Brookes credit rates Redr courses

Three of the training courses offered by the specialist NGO RedR - the Register of Engineers for Disaster Relief - can now be attended for academic credit, following an agreement reached last September with CENDEP. The courses are Managing People in Emergencies, Managing Projects in Emergencies and the Certificate in Security Management.

Under the agreement, participants who achieve a pass on the courses will be able to transfer the credits they earn towards CENDEP’s Masters degree in Development and Emergency Practice.

Martin McCann, RedR’s Chief Executive said, ‘This is an exciting partnership and one that will have a great impact on both national and international aid workers.

It’s excellent that the high quality of RedR courses has been acknowledged and demonstrates the growing emphasis the sector places on the acquisition of recognised knowledge and skills.’

Oxford Brookes’ Vice Chancellor Janet Beer said, ‘As a University we are proud of the contribution the Centre makes to humanitarian issues as so many of our students who complete the Masters go on to hold senior positions in development and emergency organisations around the world. This innovative partnership means people working in crisis situations will have access to high quality University level training.’

For further information on REDR visit www.redr.org.uk

Conflict and humanitarianism: new distance learning PG Certificate

From January 2010 Oxford Brookes University and the Université Paris XII Val de Marne, France will be offering for the first time an online Postgraduate Certificate award in Humanitarianism and Conflict.

The ‘PG Cert’ aims to link practice with theory through sharing experience, discussion with key practitioners and critical reflections. The programme’s originator, Dr Brigitte Piquard, says the programme ‘will offer a unique educational opportunity to the NGO and relief community, responding to the needs of expatriate and local practitioners from all parts of the world.’

The intention is that a forum will be created wherein students will discuss, challenge each other and search together for best practices. The programme will be based on the concepts, models and experiences represented in both French and English humanitarian practices and understandings.

Dr Piquard says, ‘The creation of an academic space for a true dialogue between these two understandings of humanitarianism is one of the main challenges of the humanitarian community and of the higher education institutions willing to reflect on it.’

The programme, which is believed to be the first of its kind, will develop a curriculum jointly designed, taught and evaluated by both universities. The programme will be delivered in French and English.
DEP students first beneficiaries of Jon Snow Scholarship

DEP students will be the first beneficiaries of the newly created Oxford Brookes Jon Snow Scholarship, set up by Jon Snow (photo right), the former Chancellor and presenter of Channel Four News. The scholarship of £5000 will be made available to a full time UK/EU student applying for the programme.

Part and full scholarships were awarded to five students from the first cohort. As well as being eligible for general scholarships offered to all Oxford Brookes students, two scholarship schemes specifically set up for DEP are the Martin Wilkinson Fund for International Scholarships, and the Brookes Africa Scholarship Scheme (BASS).

For further information on scholarships visit the Brookes website, www.brookes.ac.uk.

FROM THE TSUNAMI TO KABUL

San Kaipainen writes, I completed the taught part of the Development and Emergency Practice course in 2006-07. I do not exaggerate when saying that this year and what followed was truly life changing. I chose the topic for my thesis early; this was dealing with temporary and permanent structures in tsunami affected areas in Tamil Nadu, India.

I went to India for six weeks to work for the NGO the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI), but instead ended up staying for nine months. My interest towards the subject and related subjects grew over the last two years, and I returned to India and Sri Lanka many times since my first visit doing intensive research. I met many people on the way, whom I am still cooperating nowadays with my current projects.

As I wanted to get more involved with construction projects in conflict torn areas, I decided to move to Afghanistan in October 2008 and work for a local construction company. Although during my travels I have seen many things and heard many heart breaking stories, the reality of Afghanistan is still something quite hard to digest.

This country has so much beauty, so many rich traditions and skills in it, that the perception received through media does not do it justice. And I want to highlight the fact that this country is trying hard to get back on its feet. However, I cannot underestimate the constant fear people are living in, and the terrifying unpredictability that shadows everyday life.

I will remain here for at least another year and enjoy the privilege of working with the locals.

