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Welcome
to the first issue of Oxford Development Matters, the magazine of the Oxford Department of International Development at Queen Elizabeth House. We hope it offers a lively and engaging snapshot of what’s going on at ODID today.

The magazine is aimed at everyone who takes an interest in the life of the department, but in particular we see it as central to our new drive to develop a closer relationship with our alumni community. The department has expanded enormously since its early days in the 1950s as a residential centre for the study of Commonwealth affairs, and now runs five master’s courses as well as a doctoral programme. Hundreds of students have passed through our doors and gone on to outstanding careers across the world, as everything from NGO practitioners to lawyers, teachers to politicians, businesspeople to academics, diplomats to filmmakers.

For those of you reading this who are former students, we hope the magazine will strengthen your connection to the department as a vital centre of research and study – to the friends and colleagues you met while you were here, to the academics who shaped your learning at Oxford, and to our current students, who will shortly be following you out into the world of work.

The magazine seeks to facilitate and encourage a mutual engagement. In fact, from the very outset we are appealing for your input: first, we would love to hear your memories of QEH for a history of the department being written by Emeritus Professor Valpy FitzGerald (see p 15); and second, for any practising diplomats among you, we are keen to learn more about your experiences for new research on digital diplomacy being carried out by Associate Professor Corneliu Bjola and DPhil student Jennifer Cassidy (see p 6).

In return, please let us know more about what you want. There are many other ways in which we can maintain connections, including through events, alumni careers talks, mentoring, country-specific networks and more. Over the coming months we hope to develop these where there is interest and demand, and so we would very much like to get your feedback and to hear any requests and ideas you may have. We have set up an online survey to give you a chance to express your views, and we would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete it; you will find it here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ODID_Alumni.

Meanwhile, we hope you enjoy reading the magazine, and that it will be the starting point for a warm and mutually beneficial relationship.

Nandini Gooptu
Head of Department
Teachers looking for new ways to bring mathematics to life have a new resource thanks to a collaboration between Oxfam and researchers involved in Young Lives at ODID, an international study examining the causes and consequences of children's poverty.

Young Lives is tracking the lives of 12,000 children in four developing countries over 15 years. Its surveys and interviews with the children have yielded insights into the drivers of inequality and provided data for further research in fields ranging from health and gender to early childhood education. Now the stories of some of the children who have taken part in the project are being used to teach core maths skills and engage British children in critical thinking about poverty and inequality.

Called ‘Everyone Counts’, the free resource is available for teachers to download from the Oxfam website. ‘One of the key aims of Young Lives is to highlight the daily reality of poor children’s lives to improve policies for children – and this partnership with Oxfam is a great way of sharing this knowledge with a wider audience in the UK,’ says Caroline Knowles, Young Lives communications manager.

The Everyone Counts project came about after Caroline shared a copy of a book of profiles of some of the Young Lives study children with Oxfam’s Education and Youth team. The Oxfam team then worked with her on adapting the material into teaching materials for schoolchildren at Key Stage 2 (ages 8 to 12), a process which included piloting in several schools. The Young Lives material has been adapted to focus on the maths curriculum, in particular handling data and measuring time and distance. For example, the school students use data about the daily activities of Young Lives children to calculate and compare time spent on tasks, using analogue clocks and digital 12- and 24-hour clocks. They also use this information to compare how and in what ways their own lives may be similar or different to those of the featured Young Lives children.

After being introduced to several of the Young Lives children, such as Afework from Ethiopia, Harika from India and Lien from Vietnam, the school students are encouraged to examine concepts that affect their lives, such as what it means to be ‘doing well’ in life, or the unequal distribution of resources. Even skills such as plotting line graphs can be practised in the context of real-world social awareness, as Everyone Counts includes sessions where the children construct their own graphs based on data about life expectancy around the world or interpret graphs showing changes in GDP per capita in Young Lives countries.

Liz Newbon is Oxfam’s Education and Youth Adviser, and was a writer for Everyone Counts. She explains: ‘Real-life data is in constant demand by teachers for two reasons: first, its use is encouraged by the curriculum and by Ofsted, and second because it has the capacity to engage pupils more effectively in their learning. In this case, Everyone Counts enables pupils to explore how inequality affects the lives of children in different parts of the globe, at a time when a growing gap between rich and poor is being seen in many countries around the world.’

While the material has already been endorsed by the Maths Association in the UK, the Young Lives team hopes to develop Everyone Counts for use in developing countries themselves. Caroline recalls visiting Peru in 2010 with a Young Lives researcher and discovering children in shanty towns outside Lima using English-language teaching materials that included exercises in identifying tube stops on the London Underground.

‘Nothing could have been further from their world or the possibilities open to them,’ she reflects. ‘We have already adapted some of our research material to be used for English-language textbooks in Ethiopia and are looking for ways to adapt these materials as well to give children in developing countries access to more resources that are child-focussed and relevant to their lives and contexts.’

Find out more at www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/everyone-counts

The original version of this article was published in the November 2014 issue of Blueprint, the University of Oxford staff magazine (available at www.ox.ac.uk/blueprint).
New research from the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative at ODID shows that nearly 60 per cent of people living in the world’s poorest regions are not actually in the world’s poorest countries. Claire Battye reports.

