below is a selection of the responses.

“ We work in the area of Agroforestry at our centre. Reading *Footsteps* and speaking to others, we train ourselves and transmit information to villages we are visiting each week. ”

BENIN

“ The magazine is seen as a useful tool by staff in the eight CHAL hospitals, as well as at the four nurses' training institutions. It is particularly used by nursing personnel who have direct contact with Health Centre Nurses, community health workers and members of the community. We therefore feel strongly that this is a useful tool to use in health service delivery, particularly because there is a strong focus on Christianity. ”

LESOTHO

“ The subjects are great. I work with indigenous people and since most of them know Portuguese, I can give the magazine to them with happiness, faith and optimism. ”

BRAZIL

“ Because of *Footsteps*, people have been inspired to harvest honey, and also to make small trailers for bicycles. ”

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

“ *Footsteps* has helped the community where I am working. Before we had cases of ringworm as a result of drinking dirty water from the pond and stream but now I cannot see anybody who is suffering from this problem because we now have clean water. The community was suffering from kwashiorkor* as a result of ignorance about how to cultivate vegetables, fruit etc, but now they have knowledge on how to prepare a balanced diet. ”

NIGERIA

* EDITOR'S NOTE: a form of severe malnutrition in young children due to an inadequate diet.

“ We really love *Footsteps* in our rural communities. Getting an emailed copy is like not getting it at all! I do have internet, but often can't download attachments. We are rural people. ”

KENYA

“ Each time I receive *Footsteps*, I first turn to the Resources page and write off for free books recommended there. This has helped me to equip a modern library where friends and students come to read and do research on different topics of their choice. Our problem is that it is expensive to access the internet and the high cost of laptops and computers have also discouraged us.

I thank you for the past years you have sent *Footsteps* to us. The type of English you use is very easy to read and understand. You understood that we live in an undeveloped area. The small salary I receive is not enough for me to eat, otherwise I would have helped by contributing towards *Footsteps* copies which are distributed in other countries. ”

NIGERIA

“ *Footsteps* has been a very useful paper, providing information that affects the communities where we work, especially about health and environmental issues. For example, *Footsteps* 87 had articles on tobacco and smoking which supported our 'no smoking' campaign both at our university and in the wider city. ”

PHILIPPINES

Please write to: The Editor, *Footsteps*, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE, UK
Email: publications@tearfund.org

Footsteps in practice

Footsteps has greatly improved the social welfare of our communities in Malawi because people are putting into practice items that they read in the magazine. The impact is very high. Many people come to our centre to ask questions such as 'Why does *Footsteps* not fund our organic farming project?'

The Organic Farming Centre
P O Box 199
Nkhamenya
Malawi

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: *We enjoyed reading about your work. You raise a good question, why doesn't Footsteps fund readers' projects? Footsteps does not give any grants to any organisations or individuals. Our vision is to provide information and inspiration to our readers through our magazine. We seek to share knowledge which will enable you to see transformation in resource-poor settings and to help you to connect with others across the world. On the Resources page, we recommend free or low-cost publications and websites which can help you with your work.*

Appropriate technology

It would be good if you could include more in *Footsteps* on appropriate technology. For example: crafts made from maize waste, details on how to build washing machines or the fabrication

Twitter is an online social networking service that enables its users to send and read messages written by those accounts which they choose to 'follow'. Each message is only 140 characters long. You might choose to follow a well-known person or one of your friends. You can 'tweet' via the internet or using a mobile phone. Twitter now has 140 million users who send 340 million messages (called 'tweets') every day!

To sign up visit www.twitter.com. *Footsteps* has now joined Twitter so once you have an address, you can follow us at @footstepseditor

of simple moulds for use in the village pottery etc.

Peace and blessings in Christ,

Reverend Jacob Lipandasi
BP 287
Cyangugu
Rwanda

EDITOR'S NOTE: *We would love to publish more on appropriate technology! If readers can provide information on any of Reverend Jacob's suggested topics, or other appropriate technology used in their community, we would welcome their input. Please write to the Editor as we hope to include a selection of responses in a future edition of Footsteps.*

Update on Leon the London Paralympian!

You may remember Leon Gaisli from *Footsteps* 88. Wonderfully, Leon was able to represent Haiti at the Paralympic Games 2012. Our Editor, Alice, was able to meet Leon at an event here in London and presented him with a copy of his *Footsteps* interview. We hope that many of you were inspired by the achievements of the disabled athletes who overcame stigma and physical challenges to participate in the Games.



Thomas Williams

Learning at a distance in Guatemala

Distance learning is a way of studying a course without attending classes in a fixed location. The course material and students' coursework may be sent by post, emailed or provided on an internet platform. Tutors at the academic institution usually provide support by telephone, letter or email. This form of learning is ideal for those in more remote settings or who want to study alongside their everyday work. Here Gengly Marisol Gutiérrez, a social worker at Acción Médica Integral (AMI) San Lucas in Guatemala, tells us about her experience.