This year’s cohort of students on the Masters degree in Development and Emergency Practice (DEP) comprises 47 students from 21 countries - Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Iran, Italy, Lebanon, Malaysia, The Netherlands, Scotland, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, St Lucia, Sudan, Spain, USA and Zimbabwe.

The cohort comprises a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, including aid workers, search and rescue specialists, architects, a vet, journalists, military officers and a UK Magistrate.

Ian and Monica Verhaeghe, a married couple from North Carolina, USA joined the programme together after Monica spent six months working in an orphanage in Mozambique. Georgios Mitis left the Red Cross after 11 years working in emergency and relief situations that included Darfur, Iraq, Angola and Afghanistan. Rebecca Chestnutt spent ten years with the American Red Cross working in a variety of situations including the response to Hurricane Mitch.

Lt Col Hani Alnabulusi took secondment from the Military in Saudi Arabia, working in crowd dynamics including crowd control at Mecca. James Salt is also on secondment from his post as Captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps of the British Army, and saw two tours of duty in Iraq.

Sheila Kyobutungi grew up in Uganda and took a degree in the USA before going on to work with the development economist Jeffrey Sachs in New York. Sheila applied for DEP because of its practical nature. Margaret Tabu from Sudan grew up in Uganda and applied for DEP after studying at Makerere University.

Eric Meldrum joined the programme as a career change after 10 years in the Police Force, serving latterly as a Detective Constable within CID.

John Harvey, a practicing vet who is taking the programme part time, joined DEP after working in South Africa and Peru.

Renny Gye is also taking the part-time route, fitting study around her five children, her role as a local Magistrate and her work on the board of a microfinance NGO. She was attracted to the DEP programme because it provided an opportunity to gain a thorough understanding of many different aspects of development, humanitarian work and human rights.

DEP cohort 2008-09
COMMUNICATING WITH BENEFICIARIES IN EMERGENCIES: HOW CAN INTERNATIONAL AID ORGANISATIONS IMPROVE?
by Alessandra Vilas Boas

This dissertation investigates the challenges faced by international aid organisations in communicating with the beneficiaries of their emergency projects, and suggests ways in which these challenges can be overcome. Understanding the communication process is, however, not enough. Aid organisations are often subject to a number of pressures coming from a variety of sources, which become practical obstacles to optimal communication with beneficiaries. This research describes these challenges and concludes by proposing ways to overcome them, thus creating space for communications in the field to thrive.

THE LAST OF THE MAASAI IN NORTHERN TANZANIA? REDEFINING CULTURAL IDENTITY
by Janine FitzGerald

The young Maasai are at the centre of the Maasai’s transition in cultural identity as traditional cultural practices are abandoned in ‘modern ways’ are embraced. This dissertation analyses and redefines the term ‘cultural identity’ and shows how expressions of culture, education and vulnerability are integral to the creation of cultural identity. The meaning of ‘Masaisness’ and ‘being Maasai’ is addressed by considering the perception of these notions from the view of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’.

IN THE CLASS BUT ON THE MARGINS OF SOCIETY: GIRLS’ EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN
by Lucy Strickland

This study, based on primary and secondary research into girls’ education in Afghanistan, is an exploration into complexity which seeks to understand a dynamic context through an appreciation of the linkages and interconnectedness of the whole. As a nation emerging from many years of conflict, the challenges facing Afghanistan’s education system are overwhelming. The gendered constraints to education for Afghan girls is equally a concern, as girls sit on the margins of society and culture which inhibit them from full participation in education. To these ends this study seeks to uncover some of the complex social and institutional layers that impact girls and their schooling.

SMOKE AND MIRRORS: DOES THE PRESENCE OF AID AGENCIES IMPROVE THE SAFETY OF CIVILIANS IN CONFLICT?
by Rachel Hastie

This study focuses on one particular element of protection – the protective value of presence – in order to analyse whether the mere presence of INGOs can help improve civilian safety, and if so in what way, and in what circumstances. It is a widely held view that aid agencies that their presence alone decreases the threats against civilians, and the UN strategy for humanitarian response in Darfur was built on the premise that presence protects. However little research has been undertaken to substantiate this belief.