Over recent years, researchers at the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative at ODID have developed a new, international measure of poverty called the global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). The MPI goes beyond traditional income-based measures to show the combined disadvantages poor people experience across different areas of their lives, including education, health and living standards. The index has been published in the Human Development Report since 2010.

Now OPHI’s latest analysis, based on the January 2015 updates of the MPI, zooms in on multidimensional poverty at the sub-national level and shows that the world’s poorest people do not always live where you would expect – as well as highlighting some striking disparities that are hidden by national-level statistics.

For example, OPHI researchers looked at more than 230 sub-national regions where multidimensional poverty is the same as or higher than in the 25 poorest Least Developed Countries (LDCs) identified by the United Nations (Economic and Social Council). They found that only around 40 per cent of the multidimensionally poor in these regions live in LDCs. Nearly 60 per cent live in sub-national regions of India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Cameroon, Kenya, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Namibia and the Republic of Congo. Aside from Kenya, all of these countries are considered ‘middle income’.

The findings also show that pockets of deprivation are missed in aggregate statistics. For example, in Doula, the largest city in Cameroon, 6.7 per cent of people are multidimensionally poor; yet elsewhere in the same country, in the Extrême-Nord, nearly 87 per cent are measured as MPI-poor. The national figure for Cameroon is 6.7 per cent, and for the Extrême-Nord it is nearly 87 per cent. The global MPI assesses poverty at the individual level. If a person is deprived in one-third or more of the ten weighted indicators, they are identified as multidimensionally poor.

The MPI can be broken down to reveal what percentage of the population are both MPI poor (because they experience multiple deprivations), and are deprived in particular indicators. For example, the region with the highest rates of people who are both multidimensionally poor and deprived in nutrition is Affar in Ethiopia, and that with most child mortality is Nord-Ouest in Côte d’Ivoire. Karamoja in Uganda is the most deprived region for sanitation, and Wad Fira in Chad for drinking water, electricity and years of schooling. Androy in Madagascar has the highest rates of people who are poor and do not own any assets, and Kuntua in Gambia for school attendance.

Dr Sabina Alkire, Director of OPHI, said: ‘The MPI enables us to examine poverty within regions of a country as well as nationally, and compare the interlocking deprivations people experience. It can reveal experiences across rural and urban areas, and across different ethnic populations. We measure different types of deprivation together – such as malnutrition, poor sanitation, a lack of housing or schooling – and every person matters.’

‘Our findings highlight the value of having good quality, up-to-date and detailed survey data to reveal what life is really like for the poorest section of populations.’

The United Nations has stressed the need to identify where the poorest live in order to ‘leave no-one behind’. The researchers argue that their poverty measure, the MPI, is essential to accurately target resources and policies where they are needed most.

The updated global Multidimensional Poverty Index now covers 110 developing countries, and 803 regions in 72 of these countries. The analysis is of data ranging from 2002 to 2014, mainly collected by UNICEF’s Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey and USAID’s Demographic and Health Survey.

Claire Battye is OPHI’s Research Communications Officer.

Like all families in the village, Phuba cooks with wood – a fuel that causes eye problems and a cough for her and many other elderly women in her village. The family use a simple pit latrine for sanitation, which she states is just fine for her needs. Phuba brims with life and vitality. She is proud that even at her advanced age, she remains strong. She is still regarded as the head of the household, and holding the family together gives her a sense of accomplishment.

Phuba is poor according to the MPI – she is deprived in six of the ten indicators.

The global MPI assesses poverty at the individual level. If a person is deprived in one-third or more of the ten weighted indicators, they are identified as multidimensionally poor.

For example, Phuba (above) lives in a small village in the Chhukha region of Bhutan. The home she shares with her family is a one-room thatched hut on a gentle sloping hillside, without electricity or an inside tap. No one in the family has completed five years of schooling, and at 12 years of age, her granddaughter has never been to school. The family face food insecurity and struggle to feed themselves to the extent that Phuba worries about their health.

In 2014, OPHI was awarded an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Celebrating Impact Prize, coming first in the Outstanding International Impact category for its work to develop a method for measuring multidimensional poverty.
The power of the crowd

Every year ODID spends around half a million pounds to support students, and raising more money for this is our top priority. But we are not yet in a position to help everyone. Jo Boyce spoke to MSc in Migration Studies student Rachael Owhin, who found a novel solution.

When Rachael Owhin was accepted onto the MSc in Migration Studies she was delighted. But then, with just 10 days to go before the deadline to pay for the course, she found herself still some way short of the funds she needed and in danger of having to give up the place.

’I spent many days and hours searching for funding both from the university and also external funders, but to no avail. From sending carefully constructed letters and emails to spending days off work in the library ploughing through the grants register, I was still £10,000 short. I had saved over £6,000 and had support from family but it just wasn’t enough to cover the fees,’ she recalls.

So, in the spirit of the age, Rachael turned to the internet.

’Crowdfunding was something I’d thought about doing along the way but I’d never seen anyone successfully raise such a large amount, but after much prayer and planning I launched the campaign online.’

Using the slogan ‘£10,000 in 10 days’ and the hashtag #OXFORD10000, Rachael set up a profile on crowdfunding platform Hubbub and appealed to everyone she knew to spread the word.

