

- Study development geography and environmental sustainability
- Experience living and working in a developing country
- Do a work placement with a NGO in the development sector
- Learn the skills and methods used by practitioners
- 'Top-up' to BSc Single Honours Geography

Volunteering with Bristol Methodist Centre

Emily Paginton

Emily is a second year student on the FdSc Development Geography Course. She completed a 40 hour volunteer work placement as part of the 'Working in the Development Sector' module.

The Bristol Methodist Centre is a place where vulnerable adults can spend the day, get a hot meal, a shower and clean clothes. It utilises a team of full time staff, which are supported by volunteers. Financially, the centre is funded through charitable donations, fundraising and various other things such as grants. The centre runs as an open access drop-in service where people who are homeless or disadvantaged can go. The centre is part of the Bristol District of the Methodist Church of Great Britain, and their Christian ethos means that there is a small chapel/prayer room as well as monthly services. The slogan for the centre is "shelter, sanctuary, support", all of which the centre gives in plentiful supply to guests.



'Sleeping Rough' in Bristol. Photo Credit: E. Paginton

Since January, I have volunteered here weekly, completing a full day which is from 9.45am to 3.45pm. I chose this placement as I am interested in the work it does, especially as it is working directly with those in need. I also had known about it previously through my parent's church, and the support they give it, through harvest and Christmas collections, as well as throughout the year. I have completed many more than 40 hours, simply as I enjoy it and it is now part of my weekly routine. A few weeks into my placement, I began cutting hair for guests, using a set of clippers and my wits! This has proved to be really success-

ful and I feel that it has helped me to bond with guests, and to anchor my position as a member of staff. In early March, I spent the night 'sleeping rough', this was organised by The Methodist Centre and similar charities to raise money and awareness of the plight of the homeless. It dropped to -2°C but thankfully I didn't freeze, and I managed to raise £350 for the centre, all of which will be put to good use.

Even though this placement was for the Working in the Development Sector module, I am definitely going to be continuing my post at the centre as I feel that my time there is not only valuable to guests, but also to staff who, on some days, need support too! It's important when you're a student to get the most out of university and the opportunities it gives you, and volunteering is just one of these things. Try and find something that you're interested in and would like more experience in doing, as it can only help you prepare for the world of work.

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New face brings Environmental Hazards to BSU

Dr Richard Johnson joins the Geography Team in the School of Science, Society and Management at BSU

Environment al Hazards:

"This module explores issues of great value to societies across the globe, especially in developing nations where hazard impacts are keenly felt."

Richard
Johnson

Dr Becky Schaaf (Course Leader: Development Geography) asked me to say a few words by way of self-introduction. Hence, hello and thanks for the opportunity to join the vibrant and happy community here at BSU. Indeed Bath is a new part of the world for me, where I very much look forward to meeting people and contributing to the positive experience.

So what can I tell you? Well, I am yet another one with northern tones in the Corston Building! I am a Physical Geographer, having previously worked in academia (Durham, UCLAN), and more recently as a Geomorphologist/ Project Manager for an International Engineering Consultancy Company (Halcrow Group Ltd). I can be usually found up some hill, whatever the weather. Accordingly, my research focus is exploring sediment dynamics in mountainous environments, and the reconstruction of hazardous flood and landslide events. I also continue to practice as a chartered geomorphological consultant, across a range of



Dr Richard Johnson

environments and issues, but most especially applied fluvial geomorphology. Starting in the 2011-2012 academic year I shall be delivering a new and exciting level 5 (year 2) undergraduate module,

'Environmental Hazards'. This module explores issues of great value to societies across the globe, especially in developing nations where hazard impacts are keenly felt. In outline, we shall explore the concepts and theories which define hazard and risk; investigate selected key processes (e.g. floods, landslides, seismically triggered

events) and their impacts using recent examples; and outline management and mitigation approaches. This topical area of study will be conducted using a mixture of fieldwork, lectures, practicals, and interaction with real world specialists. In this module, students will really start to appreciate that best understanding and managing environmental hazards is critical in our pursuit of wellbeing and sustainable development.