EMERGENCY RELIEF LOGISTICS: EVALUATION OF DISASTER RESPONSE MODELS
by Line Tabbara

In the War of Art, Sun Tzu (1772) observes that ‘the line between order and disorder lies in logistics’. The logistical response to the Asian tsunami in December 2004 revealed the fragility and inadequacy of many logistics processes. High volatility is part of complex situations, but other factors from external actors can increase this complexity, including poor mandates in agencies, inadequate capacity in aid provision, or even weak diplomacy which may lead to failure. This dissertation agrees with Sun Tzu’s statement, indicating the need for early attention to recovery after an emergency.

THE KENYA FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION POLICY (FPE); AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION IN MIGWANI DIVISION
by Paul Kenya

On 6 January 2003, Kenyan children started the day with vigour and hope. Primary education was free and all that was required was for every child regardless of age to walk to a school near to where they lived. This study comes almost five years after the implementation of the FPE and when the country is ready to go to the polls again. While a lot of work has been written on the new FPE, it has been argued that most of it was done either too early in the implementation or was politically motivated to give the new government some credit.

Visit to CENDEP website for information on accessing dissertations.
Making movies and writing plays: the ‘unconventional dissertation’ route

Since 1992 over 260 dissertations have been submitted by students towards attaining the Masters degree. Several of these have followed DEP’s ‘unconventional’ route: that is, as an alternative to writing a piece of work of 12-15 000 words, a student can submit a creative ‘product’ which will count towards the final award.

Previous unconventional dissertations have included the documentary Born on the street (cover, right) submitted by Stefano Archidiacono in 2008. The 38 minute film tracks Stefano’s research concerning street children in the Bolivian city of Cochabamba, and includes interviews with street children as well as NGO workers and government officials.

In 2006 Nigel Pearson, a GP, submitted a play called Chaos Theory. The play, written in three acts, focuses on the events of Bunia Ituri within the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2003 as seen through the eyes of humanitarian workers. In 2003 Christine Foster designed development resource education materials for schools in Rwanda. The work, which included a video and accompanying text, was called Rwanda: Land of a Thousand Hopes.

Violence and space

Brigitte Piquard writes. Violence and space is a topic of great interest for practitioners and academics. It can take various forms - physical, psychological and symbolic - and have diverse social meanings for different disciplines. Violence can touch spaces either by destruction, confiscation, or inaccessibility. While extensive literature exists on destruction, division and emergency shelter, almost nothing has been written on how people inhabit disputed or disrupted spaces in a violent environment. How do people cope with spatial change? How do people respond to crises of affected space? What is the relevance of notions of urbicide and spacioide? What are the physical spaces/memorials that mark the aftermath of violent acts? How do our memories of violent events affect our work?

These themes among others were addressed on October 19th, during the first event organised by Brookes’ research group DOSStier (Discourse on Space and Society) and will constitute some of the main research lines to be taken forward.

Unit D: homelessness

Unit D is offered to undergraduate architecture students as a design route to explore issues relating to development and emergency practice. Melissa Kinneir, the unit leader, writes. This year we explored homelessness in Oxford through a series of design projects which focus on vulnerability and what this means to people sleeping rough. Students deconstructed mattresses to reconstruct products aimed at reducing vulnerability, and worked in small groups to raise awareness about homelessness.

Tutors and visitors

Core staff and module leaders

Dr Rod Burgess, Senior Lecturer, School of the Built Environment
Bethanie Cunick, Programme Administrator
Emeritus Professor Nabeel Hamdi, urban shelter and action planning expert
Dr Mohamed Hamza, specialist in natural disasters and vulnerability
Dr Brian Phillips, working with Amnesty International and editor of the Journal of Human Rights Practice
Dr Brigitte Piquard, Senior Lecturer in International Humanitarianism
David Sanderson, CENDEP Director, Principal Lecturer in Post Emergency Design
Leda Stott, expert in cross-sector partnerships. Editor of the journal Partnership Matters

Global tutors

Belinda Cowden, Director of Institutional Housing, Polokwane Municipality, South Africa
Giuseppe Damiano, Director, Rapid-Latinoamerica, Peru
Patama Roornarwitt, founder, Community Architects for Shelter and Environment (CASE), Thailand
Anshu Sharma, Programme Director, SEEDS, India