’I tapped in to all of my networks. I reached out to people far and wide – in the UK and abroad. I had support from my family, friends, church family, people I’d interned with, and even strangers,’ she says. ’Many people launch crowdfunding campaigns and expect them to run themselves. Creating the page and telling a few people about it online just isn’t enough. You have to actually speak to people and let them know your story. You need to let them know why your project is so important to you.’

The campaign was a remarkable success and within eight days Rachael had raised the money she needed.

’Most of the donations were in the £10 region which shows that a lot of little donations can really add up. In total, I had over 300 individual donors – just thinking of the amount of support I received overwhelms me.’

As part of the campaign, Rachael offered a number of rewards to potential donors – a thank you message on an Oxford postcard, a mention in the acknowledgements of her dissertation, dinner in her college, Wolfson, and more.

’Even though people sponsored me of their own volition, I felt it was only right to “reward” them or say thank you in some way. One of the rewards was for me to take photos at an event of my sponsors’ choice and I will be doing so in the summer once the course has finished. I’m excited about this as it will give me a chance to meet some of my anonymous donors,’ she says.

Now in Oxford, Rachael says the University is ’all I’d hoped for plus much more’ and the course itself has been great, although very intense.

’The highlight of the course so far would definitely be my course mates,’ she says. ’We are such a diverse group and have really bonded well … I love hearing about our varied experiences in class discussions.’

As to the future of crowdfunding as a solution to the funding gap in higher education, Rachael thinks it will become increasingly important. Indeed, her own college, Wolfson, has just successfully raised over £50,000 for a post-doctoral research fellowship in the area of Tibetan and Himalayan Studies. It is one of the first colleges in Oxford to turn to this method to support an academic project and used the same platform as Rachael, Hubbub.

’I was so pleased to hear about the success of the Wolfson College campaign’, she says. ’I believe this is a method that will be used more and more in educational settings.’

Jo Boyce is ODID’s Information Officer.

STUDENTS

The power of the crowd
#Diplomacy Redefined

Dr Corneliu Bjola and Jennifer Cassidy are researching how social media is rapidly transforming 21st century diplomatic practice.

When Barack Obama and Hassan Rouhani held the first direct talks to take place between American and Iranian leaders since the 1979 Islamic revolution, the world first learnt of it, not through a press report, a broadsheet, or a 24-hour news channel, but through the information medium of the 21st century: social media.

Minutes after the phone call, President Hassan Rouhani took to Twitter to publish an official photo of President Obama during his phone conversation with Rouhani, with the Tweet reading ‘historic phone call in the Oval Office: Pres Obama talks with Rouhani, with the Tweet reading ‘historic phone call in the Oval Office: Pres Obama talks w Iran Pres Hassan Rouhani this afternoon.’

Welcome to the world of digital diplomacy, a world which is quickly dominating the conversation and practice of 21st century diplomacy. Although there is no concrete, universally agreed definition, in its broadest form, digital diplomacy refers to the use of the internet and new information communication technologies to help achieve diplomatic objectives. A large proportion of this online activity resides in the field of public diplomacy, but it is increasingly being viewed by foreign ministries as a cheap and easy means of achieving other purposes, too: responding to disasters, gathering information and managing relationships. It is without question one of the defining tools of 21st century diplomacy, changing nearly every facet of diplomatic practice, at a pace never before seen.

Coupled with its use to achieve diplomatic objectives, social media is changing how we as academics, practitioners, and citizens view the diplomatic game. Gone is the image of the diplomat as a person of secrecy, luxury, exclusivity, and privilege – an image captured perfectly in the rich symbolism of the famous painting The Ambassadors, created by Hans Holbein the Younger in 1533, at the dawn of contemporary diplomacy in the West. Today this page has been refreshed, with digital communication technology altering not only the methods of diplomacy but also its very meaning. It seems that by going ‘digital’, the once secretive and exclusive domain of the elite has also gone public, requiring diplomats to regularly look outside their once closed doors, and perhaps more importantly, for the first time, allowing citizens to look in.

Here at the department we recognise the power of digital diplomacy and through a number of exciting projects are seeking to analyse, reflect on, and contribute to this important developing field. Dr Corneliu Bjola, Associate Professor of Diplomatic Studies, is producing a book on the theme, Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice, which seeks to analyse digital diplomacy as a form of change management in international politics. The volume, the first of its kind, brings together established scholars and experienced policy-makers to fill the analytical gap that exists in the field. Through coursework and class discussions, Dr Bjola is also bringing digital diplomacy to the lecture room. Meanwhile, Jennifer Cassidy’s doctoral work focusses on ‘digital diplomatic interference’, examining how diplomatic agents are using social media platforms during times of political crises, and how this use is challenging the norm of non-interference.

The field is highly interdisciplinary, and through research and practice we are creating links outside the department, for example with the Oxford Internet Institute, one of the world’s leading departments for the study of the internet and its impact on society and politics. We also seek to maintain and create strong relationships with diplomatic practitioners working in the field, to ensure that we achieve the best insight possible for our work and also that our findings have a tangible impact.

With that in mind, and since we are always keen to engage with our alumni and appreciate the expertise and knowledge that they can bring to the table, if you work in this novel area of digital diplomacy, or within central foreign ministries, or would simply like to get involved in this discussion, we would love to hear from you.