WHAT COURSE DID YOU STUDY BY DISTANCE LEARNING?

The distance learning course was called 'Promoting Child Participation'.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO TAKE THIS COURSE?

I wanted to learn more and to bring myself more up to date about the subjects that are addressed in the course and which relate to my own work. I'm passionate about everything to do with childhood and adolescence, themes which are central to our work at AMI San Lucas.

I was also interested in knowing more about the participation of Latin American children and adolescents within their homes, in education, in the community and in national life as a whole.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

Through the course I was able to learn about work done with children and adolescents in different countries and to think about how these experiences might be applied in my own country. I also gained up-to-date knowledge about children's rights, especially relating to regional authorities and mechanisms used to implement these rights in Latin America.

Amongst other things, I learnt that children (both boys and girls) and adolescents are not only protected by the law, as we had always assumed, but they also have rights. This confirmed to me that participation is a right for all.

I learnt about the way children and adolescents participate in advisory councils and I was able to reflect on 'adult to child'



and 'child to child' relationships. I looked at public policy on participation and the process of monitoring this participation. All the subjects were very interesting and practical.

WAS IT DIFFICULT BEING FAR AWAY FROM YOUR TEACHERS?

This was not difficult, really. I loved the use of technology, it was so practical. However, on a few occasions there were small problems with the digital platform. The communication with my tutors was good and it worked smoothly. They facilitated the course pretty well and I definitely learnt a lot from them because they are professionals with a lot of experience in this area of work.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE WHO IS THINKING OF DOING A DISTANCE LEARNING COURSE?

I would advise them to do it! It is very practical but you do need to have the right attitude: a willingness to make a commitment and a sense of responsibility in order to complete the course. It can be so easy to accumulate work and then not do it efficiently! It is a question of being conscientious and of taking full advantage of the technology and resources available.

Gengly Marisol Gutiérrez studied by distance learning through the Inter-American Children's Institute (Instituto Interamericano del Niño, la Niña y Adolescentes) www.iin.oea.org

EDITOR'S NOTE: *It is very important that you check that an institution is trustworthy before signing up for a course. Unfortunately there are dishonest institutions who will take money but fail to provide a course or accreditation on graduation. To help you to avoid such schemes, choose an institution which is accredited by a regional or international body. If possible try to talk to current or past students to hear about their experiences.*



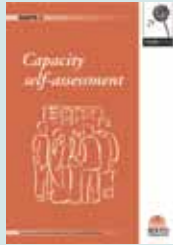
A view over the Guatemalan city of Antigua.

TILZ website www.tearfund.org/tilz Tearfund's international publications can be downloaded **free of charge** from our website. Search for any topic to help in your work.



ROOTS 3: Capacity self-assessment

Developed in 2003, this tool enables organisations to gain an overall impression of their capacity, giving a picture of the stage of their development and providing insight into their current and potential impact.



Although modelled on other assessment tools, it aims to be specifically relevant to Christian development organisations. The three modules cover 'internal organisation', 'external linkages' and 'projects'. *ROOTS 3* will help readers to highlight positive aspects of their organisations so that they can be encouraged and affirmed. This tool will also draw attention to those areas needing improvement and a learning plan can be developed. The tool may not be relevant for every situation, so organisations might want to adapt and improve the tool according to their individual needs.

PILLARS Guides

PILLARS Guides provide practical, discussion-based learning on community development. The Guides are designed for use in small community groups such as youth groups, church groups, women's groups, farmer groups and literacy groups. A trained leader is not required, just one literate person. The Guides aim to increase the knowledge, skills and confidence of group members by drawing out and building on existing knowledge and

experience, and empowering members to take charge of their own development. There are between 20 and 24 sections in the Guides. Each section has a double page containing information on the topic, an illustration and a number of discussion questions or practical activities. The Guides also contain Bible studies designed for group learning and discussion. Topics include 'Encouraging Good Hygiene and Sanitation', 'Seeking Justice for All' and 'Agroforestry'.

ROOTS 3 and *PILLARS* Guides are available to download free of charge from our Tearfund International Learning Zone website (www.tearfund.org/tilz) or by requesting hard copies by contacting the Editor.

Resource Centre Manual – How to set up and manage a resource centre

produced by Healthlink Worldwide
ISBN 0907320570

This manual provides guidance to organisations working in primary health care and related fields who are setting up resource centres of any size. It contains practical information on all aspects of setting up and managing a resource centre, from planning, fundraising and finding a suitable location, to collecting and organising materials, developing information services and monitoring and evaluating the work of the resource centre. It assumes that most readers will use manual systems for



Calling all libraries!