Regular contributors

Peter Apps, political risk correspondent, Reuters
Richard Carver, human rights specialist
Margie Buchanan-Smith, Research Fellow at the Overseas Development Institute, London
Visiting Professor Ian Davis, disaster management and shelter expert
Simon Fisher, conflict specialist
Dr Caroline Sweetman, gender specialist, Oxfam

Visitors

Kitty Arie, Emergency Officer, Save the Children UK
Sue Cavana, CEO, SOS Sahel
Leonard van Duijn, security management specialist
Prof Tom Downing, climate change expert, Oxford University
Dr Alex Frediano-Apsani, urban specialist, UCL, London
Usha Kar, CEO, Africa Now
Martin Knops, psychologist, advisor for Oxfam
Sean Lowrie, humanitarian specialist
Richard Luff, Strategic Project Manager, Oxfam
Col Marty Slade, Regional Clinical Director, British Army
Dr Hugo Slim, conflict specialist, Corporates for Crisis
Dr. Petra Tschahert, Assistant Professor, Pennsylvania State University
Dr John Twigg, Research Fellow, Benfield Hazard Research Centre at UCL

Building relevance: post disaster shelter and the role of the building professional

In September CENDEP will hold a one day conference concerning the role of built environment professionals - in particular architects - in post disaster shelter. The conference is being organised jointly by CENDEP and the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC).

While natural disasters are growing, and humanitarian agencies are increasingly being called upon to provide good shelter responses, the engagement of the architectural profession is surprisingly low. To these ends the event will address the question, ‘how can architects add value to post disaster shelter construction?’

The conference will be review the state of the art in post disaster shelter and discuss the current roles of shelter practitioners currently working in the sector. Finally it will debate what role is there for architects, if any. Around thirty participants are being invited from NGOs, universities, intergovernmental agencies and specialist think-tanks. The conference will aim to identify realisable next steps concerning education, training and services to the shelter sector.
Visions of our common humanity: ten awakenings

7th HUMAN RIGHTS MUSIC & FILM FESTIVAL

Shami Chakrabarti, centre, with DEP students at the opening night at the festival

Bethanie Cunwick writes, Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty and Chancellor of Oxford Brookes University, opened the DEP 2009 Human Rights Film and Music Festival and introduced the screening of the South African film Between Joyce and Remembrance (Director, Mark Kaplan). This was followed by a lively performance from the Afro-Cuban London Lucumi Choir.

The opening night also featured an exhibition of photography from the award-winning charity Photovoice who support social change for marginalised communities.

One of the evenings focused on faith and tolerance featuring the film The Imam and the Pastor which documents two men, Imam Ashafa and Pastor Wuye, who played a leading role in negating a peace accord in Northern Nigeria, and how they now work together bridging religious conflicts that have killed thousands.

The screening was followed by a discussion led by leaders from the Christian, Muslim and Jewish faith communities in Oxford.

The festival was held over 10 days in a number of venues throughout Oxford, including the Oxford Synagogue, Oxford Union and the Asian Cultural centre.

In 2009 the event also included lunchtime discussions which included a talk by Ben Rodgers, Founder of Change for Burma, about Burma’s crimes against humanity, and the Rev. Theodore Ngoy who brought to light some of the causes of the war in Congo.

Christian Aid introduced the screening of the award-winning film The Greatest Silence: Rape in Congo (Director, Lisa F Jackson). Shot in the war zones of the Democratic Republic of Congo, through inspiring and chilling interviews with activists, peacekeepers and soldiers, the film shatters the silence that surrounds the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war.

An evening of short films was held at Brookes’ Gipsy Lane campus, featuring Oscar winning to independent shorts from Italy, Iran, Guatemala and India. Vice-Chancellor Professor Janet Beer, David Woodman from Roehampton University, Lord Mayor Susanna Pressell, Councillor Bob Price, Emily Smith from Modern Art Oxford and Amnesty International representative Kate Shell formed a jury panel and awarded best short film to Sadaf Faroughi’s film about the first female bus driver in Tehran, Feminin Masculin.