We have a number of exciting events coming up including the launch of Dr Bjola’s book and a series of guest talks on the same topic. We are also seeking input into the organisation of a series of workshops on digital diplomacy (DiploHubs), which aim to bring together diplomatic scholars, practitioners, NGOs, and digital startups to tackle issues of practical relevance for diplomatic work. So if you would like to contribute in any way, please do not hesitate to get in contact.
Paying forward, giving back

A foundation set up by DPhil student Shrochis Karki is enabling children from some of the poorest backgrounds in Nepal to complete their education. Jo Boyce reports.

Jeni Shrestha was the first person in her family to finish primary school. Now, thanks to the Samaanta Foundation established by ODID doctoral student Shrochis Karki, the 19-year-old from a small village in the Kathmandu Valley has not only completed secondary school with excellent results, she has started on a degree in business administration.

Shrochis was carrying out research for his DPhil among schoolchildren in his native Nepal when the need for more funding to help keep high-achieving students in education was vividly brought home to him.

‘Some of the students had done really well in the national secondary level exam,’ he recalls. ‘Despite their success, they faced serious problems with continuing their education for financial reasons, and some students who got distinctions were considering leaving school to migrate to the Middle East to work as labourers.’

That experience inspired Shrochis to establish the Samaanta Foundation in 2012, to provide comprehensive ‘fellowships’ that enable children from low-income rural backgrounds in Nepal to complete their secondary education and, in some cases, go on to university.

The foundation began as a simple gesture of generosity among friends, many of whom had themselves seen their lives transformed through scholarships of various kinds.

‘When I first mentioned the problem to some friends, Vidhan [Rana, now a Samaanta advisor] instantly pledged close to $1,000 to do something about it, and his boldness encouraged me to pledge the same amount,’ Shrochis explains. Other friends, and even some strangers, contributed logistically and financially, and soon the work took on a life of its own.

The foundation initially recruited six fellows, including Jeni, from one school in the Kathmandu Valley, all of whom had performed exceptionally well in the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) taken at the end of 10th grade. ‘We focussed on gifted students because they have proven themselves so far despite the system, so they have the best chance at succeeding through this difficult transition,’ Shrochis says.

According to Shrochis, only around 36 per cent of children in public schools pass the SLC nationally and even those who do pass may find it hard to continue their education; many are likely to drop out and look for work in the informal sector or head to the Middle East if they can raise the funds. Those who stay on might be forced to do so in schools that offer a lower standard of education with an obvious impact on their performance. And the pass rate nationally for both the 11th and 12th grades is just 40 per cent.

Thanks to Samaanta (which means equality in Nepali), the fellows were able to complete the final two years of their secondary education at a private school in Kathmandu, and the foundation renewed the fellowships for three students to continue into tertiary education. One earned a place to study computer science at St Xavier’s College, one of the most prestigious higher education institutions in the country, while Jeni and another student received partial scholarships to study business administration in Kathmandu.

Following further recruitment, the foundation has now supported 14 comprehensive fellowships so far. Shrochis emphasises that the foundation is very much a team effort: ‘Jyoti Pandey ably leads the Nepal team, with support from Dev Mahato and Shishir Pandey, and the foundation would not be where it is today without them.’

Each fellowship costs close to $2,000 a year and securing institutional funding for the foundation has been a struggle, Shrochis admits, because its aims do not necessarily chime with those of traditional NGOs or INGOs.

‘All the emphasis is on low-cost programmes, even if they are ineffective. The costs of sponsoring one fellow in higher education is often equal to the cost of sponsoring 100 primary school students, so everyone wants to sponsor 100 kids and look like they are making a bigger “impact”,’ Shrochis says. ‘Our numbers might not appear sexy enough as a result, but the depth of our impact goes much further.’ The foundation has, however, received funding from Dutch charity Foundation Care for All (FCFA-Netherlands) and since featuring in the New York Times in late 2014, has received new offers of institutional and individual support.

As well as paying for schooling, the foundation provides a mentorship programme to link each fellow to a young professional in their field of interest, and has recently piloted a venture to place fellows as interns in Nepal Investment Bank. The foundation hopes to start a ‘fellowship house’ in 2015 for all the fellows, and expects to supplement room and board with a library and a computer room to facilitate their all-round development.

The fellowships also include a ‘pay it forward’ initiative, in which fellows commit to engaging meaningfully with their communities now and in the future. As the recipients of educational support themselves, the founders see Samaanta ‘as an explicit way for us to give back to our communities what we have received from others in a small but tangible way’ and they hope to nurture a similar mindset among fellows.

‘Our best case scenario … is for these fellows not just to be successful as individuals but also as community leaders,’ Shrochis says. ‘We hope that fellows will succeed in their own lives and then find the motivation to also help others in need.’

Find out more at http://samaanta.org

Jo Boyce is ODID’s Information Officer.

‘Our best case scenario … is for these fellows not just to be successful as individuals but also as community leaders’
Opening a window on art from Africa

Alumna Julie Taylor spoke to *Alpha Abebe* about Guns & Rain, the online gallery she created to provide a platform for fine artists from southern Africa.
In 2008, Julie Taylor briefly left London where she was working for Google to visit Zimbabwe, where she was born and raised. It was a politically and economically turbulent time for many people in the country and during a visit to an art gallery in the capital, Harare, she was shocked by the dire financial conditions many of the artists faced. ‘On a whim I decided to post some images of artworks on a blog site – and three works sold overnight to international buyers,’ she explains. ‘I realised then that the internet could potentially change artists’ lives.’

