



Forging Links Newsletter Spring 2023



**TOOLS FOR
SELF RELIANCE**
Practical help for practical people since 1980

Following a year of evaluation visits to our projects, and as we head into our next five-year strategy, we have been reflecting on the historical bias in vocational training programmes towards men.

There are several reasons for this. The range of trades offered and the structure of training programmes discourage many female applicants; formal training programmes often have strict and lengthy schedules, high entry level criteria, expected attendance on a full-time basis and candidates must often forfeit time spent on income generating activities during training. These factors significantly inhibit women from applying for training and they face further barriers after training in setting up a business and attracting customers.

While our partners have worked hard to ensure women join their training programmes, they are often limited to tailoring as their main pathway for training and employment success. As part of our upcoming strategy, we are committing to reducing barriers for women to join our training projects, including addressing childcare needs, the schedule of programmes, meal provisions, transport needs and entry requirements amongst other. We have also been working with partners to explore new trades where women have a chance to excel. We are already seeing very encouraging results in catering and hairdressing and we are pleased to outline some of these in this edition of Forging Links.

SIERRA LEONE

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (GEWE)

The Government of Sierra Leone passed the GEWE, described as a ground-breaking piece of legislation that puts Sierra Leone at the forefront of women's rights in the region.

The GEWE act is a wide-ranging policy hoping to serve as a **“...roadmap for achieving equal treatment of men and women in Sierra Leone...whilst achieving livelihood and social protection for all.”** Within the policy thirteen specific objectives have been set out, however, some have grabbed more headlines than others.

30% of public and private jobs *must* now be reserved for women, 30% of candidates put forward for electoral positions by all parties *must* be female, at least 14-weeks maternity leave *must* be guaranteed, and equal access to bank credit and training opportunities *must* be ensured. The language here is pointedly clear, these policies are non-negotiable, and the government expects them to be followed. However, as with any law the proof will be in the general public's acceptance and the enforcement of the law by the authorities. On the last point, the new GEWE act does have some teeth, businesses can be fined up to £2,000 for not applying the legal ratios and opening access to the female workforce.

Sierra Leone is a nation of eight million people, with women making up over 50% of the population – to build the economy without engaging four million people is a non-starter. With a median age of 19 years the potential workforce is huge and the hope is this piece of legislation can propel the economy forward for generations to come whilst tackling some deeply entrenched social barriers. As with most significant changes, however this begins with...education.

Against this backdrop Tools for Self Reliance are increasing our offer to young women in Sierra Leone. Through developing training syllabi in non-gendered trades, providing access to business start-up grants, and breaking barriers to project inclusion, female trainees will be guided along realistic pathways to sustained livelihood development.



Tools for Ghana

Our volunteers have been busy packing our tool shipment for Ghana. **110 tool kits** and **63 sewing machines** will support our training projects in carpentry, construction, motor bike mechanics, appliance repair and tailoring.





MALAWI

Our very own dragon...

Yamikani Mike Chunga is the Executive Director of the **Lilongwe Youth Organisation (LYO)**. Starting from its roots as the umbrella body of 35 youth clubs and based in the heart of Kauma village, on the bustling peri-urban outskirts of South-west Lilongwe, LYO has been running projects which focus on providing care and support to vulnerable and disadvantaged people for over 20 years. Tools For Self Reliance has been working with Mike and his team since 2015, running vocational training projects and developing the skills of approximately 1,100 graduates in a variety of trades.

In the summer of 2022, as Lilongwe life was recovering from COVID 19, Mike was approached by a group of women from the neighbourhood. They were struggling, and they wanted his help. They could not sacrifice enough time to sign up for a vocational skills training programme but recognized that the businesses they had built were not resilient enough to ride out the economic legacy of the pandemic. The women wanted to learn how to run their activities better; they needed to keep records and accounts, access new markets for their products, develop new ways to secure investments and to find and keep their customers.

After some exciting months of discussions, the Women's Business Development Pilot Project was born. But right from the start it was nicknamed the "Dragons' Den" project and without an equivalent mythological creature in Malawian tradition, the name stuck. With a twist on the original format, 60 women were brought together each Saturday for an intensive training day on business skills followed by a dynamic discussion on wellbeing and health run by the nurse from the local family planning clinic.

By the third month of the project, staff agreed the star performers and these enterprising women attended additional sessions to finalise their business plans and brush up their pitching skills. On 8th February, the final 15 presented their business plan and grant request to our panel of dragons.

Annie Mpanganeni, from our Lilongwe partner, FESODEV agreed to join local business people and dignitaries on the panel of 5 dragons. As a seasoned project manager and local resident, we knew that Annie would have a sound eye for a successful businesses venture. Would Annie mind being referred to as a dragon? Not a bit. **“Dragons are rich and powerful and have to judge who can coax the gold away”** she said. **“I was proud to be a dragon, it was a great day.”**

Our 8 lucky winners have received grants to invest in their enterprises and are confident that their businesses will grow as they apply their new skills. Mike negotiated free accounts at the local bank, so the women have a safe place to deposit the grants as they are drawn down for business needs according to their new plans. The LYO team will work alongside the women as they progress, continuing to provide mentorship and troubleshooting for challenges which may arise. For the women who could not tempt the dragons to part with gold, the team are linking them up with local companies and alternative opportunities.



"Dragons' Den" women receiving their certificates on completing their training in business and life skills.