New Prize for Excellence in Development Geography

The inaugural prize for Excellence in Development Geography has been awarded to Victoria Harte. The prize is awarded to the student receiving the highest average mark for GE5010-20: *Overseas Placement Experience* and GE5011-20: *Working in the Development Sector*. Vicki's excellent performance in these two modules demonstrates her understanding of, and considerable interest in development issues. She received an average mark of 80 percent for these two modules. Congratulations to Vicki! This prize is one of four new awards distributed to Geography students each year. The awards and recipients are:

Best New Geographer Prize—Peter Bridge

(awarded to the Geography student with the highest mark in GE4001-40: Foundations in Geography)

Most Promising Geographer Prize—Timothy Johns

(awarded to the Geography student with the highest mark in GE5001-40: Geography and Geographers)

Excellence in Development Geography Prize—Victoria Harte

Geography Project of the Year Prize—Holly Price

(awarded for the best dissertation)



Congratulations to all this year's winners!

Overseas Development Experience 2010/11

Student Placements and Presentations

These are the summaries of some of the presentations given by second year students on their return from one-month placements in a developing country of their choice. This placement is a compulsory part of their second year studies. The students were asked to reflect on an aspect of development that relates to their own experiences of the country in which they were based.

Victoria Harte

Lost in Translation in Cambodia

At first I tried to imagine my world without sound, then I tried to imagine my world where I thought I was the only one who was different in this way and finally I tried to imagine my world without a language I could learn to help me communicate.

The young adults I met in Cambodia didn't need to imagine this scenario, it was their reality. Their childhoods were spent in rural villages where not only were they the only Deaf person, rarely did anyone in their community know what being Deaf was. They were beaten for not doing as they were told and they were bored and isolated.

My research in Cambodia involved meeting the students from the Deaf Development Programme in Phnom Penh and explored disability in Cambodia, in particular being Deaf and how key NGOs endeavour to make a difference.

Eleanor Ross-Smith

Understanding HIV/AIDs in rural and urban Vietnam

Ha Noi is located in the north of Vietnam, and is a heavily urbanised area. In 2010, there were 20,260 people known to be living with treated HIV in the city; however, these are only the reported cases and this statistic does not necessarily take into account those who live undiagnosed in both the city and rural communities surrounding, and those who willingly refuse treatment for fear of the social repercus-

sions.

My research explored the following questions: what are the social issues faced by those living with HIV/AIDs? What can be done to change the social stigma surrounding the disease? And what can and is being done to actively enable those in need?

Lauren Collier

Inequality in Ghana

The disparity between rich and poor in Ghana is clear to see as soon as you leave the airport in Accra. As with any developing country

as the rich get richer, the poor never seem to get anywhere. The shocking

part for me was the proximity in which people living in absolute poverty were living to fairly wealthy middle class Ghanaians. Whilst a struggling mum washed her baby in a bucket on the side of a busy street, you could see inside to a modern (by Ghanaian standards at least) house with a TV going. My presentation explored this difference between rich and poor in Ghana, with particular emphasis

being put on housing standards. A small comparison study to countries in similar positions and with similar problems was made to highlight that the issues are not unique to Ghana and other countries are feeling the strain too. Some current initiatives in Ghana are trying to help ease the housing

situation, but progress is slow. All of this from a country that is considered one of the most developed in its continent.



Slums in Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Photo credit: V. Harte



Halong Bay, Vietnam
Photo credit: E. Ross-Smith

"Their childhoods were spent in rural villages where not only were they the only Deaf person, rarely did anyone in their community know what being Deaf was. They were beaten for not doing as they were told and they were bored and isolated."
(Vicki Harte 2011)

Joel Hunziker
The Nomadic Berbers Of The Moroccan Sahara: An Ancient Way Of Life In The 21st Century

The Berbers or Imazighen ('free people') are the indigenous peoples of North Africa, having lived there for thousands of years. In Morocco, Berbers make up around 50 per cent of the population. The nomadic Berbers live mainly in the Rif and Atlas Mountains and the Sahara Desert. In April 2011 I visited a tribal area in the south of Morocco, near Guelmim, in the foothills of the Anti-Atlas, where the mountains meet the Sahara Desert. The region is extremely arid and hot, and resources such as food, water, and fuel (wood) are extremely limited, and infrastructure is virtually non-existent. Living in tents, the nomads herd sheep and goats across the mountains, valleys, and plains in search of the best grazing and most plentiful sources of water. I spent a month living with one of the nomadic families in the area and my work includes reflections on their way of life and how they are dealing with the challenges presented by the 21st century. The challenges relate to a number of development issues such as food, water, education, healthcare, discrimination and marginalisation, and gender.