This experience would eventually give birth to her company Guns & Rain, a curated online gallery of work by contemporary fine artists from southern Africa, including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana.

While Julie was initially drawn to this work for philanthropic reasons, Guns & Rain is a commercial enterprise, which is responding to an emerging demand in the global market. Julie describes how Guns & Rain brings together her interests in both business and development: ‘There are now dozens of online art platforms. Yet despite a recent explosion of international interest in African contemporary art in the offline world, African artists are still hugely under-represented online. Guns & Rain fills the gap for an accessible, affordable, thoughtful, intelligent representation and curation of this art. Hence, whilst Guns & Rain is a business, I’m informed by social development concerns, which include both artist and audience development.’

Julie’s interest in development extends beyond her company. She completed her BA in Social Anthropology at Cambridge University prior to completing her MPhil and DPhil in Development Studies at ODID, as a Rhodes Scholar and Beit Fellow. She is the author of Naming the Land: San Identity and Community Conservation in Namibia’s West Caprivi, which is based on her doctoral research with San indigenous communities.

Her time as an anthropologist was in many ways a training ground for her current work with Guns & Rain. Both involve efforts to collect and represent the life stories and perspectives of people and communities of interest. Julie’s anthropology training also taught her ‘how to see things from different perspectives’ and drew her attention not only to the narratives told by the art, but also the interesting life histories of the artists themselves. Guns & Rain has become a platform to ‘support in recording, sharing and marketing these narratives and stories.’

Guns & Rain primarily features the work of emerging artists, as well as some who are more established. Julie looks for artists who are committed to their work, have a promising trajectory, and who explore themes through their work that resonate with her personally. ‘The name “Guns & Rain” comes from the work of South African-born British anthropologist and playwright David Lan, who wrote about guerrillas and spirit mediums in Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle – for its reference to nature, culture, identity, land, struggle, change, and many other important African themes,’ she explains. ‘These themes were, and still are, of strong interest to me both personally as a white female southern African, and academically. They certainly influence the selection and curation of works in Guns & Rain, because I’m more likely to resonate with artists and work which engages with those themes.’

‘Whilst Guns & Rain is a business, I’m informed by social development concerns, which include both artist and audience development’
There are a number of fascinating art initiatives emerging across the continent. However, Julie is careful to recognise and correct the common misconception that Africa is a homogenous place and that one can speak meaningfully about ‘African art’ as a singular thing.

‘I think there’s still a tendency, like in many industries, to see Africa as “a country”. There’s little appreciation, sometimes even within the continent, about the vast scale and range of artistic creativity in Africa.’

Julie describes the contemporary arts scene in South Africa as ‘vibrant, buoyant, lots going on, an interesting mix between old-school establishment and an emerging post-apartheid community of younger artists, plus some legendary figureheads like William Kentridge.’

In countries such as Zimbabwe, ‘artists have had to work within significant, sometimes extreme, resource constraints. This has often meant that they engage with different types of material than those working in more privileged environments’, including found and recycled objects. In the Southern African region where Julie recruits artists, the contemporary arts scene reflects both continuities with colonial and European art heritage and tradition (i.e. certain styles of painting or printmaking), as well as new and quite different aesthetics, which she describes as ‘exciting.’

Ultimately, it is the marriage between quality art and web technology that makes Guns & Rain so innovative. Julie has been able to successfully leverage over six years’ of work experience with Google, which included more than four years as Head of Communications for their Sub-Saharan Africa division. By putting the gallery online and enabling easy online purchasing, Julie is helping to close the gap between emerging artists on the continent and the global marketplace. This has also kept overheads low, allowing her to keep the prices of the art more competitive and accessible to a wide range of customers, including students and young professionals who make up over 25 per cent of sales. Web technology and social media has played an important role in raising broader awareness about African contemporary art. Julie explains that ‘people are often much more willing to explore a gallery or a museum online rather than in person, where those spaces can sometimes be a bit intimidating.’

Julie has managed to achieve an incredible amount of success to date; yet she describes her journey as really just beginning in many ways. ‘It’s still early days for the business, and there’s a lot to be done, so I think 2015 is going to be a year of hard but exciting work. Next up are some collaborations with arts professionals in London and New York to get more African contemporary work on the global radar; and I’m also looking forward to scouting for artists in new countries.’

Her journey in education continues as well. Julie admits that she still has ‘a lot to learn about both art and business.’ In fact, she is returning to school in 2015 to do a part-time master’s in History of Art at Wits University in Johannesburg. ‘I’m looking forward to stepping back into an academic environment.’

Moving back and forth between academia and the private sector has proven to be a winning combination for Julie and will likely continue to yield creative and innovative results for her projects ahead.

Find out more at http://gunsandrain.com
ODID students regularly go on to work as economists in developing country governments through the Overseas Development Institute Fellowship scheme. Below, Professor Christopher Adam recalls his life-changing experience as a fellow in Swaziland in the 1980s and, overleaf, alumna Elizabeth Brower describes her current posting in Ghana.

