



PROJECT IN THE PIPELINE! project coordinator GOALie Keith Porter, from Sligo, with local man and civil engineer Hassan Abker from AL Fasher putting in a new water pump for villagers in the Kutum area of Northern Darfur, Sudan
Pictures: Trent Keegan

Aid agency urges us to reach a new GOAL

BY HELEN MCGURK

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If you are an accountant, engineer or project manager, you might not have thought of yourself as being in a life-saving profession. Think again.

John O'Shea, founder and chief executive of Irish aid agency GOAL, wants to hear from professionals from Northern Ireland who would like to make a difference in the Third World, in countries torn apart by war, natural disaster or poverty.

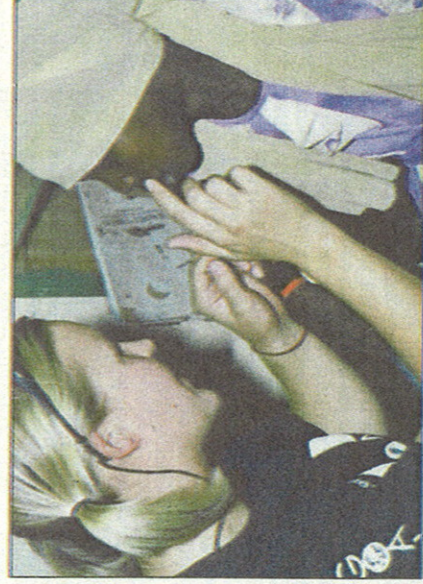
GOAL, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, says there is an urgent need for volunteers, or what it calls GOALies, to work in developing countries such as Kenya, Malawi, Niger, Darfur, Sudan, Ethiopia, Congo, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zimbabwe. "We are suffering from a shortage of quality people - people with the ability to run major programmes in Third World countries where corruption is a way of life; where bureaucracy is endemic; where getting a job done is extremely difficult. So, we are looking for project managers, structural engineers, doctors, nurses, midwives, accountants, logicians, entrepreneurs, neural people - people who are able to find a way of getting a job done," said Mr O'Shea.

They don't grow on trees and they

are usually found in very big companies making a lot of money. I am trying to prise people away from that line of activity for maybe a year and offer them an opportunity that they wouldn't get normally in the West. To give a period of your life to live in the Third World with a vibrant agency is very rewarding."

Mr O'Shea said many GOALies stay on for more than a year and there's plenty of scope for movement into management positions and paid employment.

A recent example of GOAL's work was in Sri Lanka. Several schools were devastated by the tsunami in December, 2004, and hundreds more were severely damaged after thousands of homeless tsunami



CENTRE OF CARE!
GOALie nurse Emily Begg, from Antrim, at GOAL's clinic in Kutum, North Darfur

survivors took refuge in schools for several weeks.

With a budget of €20 million, GOAL rebuilt and rehabilitated 66 schools in the Anpara district and provided associated educational resources. This meant 36,000 children could continue with their education after one of the most traumatic years of their lives.

Mr O'Shea, a former sports journalist, explains that GOAL provides relief and long-term development.

"When there is a major disaster on the planet, it is expected of us. As a consequence we have been in Darfur for the last three years. There are two places that are vying for the dubious title of the worst

place in the world. One is the Congo, where five million people have died as a result of the greed of seven neighbouring countries, all of which are supported by the West. Darfur has been a tragedy for three years. Four hundred thousand people are dead; 3.4 million people have their lives hanging by a thread," he said.

It works towards ensuring that the most vulnerable in the world and those affected by humanitarian crises have access to the fundamental needs and rights of life such as food, water, shelter, medical attention and primary education. It is non-denominational, non-governmental and non-political.

GOAL has campaigned on: Third World corruption; the international arms trade; the need for an international standing army to protect civilians in times of war; the importance of transparency and accountability in the handling of overseas aid; child trafficking; street children and HIV/AIDS.

Since its inception GOAL has sent 1,300 GOALies to work in the developing world, alongside many thousand local staff and spent over €400 million on the delivery of aid.

So why not transfer your skills to where they could make the difference between life and death?

GOAL can be contacted by writing to PO BOX 18, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin, tel. 00353 1280 9778, email info@goal.ie or visit www.goal.ie