Ashley Hawkins
Development Indicators: Prosperity can be measured with various techniques

The role of religion within a developing country is integral to identity of that country. The unity of the population in regards to religion creates a massive culture difference. Sri Lanka has a high percentage of Buddhists compared to any other religion within the country. Buddhists believe that all people are equal and that the family unit is very important and also the importance of wealth



Adams Peak, Sri Lanka
 Photo credit: A. Hawkins

as the western world see it, is very low. Many people believe that Buddhism is not a religion but a way of life, setting out very

simple ideas and prophesies, so whether you are rich or poor, the gap between social classes as we see in the western world is something not noticeable, highlighting the importance of a shift from viewing development as something that is measured in monetary terms towards other indicators which measure the prosperity of a country.

Ceri Mugford
Marine conservation: A slow, but worthwhile battle

Marine Conservation Cambodia is an independent conservation organisation, dedicated to protecting the reef around Koh Rong Samleom and Koh Rong. Working with the fishery department, the MCC have started to see progress in marine conservation. The work is de-



Beach clean-up, Cambodia
 Photo credit: C. Mugford

pendent on the steady flow of volunteers who provide the workforce to conduct surveys, which continuously analyse the situation, and provides the MCC with a steady income which enable operations to keep running. The MCC also work closely with the Mai Pei Mai community, and this relationship is crucial for the work being done, including working with local fishermen to reduce the affect of fishing on the marine environment, and improving techniques to ensure sustainability.

Alice Barnes
The Methods of Wildlife Observation at Legodimo Nature Reserve, Botswana

The presentation will outline the methods used to track and monitor the wildlife found within the Legodimo Nature Reserve in Botswana. 15,000 hectares of savannah woodland make up the reserve, which is home to a variety of flora and fauna. Conservation is the main focus of the project and both staff and

"The nomadic Berbers live mainly in the Rif and Atlas Mountains and the Sahara Desert...Living in tents, the nomads herd sheep and goats across the mountains, valleys, and plains in search of the best grazing and most plentiful sources of water"
 (Joel Hunziker 2011)

volunteers are dedicated to the task of ensuring that Legodimo remains the untouched wilderness of Africa. Compiling species lists, for both mammals and birds, is an important aspect of the conservation project as they provide a strong database of the behaviour (migratory patterns and movements), density and ranges of the wildlife. The methods used to create these species lists include GPS mapping and recording the location of the animals, blind observations, bird watching research drives and camera traps.



Travelling to the dive site
Photo credit: C. Mugford

Visakha Sroy
Early detection and intervention centres for children with intellectual disabilities

My presentation focused on the issues surrounding early detection and intervention centres for children with intellectual disabilities in Vietnam's capital city Hanoi, particularly looking at the practices used in *Morning Star*. *Morning Star* centre is a centre for early detection, care and parental counselling for those with intellectual disabilities. My placement experience highlighted various issues related to diagnosis and treatment of learning disabilities, as well as the general care of these children and the level of teacher training.

Lucy Parsons
A Study into the Transport Infrastructure in Usa River and Arusha, Tanzania

Usa River is located around 23 kilometres east of the City of Arusha, Tanzania. It is about a 40 minute drive to the city centre and there are a number of settlements and organisations along the way. The main forms of transportation to the city centre, and in general, is either by *DalaDala*, 'Pickie-pickies', private cars, walking or taxi's. There is only one main road to the city centre and the condition of the road is

something that many locals feel need to be maintained and improved. My research explored the above topic looking particularly at the role and importance of

transport in Tanzania. It highlighted why a transport system is essential and an important part of the infrastructure system. Drawing on my own reflections, I then evaluated the effectiveness of the current transport system in Usa River, Tanzania including the impact it has on both myself, westerners and the lives of local people.

Ashok Weiffenbach-Carr
Gender Equality and Cultural Impacts on development in India and the comparison between different States

As India slowly develops into what many consider to be the next global super power alongside China, there are still many issues facing the country's development. I spent most of my time working on an organic farm in the State of Tamil Nadu, but even working in this remote environment I was able to observe how modernisation and local traditions impact on one another, and the conflict that this can cause. Of particular interest was the role that the caste system still plays, although it has officially been abolished. Gender inequality was another development issue that interested me, as it is relatively prominent in the rural parts of India. I was fascinated by the fact that in many respects women seem to do most of the work, in contrast to men who have more free time. Social stigmas and religious laws play a big part in dictating the role that women have within society.

This is of interest when it comes to development, as academics such as Amartya Sen believe that empowering women and increasing gender equality are key factors when dealing with development issues. When considering these issues I

will be looking at the impacts that they have within the different States due to contrasting political and social systems that exist within India.