Christopher Adam
Professor of Development Economics, ODID
ODI Fellow 1987–89, Ministry of Finance, Swaziland

In 1987, armed with an MPhil in Economics from Oxford, I was weighing up some attractive job offers. In one hand sat offers from the UK Treasury and the Bank of England and in the other a two-year ODI Fellowship. With no background in development economics and only the haziest of ideas about the ODI, but filled with a desire to escape what was shaping up to be a very conventional career path (and, to be honest, to escape the greyness of mid-1980s Britain), I plumped for the latter and for the next two years, I worked as an assistant secretary in the Budget Division of the Ministry of Finance in Swaziland.

It may be rather clichéd to say so, but that uncharacteristically impulsive decision changed the direction of my life and has had a huge influence on my professional career as an academic economist ever since. Although I have not been back since my time in the ministry, and although none of my subsequent research has been on Swaziland, my two years as an ODI Fellow there taught me a huge amount about how economies work in practice and about the politics and practice of economic policy-making. These formative experiences continue to shape my research, which remains anchored in the macroeconomics of Africa.

My position as assistant secretary placed me on the lowest professional grade in the ministry, but with only 12 professional staff it was senior enough for me to be at the heart of the economic policy process. And although this small (and, to be honest, at times rather dysfunctional) country had a budget not much larger than that of Oxford City Council, it was still a fully fledged country with a parliament, monetary and fiscal policies; and full membership of the UN, the World Bank and the IMF programme. We took decisions that really mattered for peoples’ lives and we engaged with the world outside the borders: what more could a young macro-economist ask for?

Almost 30 years on, the experience remains vivid but some key memories do stand out. The first was being asked, within the first three months of arriving in the country, to produce the first draft of the finance minister’s Budget Speech, and then sitting in the ‘officals’ box at Parliament on Budget Day scribbling hasty notes for the minister as questions rained in from MPs.

The second was finding myself in an ill-tempered high-level meeting in at the South African Parliament in Cape Town as part of the Swaziland-Botswana-Lesotho delegation negotiating VAT reforms in Southern Africa in the presence of the National Party’s old guard, Foreign Minister Pik Botha and his namesake, State President PW Botha.

The third was writing speeches for the minister for finance. He didn’t like to speak off the cuff so I wrote on everything and anything, from speeches in Parliament steering the new Mining Tax Act into law, to a tricky address to senior Coca-Cola executives who were ‘dis-investing’ from South Africa and looking to secure a sweetheart investment deal from Swaziland. But my favourite speech was probably the minister’s ‘first-person’ account of his memories of Swaziland’s Independence Day Celebrations in 1968. This was an interview for the inflight magazine of the Royal Swazi National Airline Corporation and the fact that in 1968 the minister was studying in the United States and I had just celebrated my fifth birthday did not deter us from producing a vivid account of the day!

My other key memory from that time was living and working in the shadow of South Africa. The economic fortunes of Swaziland always have been and always will be dominated by its large neighbour, but in the late 1980s it was the politics of what turned out to be the final days of the Apartheid regime that set the rhythm of our lives. At the time, the end-game seemed a long way off and there was every sign getting there would be brutish and protracted and would engulf not just Swaziland but the whole of the Frontline states of Southern Africa. The politics of the struggle were intense, the music, theatre and literature were raw and impassioned and like many ODI Fellows in the region, I felt myself drawn deeply into what to us was a defining political issue of the day. It was both an exciting and a very sobering experience.

Being a former ODI Fellow is a privilege and a pleasure. Having stayed intimately engaged with the economics of Africa since I returned from Swaziland in 1989, I am constantly bumping into former fellows. Whether on the fringes of academic conferences, at DFID in London or at the World Bank and IMF in Washington DC, I can almost guarantee that a conversation will start: ‘you’re an ex-ODI Fellow aren’t you? So was I; where were you posted?’ What is particularly pleasing these days is that this conversation plays out with former students from our programmes in ODID.
The highlight of being an ODI Fellow is getting the rare opportunity to work as an African civil servant, rather than within an external organisation. This is a truly unique experience, one only aided by Ghanaians' warmth and openness to foreigners. I felt accepted in the office from day one, which comes with its positives and negatives. On the one hand, you are respected and given work from the start; on the other, you are also expected to know how to weave your way through the bureaucratic systems almost immediately. The working conditions take some adjustment; there is no air conditioning (or fan) in my office and no internet. Needless to say, the work is sometimes frustrating, however a little patience and flexibility goes a long way.

My main role in the Girl’s Education Unit is to manage a large, aid-funded scholarship for about 50,000 needy, junior high school girls around the country. A colleague and I coordinate the implementation of the scholarship, which involves a lot of administration, but includes training District Heads of Girls’ Education across the country to implement the scholarship. I also have to ensure our team receives data on every scholarship recipient, her background, attendance and performance, which is where my economics skills prove very useful.

Travelling around the country training the District Heads is an exciting aspect of the job. The last session we ran consisted of a room full of colourfully dressed Ghanaian women completing ICT training. The day started with a prayer, followed by a song and a dance. Training people who have never used a computer how to store data on an Excel spreadsheet was not the easiest of tasks. However, this gave me a useful insight into problems that can arise when implementing projects in the field.