Other screenings included Iranian Based animation Persepolis (winner of the Festival’s Audience Award), US blockbuster Rendition with Reese Witherspoon and Jake Gyllenhaal, the classic film Footloose starring Kevin Bacon, Academy Award-winning documentary Born into Brothels and Ken Loach’s immigration focused film It’s a Free World.

The festival is an annual event, run each year as an initiative of the students from CENDEP who organise the event and secure the films, speakers and performers.

The festival is free of charge and open to all. Films are usually donated by directors and film makers who support the event’s aims.

Food insecurity, Southern Sudan

Val Encomio (CENDEP, 2004/05) writes, I am currently serving as the Programme Manager for Agriculture and Enterprise with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Southern Sudan. Before coming to Southern Sudan I worked with the American Refugee Committee in Sierra Leone in agribusiness development.

What I am finding very challenging in Southern Sudan, especially in the rural areas, is the high degree of food insecurity. Though having tried to make good use of my experience in agriculture, I have found larger issues of migration instilling a sense of uneasiness with some of the communities working with us.

As for what I do, I manage a modest portfolio of seed production projects and a women’s group-lending scheme. Both projects highlight major challenges currently faced here, namely food production, which is barely at the capacity of what could be produced here given the country’s rich agricultural potential; and, the other is the limited flow of trade and business activity.

Adam Guy, from 2007/08’s cohort, writes, For my dissertation last year I wrote about some of the effects that stigma has on HIV and AIDS development projects in South Africa. After finishing the course I went to South Africa and started an internship with the NGO CARE. I have been based in their country office in Johannesburg where I have been involved in a number of different tasks.

In South Africa, CARE runs projects with priorities such as Water and Sanitation, and HIV and AIDS. The project that I have had most involved with is called DELL (Deepening and Expanding Local Links). With this project CARE focuses on settlements and townships within Free State where they facilitate and develop smaller local community based organisations. This particular project has an emphasis on Orphans and Vulnerable Children. The community organisations provide services such as weekly workshops where the children can come and play with the care givers, help with medical and social issues, and basic needs such as food and school uniforms.

In my time with CARE I have learnt a huge amount about how a country office for a large NGO works as well as how they interact with their local partners. I aim to use this experience as the starting point for my career in development.

David Lammy MP, the British Government’s Minister of State for Higher Education, on a visit to Oxford Brookes with DEP students (from left) Monica Verhaeghe, Margaret Tabu and Judith Homadi Mensah.

Bangladesh’s Grameen Bank founder and Nobel Prize winner Mohammed Yunus with Monica and Ian.
my head. We have cowboys here (sans chaps and spurs), and cattle rustling, and a cultural obsession with barbeque and large hats. We have chiefs, rather than sheriffs, gangs of young warriors and raiders, and sparse settlements with only tentative connections to the central government.

It’s hot and dry. We have wide open plains covered in scrubby bushes and dry grass, and mountains are scattered like giant gumdrops and candy corn in the distance.

I am also slowly settling in to my position at the Kotido Peace Initiative office. Recently we had a huge community meeting with the lik tribe north of here, who are mostly nomadic pastoralists and bee-keepers, but now they want their children to get an education. So, as an inter-tribal peace building project, we’re helping sponsor their children in school.

Then, last week we went to the Turkana region of Kenya for a meeting with all the highest level politicians in our inter-connected regions (Karamoja and Turkana consider themselves of the same ancestry).

The discussion at the meeting centred around cattle rustling, disarmament, and cross-border peace programmes. It was encouraging to see the concern of these high level politicians for peace, but also discouraging to see how they failed to reach a consensus on what should be done. Our meeting was honoured by the appearance of the Kenyan Minister for Labour. That was impressive.

Then we had a meeting in Moroto under the title of ‘Training of Trainers’. We are training local political and community leaders on how to monitor, assess, and facilitate development and disarmament in their local sub-counties.

The training is aimed at enabling participants to train elders, traditional leaders, and the wider community.