Teaching in Vietnam
Photo credit: V. Sroy

"I was able to observe how modernisation and local traditions impact on one another, and the conflict that this can cause...Social stigmas and religious laws play a big part in dictating the role that women have within society" (Ashok Weiffenbach-Carr 2011)

Alumni News

Michelle Brooks PhD student, University of Reading. Michelle completed her BSc at Bath Spa University in 2009.

"I feel lucky to have been at Bath Spa and to have been encouraged to work really hard, take every opportunity to experience new things, make the most of the knowledge and experience of my tutors, and make the most of my degree"
(Michelle Brooks 2011)

Since leaving BSU I have begun a 1+3 MSc /PhD programme at the University of Reading, after winning the open competition for a full studentship. The application was based on the research I completed as part of my undergraduate dissertation project at BSU. My PhD explores the trajectory between belonging and terrorism in Islamic communities using an 'auto-pictorial' methodology that I devised here at Bath Spa to work across groups with varying capacity for engagement with social research. I have presented some of my research at international conferences in Newcastle, London (RGS-IBG) and in the US (Georgia State University).

I also teach at Bath Spa and occasionally abroad. Currently, I am also beginning a research project to survey residents of slum districts in Colombo, Sri Lanka, the city where I was born. The government there hopes to conduct a compulsory re-location of slum dwellers to new purpose built developments in order to free up prime real estate and also to improve

housing conditions for the people. The research will survey the community networks and spatial arrangement of ecological, social and economic capital through the same visual methodology in order to help the government conduct the re-location in a sustainable way. The UN and Save the Children in Sri Lanka will be project partners in the research. In addition I also act as a referee for the academic journal 'Political Geography' and news editor for the online academic journal 'Geography Directions'. So, a lot has happened since I first began my Development Geography degree at Bath Spa but there is no doubt that this education has really



Conducting research in Sri Lanka
© M. Brooks

taken me places and opened doors in ways I never really imagined. At a time when university graduates are finding it hard to find employment, I feel lucky to have been at Bath Spa and to have been encouraged to work really hard, take every opportunity to experience new things, make the most of the knowledge and experience of my tutors, and make the most of my degree which has stood me in good stead so far.

Environmental and Social Seminar Series 2010/11

Each year the department hosts a number of research seminars given by guest speakers on a wide variety of topics that are open to all staff and students. 2010/11 saw an interesting range of well-attended, thought-provoking seminars.

Of particular relevance to students interested in issues of development and sustainability, were the seminars given by Jacki Hill-Murphy, Professor Mike Benton, Dr Philip Conford and Dr Simon Dyson. Jacki Hill-Murphy spoke about her experiences travelling and film-making in Oman, while Professor Benton discussed the causes and effects of a mass extinction event through a study of fossil beds in Russia. Sickle cell disease in Ghana was the topic of Dr Dyson's seminar, where he reported findings of a study into perceptions of the disease and actions taken to mitigate and treat it.

The speaker for this year's Royal Geographical Society lecture was Dr Philip Conford, a leading authority on the history of the British organic movement. Dr Conford discussed some of the key ideas, thinkers and publications that have shaped the organic movement from the 1840s onwards.

If you have any suggestions for topics or speakers for next year's series, then please contact the editor; details are on page 8.



Film-making in the desert in Oman
© J. Hill-Murphy

Working in the Development Sector

Reflections on a placement with Oxfam South West

Victoria Harte

Victoria is a second year student on the FdSc Development Geography Course. She completed a 40 hour volunteer work placement as part of the 'Working in the Development Sector' module. This module is compulsory for all FdSc students.

I had always planned to volunteer with a non-governmental organisation (NGO) during my second year of University so combining this with an assessed module was a win-win situation for me. I had researched a few organisations throughout the summer, but my internship at Oxfam was initiated thanks to an ex-colleague who works for Oxfam Cymru. After an interview in October 2010 I was offered an internship as Campaigns Activist with Oxfam South West. Whilst campaigning would not have been my first choice I was keen to know more. Naively I assumed it would be linked to fundraising and was dreading having to go and shake a bucket. Thankfully this was not the case and I soon learnt campaigning had little to do with extracting money out of people!

Oxfam is an ambitious major player in the global network of NGOs (Black, 1992), with a 2009/10 budget of £318 million (Oxfam, 2010) partially funded by the UK Department for International Development (DfID). I noted it is this relationship and its political lobbying power that is often called in to question with opponents asking if it is appropriate for charities to be heavily involved in politics and do they risk being compromised as a result (Elliott, 2008)? Oxfam's vision is a worthy one: to "overcome poverty and suffering" (Oxfam, 2010) but I wonder in reality if this is ever possible, no matter how much funding is available.