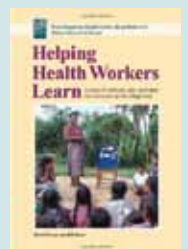
Here at Tearfund, we are looking to donate some of our excess back copies of *Footsteps*, along with selected additional publications, to libraries which are serving the needs of their communities across the world. If you would like to apply for a selection of free copies, please write to the Editor at the usual address and include contact details of your library or resource centre, and an explanation of how the copies would be used. We will require you to fill out and return a feedback form after you receive the resources.

organising information, but also explains how computers can be used in resource centres including email, internet and databases. The content includes practical information, checklists, tips, examples and illustrations, which can be used for reference or training. Price: £5 plus delivery.

Helping Health Workers Learn

by David Werner and Bill Bower
ISBN 9780942364101

Helping Health Workers Learn is a collection of methods, aids and ideas. It is written in clear English, for use by village instructors who may have limited formal education. Hundreds of drawings and photographs emphasise the key points. The focus of the book is educational rather than medicinal. It covers learning through doing, group discussion, and practice in solving problems; role playing, storytelling, games and other ways to bring learning to life; learning in the community and building on people's traditions, experience and strengths. Cost: £20 plus delivery.



Resource Centre Manual and *Helping Health Workers Learn* can be ordered by writing to TALC (Teaching-Aids at Low Cost), PO Box 49, St Albans, Herts, AL1 5TX UK or by emailing info@talcuk.org

Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.com)

Wikipedia is 'a multilingual, web-based, free-content encyclopedia project' which is produced by allowing individuals to contribute their own knowledge and learning to the 22 million articles currently online. Anyone can write and make changes to Wikipedia articles, providing they act within the guidelines set by Wikipedia, enabling the content to be kept up to date as new information becomes available. Started in 2001, Wikipedia now has 77,000 active

contributors, who are regularly editing articles in 285 languages. Due to the open editing policy, articles may not always be accurate, particularly if they have been created recently and are still to be reviewed by others. Despite this, Wikipedia can be a useful source of information on a wide range of topics and provide links to other websites on a similar theme.



'University by the fireside' – taking learning into the forest

Jacques decided he wanted to enrol to study Development Studies at the University of Shalom (meaning 'peace' in Hebrew) in Bunia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

His mother Evelyn was very sceptical about his course of study, saying 'this is no use to us'. Things were very hard for her, particularly living with her husband. He was a mechanic and his life was all about cars. She had often asked him whether they could build a house but he had refused, preferring to spend their money on cars.

Out of the classroom

Jacques enrolled on the course. The University of Shalom uses a Church and Community Mobilisation approach as well as theological and practical reflection. As part of this he took part in an 'internship' of 35 days, living with a community of forest people. In this approach, small groups of students live with a community. They bring no food or water with them and walk nine kilometres to get there. They sleep on dried banana leaves, eat basic forest food and are eaten by the many insects! They work alongside their hosts, dance with them and hold 'University by the fireside'

discussions in order to reflect with the communities about their situation.

This forest community in Atalahulu has encountered a lot of discrimination so it was very important that they were shown love as the students lived with them. After discussion, the community prioritised their needs. Firstly, they needed access to water (the clean water source was nine kilometres away). Secondly, they needed a new canoe to replace the worn out ones. Thirdly, they wanted a school for their children.

Dreams become reality

Over a period of time the community were mobilised to protect a water source, using a small grant of US\$85 from the University to transport some cement and a technician to the site. All the materials and labour costs were provided by the community. The result was clean water nearer to the village.

They then built a canoe which they all pulled five kilometres to the river. It was the largest canoe they had ever built, able to carry 25 people. This project also brought together two estranged communities from opposite sides of the river.

The forest people's children found it difficult to go to school because it was not in their village. When they could, they travelled there for a month at a time. However, with the new sense of ownership, the community built a school from local materials, including a door which they used as a blackboard. During the day it is a blackboard and at night the owner collects it and uses it as a door!



Jacques and his mother, Evelyn, near the home they built in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Changed thinking

Jacques reflected on this experience: 'We learnt principles for development from the Bible and saw results. People understand it when it comes from the Bible. I was joyful seeing the forest people having clean water.'

Jacques decided to practise these same ideas with his family. He helped his father to reflect on the challenges of not owning a house, by showing him how much he was spending on rent (US\$80 per month). Eventually his father was convinced and sold a car, which enabled them to buy a plot and build a house. His father wanted to remove the banked soil from the house to make the plot flat. Jacques suggested using this soil to make bricks.

Sharing with his father what he has learnt through his course has improved their relationship. His mother, Evelyn, says 'I was amazed by all these changes. Now I want Jacques' sister to study Development too!'

*With thanks to the University of Shalom, Bunia.
Website: <http://unishabunia.org/>
Email: admission@unishabunia.org
Telephone (+243) 99 85 07 371*

