

# HEADINGTON HEADLINES

Winter 2011 Newsletter



Dr. Donald Bosch

Photo: Security Training Scenario

## Security Training Nairobi, Kenya

We felt the first raindrops just as the kidnapping scenario was about to begin at the Kenya military/UN training center. This came as a welcome relief from the intense sun for the participants, who would soon be hooded with black sacks and bound in hand restraints. During the next training session, they would be interrogated by hostile militia commanders, held in makeshift huts with blaring obnoxious music, and made to do useless repetitive tasks. Here, they would learn to control their physical and emotional reactions, increasing their chances of survival in a real life emergency.

During these training scenarios, I help ensure that no one is pushed beyond their limits. Since I've already coached participants in psychological survival skills, I'm there to provide support. Occasionally, someone exits a scenario mid-stream, and then we talk. More often than not, these are moments of insight, enabling them to draw connections between their current reactions and their history. Because participants completed a prior online assessment, I can modulate the experience for those who need more gradual exposure. Typically, they return to complete the scenario.

I help participants understand how the brain functions in dangerous situations, and get familiar with their own unique responses. This prepares them for what they may encounter in the field. Rather than shocking and overwhelming them, the program carefully blends elements of advance preparation with realistic immersion. The team of highly skilled security trainers ensures both the grim realism of the scenarios, and the safety of all participants.

Toward the end of this particular training program, the regional security advisor motioned me over. He had just learned that two aid workers from another organization had been abducted that day from the same location we were preparing this team to enter. In that one awful moment, I again felt clarity as to why the Headington Institute would choose to assist with such difficult training exercises. We do it to help aid workers have the best chance of surviving the horrors that accompany fieldwork in today's world.

**-Dr. Donald Bosch, Director of Counseling Services**



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## Sudan what's next?

**Brent will head to both South and North Sudan to help lead and facilitate training workshops with leaders of a humanitarian organization.**

photo: Sudan

## From the President



In addition to the clinical services we offer in the field, we provide online training materials read or viewed by thousands of people each month. This has become an important way for us to assist humanitarian workers around the world, most of whom we may never meet.

Generous charitable donations have made it possible for us to offer these free resources in several languages. Now, Dr. Linda Wagener is creating training materials easily accessed by mobile devices (phones & tablets), using a more concise blog format. She is focusing on gender issues facing today's relief & development workers, such as safety and security, organizational and management dynamics, sexual harassment, and cultural customs.

We believe these materials will equip those we serve with the information and personal insight needed to work more effectively in high risk, high stress environments. Please contact me if you'd like to donate funds or services to support this important effort. Thanks.

**- Jim Guy, President & Cofounder**

## Thoughts from our new extern

Annie Mathew



As part of my training, I had the privilege of visiting Haiti, as the current Clinical Psychology Extern at Headington Institute. I was excited to be part of this trip, because it provided an opportunity to learn about clinical work in an international,

humanitarian context. During this trip, we met with relief workers and university student interns. Beyond the basic infrastructure challenges, they shared about facing complex issues, such as, an increase in teenage pregnancies, lack of resources to deal with displaced children, and the lack of security due to increased kidnappings.

I observed Dr. Rick Williamson (Consulting Psychologist, Headington Institute), lead training sessions with relief workers, as well as the University of Haiti faculty and students. They appreciated the workshops and discussions. This trip also provided an opportunity to reflect on future possibilities, including parallel workshops for management level personnel, and developing an effective clinical supervision structure for the university students. I hope these discussions will help inform my work here, and back in India.

I continue to be awed by the resilience, the dignity, and the strength of the people I have met in Haiti. They displayed grace and hope in spite of the circumstances surrounding them.

**-Annie Mathew, Psychology Extern**