Kelly Fisher (above photo right), originally from the USA, attended DEP in 2007-08. Towards the end of the programme she organised a placement in Karamoja in north eastern Uganda. Here Kelly writes about some of her experiences.

It’s hard to believe I’ve been in Karamoja now for four months. To be honest I just am now starting to really appreciate it. Culture shock and homesickness are slowly fading and relationships are growing stronger, along with my patry, but good intentioned, language skills.

I recently received my Karamojong name from two young women who have become good friends of mine. They named me Nakiru, which means ‘rain’, because I came in November, just after it had rained. Living here is a little like living back in the days of the wild west in America. Sometimes I expect a tumbleweed to blow across the road and spaghetti western music plays in

Rod Burgess led the 2009 field trip to Peru, linking with several NGOs in Zambia concerning urban planning.

Richard Carver advised UNDP on improving the effectiveness of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) in several Central and East European countries, and was guest lecturer at Harvard and Nottingham universities on NHRIs and international law. He was also an author of the report of the Eminent Jurists Panel on Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism and the Rule of Law.

Belinda Cowden (Global tutor, South Africa) was appointed by South Africa’s Department of Arts and Culture to develop a policy on cultural planning and how to encourage cultural identity within human settlements with specific reference to housing projects. She continued to work at the Municipality, where she works, overseeing the development of single men’s hostels.

Giuseppe Damiano (Global tutor, Peru) was engaged in the development of a search and rescue initiative with a team of 25 trained volunteers, developing a capability to deploy in the Latin American region within eight hours to respond to major natural disasters. He led a community risk management programme, working with a team of 20 people that worked with 21 rural communities in the Ancash region. The programme carried out training with 500 community resource members and 200 students of five schools in local disaster response and management.

Simon Fisher trained DFID conflict advisers on peace processes and conflict transformation. He worked with the American Friends Service Committee on strategy development in the Middle East and with CARE Kosovo on conflict sensitive programming. He facilitated the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust Peace Leadership course and made the keynote speech at the Asian Peacebuilders Forum in Nepal. He paid several working visits to Zimbabwe and gave the annual Chevening Lecture for the British Council in Harare.

Nabeel Hamdi has been working for Habitat for Humanity in Costa Rica and Bucharest, introducing a broader developmental agenda to their house building programmes. As an Ove Arup Fellow he taught a course at the University of Cape Town, as well as teaching with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim and Sri Lanka. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Pretoria last March.

Mohamed Hamza was appointed by the Munich-Re Foundation as Prof. Chair in Social Vulnerability at the United Nations University, Environment and Human Security Institute, and also appointed Prof. of Disaster Risk Management at Lund University, Sweden. He finished designing training courses for UNDP/BCPR on disaster risk reduction and finished a review of the socio-economic impacts of climate change in Afghanistan funded by DFID.

Brigitte Piquard undertook fieldwork in Palestine and Nagorno Karabagh in order to develop an action research project on space and violence. She hosted a one day conference on Space and violence at Oxford Brookes University, and continued to develop the new PG Certificate in Conflict and Humanitarianism.

David Sanderson worked with CARE Bangladesh on the development of an urban strategy. He led an evaluation of the Pakistan earthquake recovery for Action by Churches Together (ACT). He taught two courses for REDR in Canada and attended the IV World Urban Forum in Nanjing, China with the NGO Practical Action, and presented a paper at the first World Conference on Humanitarian Studies in Groningen University.

Anshu Sharma (Global tutor, India) worked on shelter reconstruction projects using local and appropriate materials such as earth, fly-ash and bamboo. He also worked on advocacy projects involving disaster management planning with provincial and local governments in India and attended a number of workshops in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Japan, on subjects related to community based disaster management and worked on developing a course module on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction.

Leda Stott has been working as the content expert for the European Social Fund’s (ESF) Community of Practice on Partnership and has just completed a guidebook to assist ESF Managing Authorities to promote and support partnership as a useful mechanism for encouraging economic growth, social inclusion and employment opportunities in Europe. She also carried out mentoring work for the International Business Leaders Forum and Aga Khan Foundation’s Civil Society Programme.
Learning from the tsunami, Tamil Nadu, India

DEP student Elizabeth Parker (bottom photo) writes, During the Christmas vacation 15 DEP students travelled from their homes in almost every continent to meet in Nagarpatinam, a town in Tamil Nadu, Southern India.