My placement started and I immediately realised that I had missed the 'office environment'. I felt at home with a desk, phone, coffee and a purpose to my day. Whilst I love the freedom of being a student I found myself relishing being in an environment where something was expected of me between 9 and 5! I realised how much I miss my evenings and weekends, and having time to switch off; something I've not done in months. However, I

was apprehensive about starting to work in a field that I have given so much to get in to, in case I found that I didn't enjoy it or was no good at it!

Initially my role was to research and visit community groups that may wish to work alongside Oxfam on the 'Mums Matter' campaign (Oxfam, 2011) and to build partnerships with them to raise the media profile of the schemes. Although I was excited about the opportunity, I wasn't looking forward to being out in public and talking about Oxfam as I was worried that I wouldn't be able to answer any questions. Working on the 'Mums Matter' campaign gave me a valuable insight in to how government and NGO decisions are implemented in real situations. The issues faced at grass roots level became clearer to me than they had been before and the complex decisions made every day about funding, allocation of resources and emergency responses borne out of development theories and policies were more apparent.



Mums Matter Campaign
(www.oxfam.org.uk)

After two weeks researching it became clear that the fundraising team were also plan-

ning an event working with local community groups, which would have duplicated a lot of my project work. It was exasperating to have wasted considerable amounts of time researching, an emotion that was evident in my journal!

Having needed to adapt my planned role significantly, I was given free rein, so rather than waste the research already carried out I designed a new campaign for Mothers Day based on 'Mums Matter'. I am really proud to have written proposals for a few ideas and amazingly a version of my mother's day campaigning card was accepted for the national campaign (Oxfam, 2011). I hadn't fully anticipated how long approval would take as different teams had to meet before any progress could be made which sadly meant that I finished the internship before the card was pub-

"Working on the 'mums matter' campaign gave me a valuable insight in to how government and NGO decisions are implemented in real situations."
(Vicki Harte 2011)

Work placement with Oxfam South West (continued)

"...it's great to now see it on the website and to know that I have been involved, even in this small way, to promoting an Oxfam campaign. It was an unanticipated outcome which has added value to my placement."
(Vicki Harte 2011)

lished which was incredibly frustrating. Even though I wasn't able to finalise the finished product, it's great to now see it on the website and to know that I have been involved, even in this small way, to promoting an Oxfam campaign. It was an unanticipated outcome which has added value to my placement.

Alongside learning about Oxfam and its campaigns I found it useful to discuss wider development issues with members of staff. Many had direct 'on the ground' experience of Oxfam and other campaigns overseas and were keen to discuss these with me. During my placement I also attended various evening events linked to Oxfam and other organisations. These events helped me to apply the knowledge I have gained at university to 'real world' conversations and to gain a greater understanding of development issues on a wider scale.

In conclusion, I really enjoyed the placement and found it extremely valuable. It has felt like I have scratched the surface of



Mums Matter Campaign
Photo credit: Jim Holmes, Oxfam

Oxfam (Harvey *et al.*, 1998) but I have maintained links through their student campaigns group and I have represented them at events including the university 'refreshers fair' in 2010.

I'm not sure if the placement has influenced my career plans. I enjoyed my time with the campaigns team, but I don't think it is an area in which I would wish to work in the long-term. My aim from the outset of my degree has been to move overseas and work at a grass roots level, where there will hopefully be tangible outcomes to my efforts. I want to work somewhere where I can see the results and impacts (both positive and negative) of policies and funding decisions made in the developed world by our governments and charity organisations.

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Want to know more about Development Geography?

For further information about the Foundation Degree in Development Geography contact the Course Leader, Dr Rebecca Schaaf on 01225 876336 or r.schaaf@bathspa.ac.uk or at the address opposite. Also take a look at the Department's websites:

Foundation Degree in Development Geography

www.ssbathspa.com/our-courses/development-geography

School of Science, Society and Management

www.ssbathspa.com

Contribute to Development Matters!

Send your news and articles (no more than 1000 words) to the Editor, Becky Schaaf at r.schaaf@bathspa.ac.uk If possible please also supply an interesting photograph, but make sure that it is copyright-free.

In the next issue:

- **More Overseas Placement Reports**
- **Work experience in the Development Sector**
- **Student Updates — where are they now?**
- **Future Plans — we need your input!**