Even amidst the adventure, risks need to be considered. One weekend I travelled with my boyfriend to the largest national park in the country, about four hours’ drive from the city. On the Saturday afternoon I started to feel ill, and by Saturday evening I had been diagnosed with malaria by a nearby health clinic. By night my condition worsened and we set off to the closest hospital in a small town two hours away. My boyfriend had to purchase my medication (quinine), food and water from the town; there was nothing provided by the hospital. Blood tests showed that I had also contracted typhoid fever, so I was treated for that as well. Although I was in a small, public hospital I was given exactly the right treatment at exactly the right time, treatment which essentially saved my life. I felt scared at times, however the experience gave me a true insight into the challenges faced by the public health care system. After three days I was discharged and came away feeling extremely lucky. I was in awe of the five doctors who worked in the hospital and how much of a difference they made.

One of my biggest aims over the next two years is to leave the team with a quality data project that they can use to illustrate the causes of girls’ low attendance and performance and set some solid foundations for gathering and using data in the future. Then I will feel that I have truly made a difference.
In September 2011, right before leaving central Africa to start my DPhil, I met with a distant relative in Bukavu, DR Congo. Eric had landed in then-Zaïre by accident in the late 80s and had been in love with the Kivus ever since. He wanted to discuss an idea he had had with his old friend Guillaume Baguma, the director of a youth and cultural centre in Goma (the Foyer Culturel): organising an international music and dance festival in the city. I was thrilled: the project seemed just crazy enough to work. He needed some connections with Burundian artists, so I started working on this, and soon on anything I could do to help from Oxford.

Two years later, as the Guardian and the Courrier International were praising the emerging musical scene in Goma, the festival was taking shape: financing from businesses and international organisations, as well as through crowdfunding, was being secured; logistics were being arranged through contacts in Kampala and the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO); and a few African hip-hop stars had accepted our invitation. In Goma, the Foyer Culturel was selecting local artists during weekly concerts. In June, an official press conference announced the festival, which would be titled Amani (‘peace’ in Swahili) and dedicated to promoting peace. NGOs, international organisations, and politicians were invited to join in, but for once were not in the driving seat. The festival was planned for 30 August–1 September.

Just a month before, combat resumed around Goma, and on 26 August the M-23 rebels shelled the city. With a heavy heart we decided to cancel our festival for peace. This blow left us out of pocket but also with hundreds of enthusiastic volunteers and supporters in Goma and abroad. Over the next few months, as the M-23 were being defeated, it became clear that the festival had only been delayed.

The first Amani festival finally took place on 14–16 February 2014. Some 25,000 people gathered in the College Mwenga, danced, sang, and applauded – even Rwandese artists. MONUSCO chief Martin Kobler danced with local star Innocent Balume and ministers were equally restless in the VIP space. UN peacekeepers and the Congolese police provided security and reported no serious incidents, in spite of the thousands of people who had to remain outside as the capacity of the stadium was exceeded. Over 500 volunteers, most of them in their early 20s or even younger, worked on the festival and shortly after it finished, social media was buzzing with calls for a second edition.

At the time of writing, DR Congo is going through new political problems, but the second festival will nonetheless take place. Crowdfunding is still ongoing but the artists are already known: headliners include Ivorian reggae legend Tiken Jah Fakoly, Mali’s new talent Habib Koité, and a true Congolese star from Kinshasa, Bill Clinton (Kalonji). The $1-a-day tickets are selling quickly and 33,000 festival-goers are expected. New volunteers have also joined the team, making us hope that the new reference music and dance festival of the Great Lakes region is here to stay.

The 2015 Amani festival took place in Goma on 13–15 February.

Jean-Benoît Falisse is a DPhil student at ODID. His research explores mechanisms of community governance in healthcare in Burundi and South Kivu, DR Congo.

Find out more at www.amanifestival.com
Examining structures of Islamic authority

A major new research project was launched at the department in 2014, led by Masooda Bano, University Research Lecturer and Associate Professor, and titled Changing Structures of Islamic Authority and Consequences for Social Change.

Since September 11, research on Muslims in Europe or in the Muslim-majority countries has focussed primarily on understanding the causes of religious radicalisation. Less attention has been given to the growing number of initiatives among Muslims in the West aimed at bringing about intellectual revival within Islamic thought, or to the changes coming from within some of the most influential traditional structures of Islamic authority – such as Al-Azhar University, Dar-ul Uloom Deoband, Diyanet, and Al-Medina University – in response to the new context of the 21st century.

This project aims to fill this gap. It seeks to understand the emergence and growth of the new intellectual reform movement in the West and the background and methodological approaches advocated by the actors leading it. It aims to situate the development of this movement within broader challenges to traditional Islamic authority structures triggered by shifting Muslim youth demographics in both the West and the Muslim-majority countries.

The project will also highlight the spaces that are emerging for engagement between the Islamic and Western scholarly traditions and inform theories of religious behaviour.

The research is funded by a 1.4 million euro European Research Council (ERC) Start-Up Grant.

Future research leaders

Two ODID Junior Research Fellows won ESRC Future Research Leaders awards in 2014.

The scheme aims to support outstanding early career researchers to carry out excellent research and to develop all aspects of their research and knowledge exchange skills. The two three-year awards total around £340,000.

Dr Oliver Owen’s research will explore tax and the social contract in Nigeria, looking at how relationships between government and the public change as many of Nigeria’s states move away from relying heavily on oil revenues towards re-engaging with direct taxation of the public.