We were joined by Dr Anshu Sharma, A CENDEP Global tutor from the NGO Seeds India, and were hosted by the Indian NGO RCPDS (Resource Centre for Participatory Development Studies), led by Dr John Devaram. RCPDS had arranged for us to work with two tsunami-affected communities, one an agricultural community 4km inland and the other a fishing community.

We spent two weeks assessing the impact of the Tsunami on the two villages, using Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) techniques, identifying needs and problems, and piecing together the information in order to feedback to the villages and to RCPDS.

We were lucky enough to have the support of five social studies Masters students from a local university who acted as our translators, cultural guides, and were invaluable, as we quickly learnt that our limited Tamil would not be enough and the participatory assessment techniques that we were using, although mostly visual, were greatly enhanced by a shared language!

On our final day we presented our findings back to the communities and RCPDS for comment and debate. Cake was eaten and coffee was drunk as we gathered around the boards we had made with the information they had given us.

It was a true team effort. The warmth and good humour that we were welcomed with left us all humbled and we left with a great deal more friends than we had arrived with. Nanden!

Photos from top: presentation and discussion between students and village residents; community meeting and feedback: Both presents work.

Visit YouTube to see the field trip film.

Building understanding between the military and NGOs

Each year the DEP programme attracts students from both the military and from NGOs. Colonel Marty Slade of the British Army Medical Services was one of the first serving military officers to attend the program in 2003/04. Here Marty reflects on his time at CENDEP.

I attended the Brookes DEP Masters programme in 02/04 as a full time student. I believe that I was the first serving British Army Officer to complete this programme. The timing was significant, as weeks before starting the course I was running an Army Field Hospital in Iraq which had been fully involved in the reception, treatment and evacuation or repatriation of hundreds of casualties, the majority civilian, during the preceding 6 months of the Iraq war.

My experience during this period led me to my dissertation, ‘The Medical Treatment of Civilian Casualties in War: Who Cares?’ This highlighted the difficult resource, moral, legal and ethical dilemmas facing the Army Medical Services during and immediately following armed conflict in relation to the treatment of civilians. It explored these issues from the perspectives of the military, NGOs, the civilian population themselves and the responsibilities of States in this regard.

The cultural dissonance between the military establishment and within and between various NGOs was also explored. Given my 37 years of military experience and having previously worked alongside NGOs in the Balkans and Sierra Leone, this programme was a real education for me.

I have subsequently remained passionate in my attempts to educate and build bridges between the Military and NGO communities. Some examples are NGO/Military study days held at Brookes, the linking of staff to the Centre of Army and Defence Doctrine and meetings with the Director General Army Medical Services, ensuring that there is permanent Army Medical Services representation on future DEP programmes.

I continue to engage in an ongoing dialogue between our communities. The aims are to inform, educate and better prepare open minded individuals and organisations, whether military or civilian medical organisations (or wider constituencies) in order to minimise misunderstanding, perhaps borne from prejudice or myth or just plain ignorance.

Internships

Each year DEP students look for placements to carry out research for their dissertations, and/or gain some experience. While many students secure their own placements, CENDEP assists by linking students to organisations it works with, in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The organisations currently include: the NGO the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) based in Ahmedabad, India; the large NGO CARE Bangladesh; the Provincial Government’s Department of institutional housing in Polokwani, South Africa; the NGO Rapid LatinoAmerica; and the Indian NGO SEEDS India which works throughout the country.

Three former DEP students are currently working with Oxfam Ethiopia. They are Coree Alvarez, Patrick Bell and Anne Leewis. A forth former student, Lucy Stickland, also worked at Oxfam Ethiopia before leaving to take up a post with USAID in Sudan.

