

CHARLOTTE DI VITA'S FUNDRAISING CAREER



Charlotte di Vita was born 5th September, 1966. She was educated in Italy and Britain and graduated from Edinburgh University in 1988, aged 21 years, with an M.A.

After graduation, Charlotte di Vita worked as a voluntary research, marketing and fundraising consultant for various environmental, human rights and medical organisations in Britain, Romania and the USA.

In 1988, she raised US\$45,00 for environmental research and development projects from private sponsorship in the USA.

In 1990, Charlotte di Vita took on the role of co-ordinator of The First Anglo-Brazilian Conference on the Environment, held in Brasilia. The objective of the Conference was for the British and Brazilian governments to consider ways by which the destruction of Brazilian virgin forest could be halted, and degraded land returned to useful purposes. H.R.H. The Prince of Wales was the patron of the Conference, which was sponsored by the British Overseas Development Administration (now D.F.I.D) and private sector.

Directly after the conference, Charlotte di Vita secured a donation of US1,250,000 from the British private sector for Pro-Natura, a Brazilian-based Rainforest Preservation non-profit organisation.

This donation has funded the organisation and management of the Juruena project, which examines extractivist reserve techniques, agricultural improvement schemes and land revitalisation techniques for communities settled on the margins of the rainforest. The project has created alternatives to logging and agriculturally degrading land practices in order to halt further encroachment into virgin forest by Juruena's farmers. Over the following 10 years the project grew to influence over 10million hectares of rainforest, an area larger than the British Isles.

In 1990, Charlotte di Vita contributed to the Body Shop Romanian Orphan Appeal by raising sponsorship of pharmaceutical products, childcare products and construction materials valued at US\$22,750 for orphanages and children's hospitals in Romania.

She was a member of Amnesty International's Business Group's co-ordination committee from its inception in 1990 until 1992.

To support her voluntary work, Charlotte di Vita worked as an environmental corporate consultant for several British firms from 1990-1992.

In 1992, Charlotte di Vita initiated the trade plus aid concept designed to raise and diversify local incomes in developing countries by promoting trade of environmentally-sustainable handicrafts by marketing these products internationally. The first project was established in Ghana in 1992.

Between 1993 and 1996, Charlotte di Vita successfully completed four voluntary assignments for BESO (British Executive Services Overseas) in Kenya, Thailand & Brazil.

In 1993 Charlotte di Vita was a finalist in the Cosmopolitan Achievement Awards for her voluntary work.

By 1994, through the sale of handicrafts, Charlotte was able to fund food security and community-owned seed-credit schemes to revitalise devastated farms in the Bawku region. 6472 farmers, 4,062 of which were women, received ground nut and sorghum seed, allowing them to grow the area's staple diet to feed 25,000 people.

By 1995, Charlotte's trading initiatives had also raised funds to build and equip three schools and to train 37 teachers to give 1,100 children in Bawku, with no previous access to education, the opportunity for schooling.

By 1997, Trade plus Aid® had contributed to the economic development of disadvantaged and marginalised communities in twelve developing countries on three continents: Africa (Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia); Asia (India, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand); South America (Peru, Guatemala, Belize, Brazil).

These communities sought Trade plus Aid's assistance to develop their skills and resources through design and quality training, interest-free credit and the marketing of their handicrafts. These handicrafts included: environmentally-conscious jewellery, musical instruments, household ornaments, picture frames, candles and candle sticks, baskets, tableware, traditional dolls, Christmas tree ornaments, handmade paper products, rainforest toiletries, skin and hair products made from natural ingredients. Principal markets were the U.K., Germany and Japan.

The difference between Trade plus Aid® and other traditional alternative trading organisations or fair trade companies in the UK has been its focus on assisting and encouraging communities to become self-sufficient by trading directly and independently with commercial customers.

In 1997, with the Bawku projects successfully completed, Charlotte di Vita began to look at projects in Kenya, South Africa, Zambia, Peru and Guatemala, where she could help some of the world's poorest communities by donating her time, her skills and her company's profits. Charlotte di Vita led Trade plus Aid® into urban slums of South Africa where she funded and devised ingenious commercial concepts to generate income for organisations working with abandoned children, child prostitutes, abused and battered women. She also successfully aided a workshop for the mentally-challenged in Kenya which was threatened with closure.

In 1997, with the majority of Trade plus Aid's producer groups successfully trading independently, Charlotte di Vita sought a new challenge.

In 1997 Charlotte di Vita first travelled to China to help revive a traditional 17th-century enamelling technique, which had originally been introduced to the Chinese Imperial Court through gifts made to the Chinese Emperor Kang Shee. Charlotte's aim was to create employment for villagers in a region of Northern China that traditionally had suffered from harsh poverty and unemployment. Charlotte di Vita traced a master craftsman who had been trained by court masters of the Forbidden City and together they designed a range of handcrafted and hand-painted miniature enamel collectable teapots.

Charlotte di Vita launched the first collection of miniature enamels in May 1998 into a buoyant UK collectibles market to instant success. Demand for the product immediately exceeded supply and created secure employment and fair working conditions for over 300 Chinese artists and craftspeople, as well as providing a national platform for Trade plus Aid's ethical trading partnerships. Prestigious retailers such as Harrods, Fortnum & Mason, and Saks Fifth Avenue supported this first fair trade programme in China by promoting the miniature enamels.

In October 1998, Charlotte di Vita was invested as a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) by Her Majesty The Queen at Buckingham Palace. Charlotte di Vita was awarded this honour for her work with trade plus aid. Charlotte in turn presented Her Majesty with one of the first of her miniature enamel teapots.

In 2001, Charlotte di Vita established a new partnership to found new manufacturing in China's Southern Economic Zone to ensure the production of her miniature enamels. By this time, the enamelling factory in northern China could operate self-sufficiently and continue to trade independently of Trade plus Aid®.

In 2001, the enamels were officially re-launched under the Charlotte di Vita Collections™ brand name, which is now recognised in the giftware trade as a leading, miniature enamel collectibles brand.

In the same year, Charlotte agreed a distribution agreement with W. Goebel Porzellanfabrik, one of the giftware trade's most respected and well-established collectibles companies. This partnership has positioned the Charlotte di Vita Collections™ as a worldwide collectible brand.

In 2002, following a very successful initial year, Goebel agreed a new four-year licensing deal that guarantees Charlotte a minimum licensing fee of US\$1.3 million over four years.

Between 1992 and 2003, Charlotte di Vita's trading initiatives have not only been able to return US\$4,480,200 to producer groups in 21 countries, as payment for their handicrafts, but have also raised US\$347,200 to fund development projects in 12 countries.

Charlotte continues to make donations to the Trade plus Aid® charitable trust from funds raised through the sale of the Charlotte di Vita Collections™. In 2002, Charlotte di Vita visited South-East Asia, China and Africa in order to research potential development projects for the Trade plus Aid® charitable trust.

From 2003, the Trade plus Aid® charitable trust is funding 10 new development projects designed to alleviate poverty in less developed countries in Africa and Asia.

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