Dr Indrajit Roy will examine the transmission of political ideas, identities and practices by labour migrants in India. He intends to uncover the ambivalent and heterogeneous ways in which labour migrants originating in rural Bihar conduct politics in their home and destination localities, as well as while they are on the move. He will use a combination of surveys, elite interviews, archival investigation and ethnographic fieldwork.
Valpy FitzGerald retires

Development Finance, joined the department in October 1993 and was Head of Department between 2007 and 2012. The department marked the occasion with a workshop on ‘Economic Management under Stress’ in November. The workshop encompassed the broad range of issues to which Valpy has contributed, including the causes and consequences of financial shocks, trends in income distribution in Latin America, and the consequences of conflict, with special attention to Nicaragua, where Valpy was an adviser from 1979 to 1986. Participants included Valpy’s colleagues and former colleagues, as well as former students.

Valpy’s first retirement project is to write the history of Queen Elizabeth House (see box opposite).

MNEs and MDGs

The Technology and Management Centre for Development began work on a major new project funded by the EU 7th Framework programme in 2014. MNEmerge: MNEs and Global Development is a collaborative research project which aims to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the impact of multinational enterprises (MNEs) on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in developing countries, using case studies and quantitative data as well as policy analysis.

Instead of trying to combat poverty by giving foreign aid, more permanent results could be achieved by educating local people to help themselves, which could be accomplished through MNEs. Companies possess the money, knowledge and innovation to help the citizens and governments of developing countries improve their living conditions. The MNEmerge research team is studying how multinational enterprises operate in developing countries, what kind of benefits the companies get from operating there, and how cooperation between companies and decision-makers could be strengthened.

Field research will be carried out in three countries, Brazil, Ghana and India. In Brazil, the objective is to study how rural communities could be electrified in a cost-effective manner. Research in Ghana focusses on assessing the impact of the operations of large Chinese enterprises in Africa. In India the aim is to study how sanitation and hygiene could be enhanced in rural communities in order to improve people’s health and capacity for work.

More news

The department appointed John Gledhill as Associate Professor of Global Governance in Michaelmas 2014. John was previously a departmental lecturer at ODID teaching on the MSc in Global Governance and Diplomacy. John’s research investigates conflict processes, post-conflict reconstruction, state formation and dissolution, the politics of transitional justice, and transnational social mobilisation. He continues to teach on the MSc in Global Governance and Diplomacy, running the foundation course in Global Governance as well as offering a number of options papers.

Matthew Gibney was awarded the title of Professor in the annual Recognition of Distinction exercise in 2014. He is now Elizabeth Colson Professor of Politics and Forced Migration. Matthew is a political scientist who has written widely on issues relating to refugees, migration control and citizenship from the perspectives of normative political theory and comparative politics.

The International Migration Institute won awards totalling over £750,000 for two new projects. European Welfare States in Times of Mobility is a Noface-funded project that will be led by NIDI Netherlands in partnership with IMI. The project aims to understand the role of welfare systems in destination and origin countries for migration patterns within and towards Europe. ‘The TRANSMIC: Political Remittances: Migration, Social Transformation and Revolution’ project, funded by Marie Curie ITN, and in partnership with Maastricht University, will examine the conditions for and effects of transnational migration, the possibilities for the mobility of migrants’ rights to be enhanced, and the links between migration, citizenship, and migration and development.


Associate Professor Corneliu Bjola won an OxTALENT award for enhancing students’ learning experience using social media. He uses Facebook to post daily news on diplomatic affairs as well as Storify, media. He uses Facebook to post daily news on diplomatic affairs as well as Storify, political remittances, used to be: climate change and energy scarcity, has won an honourable mention in the Rachel Carson Environment Book Award. The book was published in August 2013 by MIT Press. Read an interview about the book in SEJournal: www.sej.org/publications/sejournal/overview

Associate Professor Corneliu Bjola won an OxTALENT award for enhancing students’ learning experience using social media. He uses Facebook to post daily news on diplomatic affairs as well as Storify, which helps students conduct research and present the outcome of their research for group projects.

Wanted: Your QEH Memories!

Valpy FitzGerald has been commissioned to write a History of QEH from its foundation in 1954 until the present day. He would be delighted to receive memories (oral or written) of QEH students, academics and administrative staff – particularly for the 1960s, 70s and 80s.

He would also be grateful for any photographs that might be relevant (to be copied and returned of course). He will be organising a series of seminars as work progresses, to which anyone from the past or present ‘QEH family’ who happens to be in Oxford is invited. For details, see www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/events-1

The department was sorry to say goodbye to Professor Valpy FitzGerald, who retired in October. Valpy, Professor of International Development Finance, joined the department in October 1993 and was Head of Department between 2007 and 2012.
STAY IN TOUCH

The department uses the University database, DARS, for information on alumni. If you think your details may be missing or out-of-date on the database, please update them through the University's alumni website: www.alumni.ox.ac.uk.

You can always keep in touch with what’s happening at the department through social media. You can find us on Facebook and Twitter and we have course-specific LinkedIn groups for all our master’s courses.

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www.qeh.ox.ac.uk

SEND US YOUR STORIES

If you would like to write a story for the next issue of the magazine, or have news you would like to contribute, please email alumni@qeh.ox.ac.uk. We are always happy to hear from you.

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