Patrick Bell, centre, with Oxfam colleagues in Logia, Ethiopia
Community risk reduction, Peru

DEP student Eric Meldrum (bottom right photo) writes, The field trip was organised with Rapid LatinAmerica (RLA), an NGO working in the field of disaster risk reduction and run by a former student of our course, Guiseppe Damiano. RLA is concerned with enabling community members of 14 towns and villages to react and deal with a variety of potential hazards.

The communities are located along the Huaraz to Conococha highway, which is some 280km in length and carries heavy traffic to and from a large copper and zinc mine to the north. There are therefore risks of chemical spillages resulting from accidents along the road and skills such as fire fighting and first aid are taught by RLA.

Our trip coincided with the implementation of the second stage of a project which is based upon a UN advisory document, called APELL (Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at the Local Level). This stage was to organise the 14 communities into three groups and create committees to coordinate activities between the towns and villages in order that each would have more resources to draw upon should a hazard occur in one community.

There were six of us students with DEP lecturer Rod Burgess and we attended meetings with the differing communities, had meetings with the mayors of several of the communities as well as speaking to other key players such as the local nurses. The motivation of the local people was quite obvious and it was clear that RLA had the trust and respect of the communities due to their previous work. Most of those turning up at the meetings were women due in part to most of the men working but it was also quite clear that women in these rural communities take responsibility for their families and communities and were certainly vociferous enough in their views to substantiate this.

We also visited the mine and had a meeting with the firm’s community manager. They have invested a lot in projects and the building of schools in the areas the mine affects, but these funds will dry up unless the prices start to rise for copper and zinc which will likely lead to tensions between the mine and the communities. Our last day was spent visiting the informal communities of Villa Santa Maria and Villa El Salvador in Lima. At the former we spent time at an urban agriculture project run by local people and a local NGO. This was an impressive project, enabling members of the community to grow their own food and sell any excess produce on land that would otherwise likely be used as a rubbish dump. It was also possible to see housing in all their stages of construction in these districts as they become more secure and integrated into the city.

All in all we saw a lot of the variety of places and lives of the Peruvian people. It is clearly a hard life making a living there, but I could see what the Peruvian economist Hernando De Soto meant when he described Peru as a country of entrepreneurs, from the kids to the elderly, using their initiative to create and exploit a market. To see some of the conditions and manifestations of poverty at first hand was an eye opener for me and is something hard to appreciate fully when just reading about such conditions.

The whole experience was an adventure where every day was full of different things to see and do and stories associated with them all. Giuseppe had put together an impressive programme of events for us and I got a lot out of it, seeing the multiple realities of life in a country that is struggling to develop and it has helped relate much of what we have been learning on the programme.

ON DOING FIELD WORK, HAITI

Although this wasn’t confirmed for a long time, I persisted. I went there in July 2008 to stay for two months, having prepared my questionnaires, a handful of email contacts, accommodation and a general optimism that it would all work out.

Enthusiastically I started contacting and meeting up with the people I had contact details from, and through them I quickly received much more meetings and interviews.

Haiti is an amazing country, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and with a history of political violence.

Being in the Caribbean Haiti also has the problem of hurricanes, something that was all too clear when I was there and three hurricanes hit, and hundreds of people died.

Experiencing things like this made it clear once again why I wanted to get into this field - that is not as romantic and idealistic as many people imagine it to be.

Even with all these problems however, the spirit, culture, music and dance of most people are amazing, and my experience in Port au Prince was extraordinary.

I can thoroughly recommend taking a chance and going away to do field research: the people you’ll meet, the places you will see and do will be unforgettable and a great plus when looking for a job later on!

FIELD TRIPS 2009

In January DEP students attended two field trips. The first was to Peru to work alongside the NGO Rapid LatinAmerica, headed by CENDEP Global tutor and former student Giuseppe Damiano, to undertake an observation assessment regarding the risks associated with a nearby mine.

The second field trip was to the Indian State of Tamil Nadu to revisit communities affected by the 2004 tsunami. The field trip involved undertaking a participatory assessment using Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) techniques such as mapping and transect walks. The trip was organised with the NGO RCPS, who have been closely involved in the development of PRA tools since their inception.

A third field visit was organised later in the year to Bethlehem, in association with Université Paris XII Val de Marne, France.