Christina Kadothi runs the MA A Gloria Salon. A single mum with 2 children, she finds it difficult to pay school fees, and wants to build her salon business so she can cover any medical bills and start to save. Before she joined the training, she was able to set her prices for her hairdressing services, but didn't keep customer records and had no marketing skills, so wanted to learn how to grow her client base and improve her bookkeeping skills.

Christina has just completed the business skills training and was one of the lucky grant winners, she will be investing these new funds in her business and hopes that in 2 years she will be running a state of the art salon, creating new jobs for young people in the community.



GHANA

Transition to Work



Sandra Lapa, tailoring trainee with Street Girls Aid

Street Girls Aid, our partners in Accra, Ghana, work with street-connected girls who live in one of the various 'slums' within the city limits. These young women are often lured to the capital with promises of good jobs and a better life only to find these jobs do not exist and are forced to work on the streets to survive. Through our partnership 20 young women have been trained in tailoring, housed, and supported with meals and childcare.

Tools for Self Reliance projects aim to support people through training and tools, whether into self-employment or the formal job market to increase and sustain their income. Sometimes, however, greater support is required to achieve this. The young women on this project have come from one of the worst and most dangerous settlements in Ghana. Keen to build upon the training and help move the women away from the street, we are supporting the graduates to transition into work and/or set up businesses whilst the project staff work with other NGOs to secure more permanent housing. This is the type of transformational change we believe Tools for Self Reliance projects can promote. Through a holistic approach, we support long-term changes that can break the generational poverty cycle and allow trainees to build towards the future they want and deserve.

UGANDA

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Women and girls in Uganda are disproportionately affected by the inability to proceed with formal educational training due to early pregnancies, limited access to sanitation facilities, a lack of funds or domestic responsibilities. This means there is a growing population of child mothers and young people who face significant barriers to employment and are unable to contribute to the Ugandan economy in a meaningful way.

Our partner **Rural People In Action for Development (RUPAD)** works to deliver vocational training courses to rural women and other vulnerable young people, including

those who have not been able to finish their education. As part of their training in trades including carpentry and building, participants support the construction of facilities, such as Ventilated Improved Pit Latrines for communities and schools, ensuring girls have access to safe changing facilities and thus reducing absenteeism from the classroom. Girls who are able to finish their school education have greater employment opportunities and power to earn sustainable livelihoods.



Commissioning the latrine at Kiguza Primary school

FOND FAREWELLS

Last month we said goodbye to Trust Fundraiser, Nuisha Russo. Nuisha joined the Tools for Self Reliance team in 2016 and was instrumental in securing donations from grant makers to help sustain more than 125 projects. Nuisha's outstanding commitment to fundraising helped thousands of young people access vocational and business skills training.



And this month we are sad to be losing Workshop Manager, Stuart Bailey. Since joining Tools for Self Reliance in 2018, Stuart has seen 19 tool shipments safely leave the workshop on their way to Africa, containing an incredible **67,722 tools!** He has also taken 11 EVS volunteers under his wing and managed between 90-100 volunteers in the workshop every week.

Stuart joined CEO Sarah Ingleby on a visit to Uganda in 2018, where he met our partners and trainees. Stuart said, **“It was amazing to see first-hand how our training courses, especially business development courses, have helped people expand their businesses and operations.”** The trip left a big impression on Stuart and last year, as preparations got underway for our Uganda tool shipment, Stuart walked the South West Coast Path fundraising to cover the sea freight and overland transportation costs. Stuart raised an incredible **£8,350** and completed the entire 630 mile route in only **52 days**. The shipment has now arrived in Kampala where our partners will receive the tools ready for distribution to trainees and training centres.



Stuart at the end of the South West Coast Path

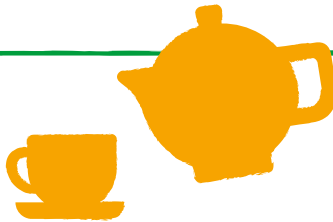
We wish Stuart and Nuisha all the best in their future endeavors, and welcome Colin Burford who succeeds Stuart as Workshop Manager.

TEA FOR TOOLS

Your donations matched

Our annual fundraising event – Tea for Tools – is back in 2023 throughout May and June. We invite YOU to get involved by hosting your own tea parties and coffee mornings with your friends, family, neighbours or colleagues and asking for donations in exchange for sampling your best homemade (or shop bought!) refreshments.

The Coronation of King Charles III is on Saturday 6th May so why not celebrate with a tea party on the lawn? If you can't host your own event, come along to our summer **Tool & Haberdashery Sale at Netley Marsh on 24th June**. We'll have a huge selection of refurbished trade and garden tools and haberdashery items available and all funds raised will go to supporting our vocational training programmes. And this year, the **Dalgleish Trust** has promised to match up to £10,000 of Tea for Tools funds raised in May and June, so register for your free fundraising pack at **www.tfsr.org/events**



Christmas Appeal Update

Thank you to everyone who supported our 2022 Christmas Appeal. Together you raised over **£7,800** to help fund our vocational training projects.

“With the help of the business skills training at Craftshare I now know how to approach and talk to customers even at the on-the-job training. Furthermore, the life skills training taught me a lot about stress management and self-esteem.”

Isatu Kamara, hairdressing trainee, Sierra Leone



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Tools for Self Reliance, Ringwood Road, Netley Marsh, SO40 7GY | Tel: 023 8086 9697

