



Forging Links Newsletter Autumn 2023



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

Tools for Self Reliance projects have been changing lives for young people for over 40 years. In this edition we look at ways in which our projects are directly impacting not just the trainees but also **the communities where they live.** In collaboration with our local partners, we are implementing activities which complement vocational training, engage and benefit the hosting communities, and deliver on our commitment to poverty reduction, quality education, decent work and economic growth.



Community buildings

Karaga District, in the Northern Region of Ghana, has a population of approximately 15,000 people and is served by Karaga District Hospital. The hospital's maternity facility currently houses mothers and their babies in a single room, making it challenging to provide quality care for newborns. Our upcoming Skills to Wealth vocational project with partner NORSAAC, will **train 25 trainees of whom 8 will take on building and construction.**

During the project, trainees will be involved in the construction of a new Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, extending the capacity of the existing facility and creating a dedicated waiting area for mothers and a treatment room for their children. It will be an **essential amenity for the local community** and will showcase the talents of the trainees, raising awareness of what they are doing and identifying them as capable trades persons for future work.



GHANA

The existing maternity facility at Karaga District Hospital.



UGANDA



Latrine block nearing completion

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

All Tools for Self Reliance and partners project designs include investments in the local community. In 2022 we began a 12-month project with TA Crusade in Uganda, to:

**train 125 trainees in
7 trades and support
1,225 school children**



The building trainees are constructing four gender sensitive latrine blocks which will provide 800 pupils across two community primary schools in Nakifuma with access to quality sanitation. In addition, 325 rural school girls will be provided with locally made reusable period pads to manage menstrual hygiene and support their continued consistent attendance at school. Work started on the latrines in November and will be completed this month when the project ends.



ZAMBIA

Re-useable period pads keep girls in school

Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) can be particularly challenging for girls and women in developing countries, where clean water and toilet facilities are often inadequate. Menstruation can be a barrier to education for many girls, as a lack of effective period products restricts girls' involvement in educational and social activities. Working with Kabushi Enterprise Vocational Training Centre (KEVTC) trainees, **we hope to enable more young girls to stay in education.**

In 2022, tailoring students from KEVTC engaged in making reusable or washable period pads. 2,672 pads were donated to adolescent girls

at Kaloko primary school. The project provided them with practical training that enhanced their skills. This experience also helped them gain speed and confidence in making finished garments.

These washable pads help girls aged 10–19 years from low-income families who face a lot of MHM challenges, including: a lack of information, products and services, and the use of unhygienic materials such as dirty rags, toilet paper, pieces of mattress, blankets and cotton to manage their menses. Discomfort and poor protection causes girls to abstain from school, sometimes 3–5 days a month. This directly impacts academic performance, forcing the majority of girls to drop out of school, and exposes them to early marriages, early pregnancies, abortions and sexually transmitted infections. Disposable period pads remain costly, inaccessible and environmentally unsustainable.

Reusable period pads are made from clothing materials that are readily available on the market. Waterproof material, soft cotton flannel and absorbent cotton fleece are combined to create soft, non-itchy pads offering full protection and comfort. They are environmentally friendly and cost less than disposable period pads. We are excited to know (through the feedback we get from the beneficiaries, including girls, school staff and community leaders) that our project is helping so many girls in schools.

Inspiring minds

In this edition of Forging Links, **we are delighted to shine a light on the lives of our trainers, who are instrumental in the success of our trainees across all our partnerships.**

Cecily, Africa Programme Manager, met with FOCCAD and their trainers in Malawi in June and had the chance to ask them about their experiences through our projects.

Daniel Manda, aged 51, has five children and lives in Sasani, Malawi. He is a motorcycle repair specialist with eight years' experience and joined the project to help share skills with other young people who can follow in his footsteps.

Daniel also understands the importance of diversifying income generation in areas that can be affected by supply issues. He also trains his students to fix maize mill engines and says he is "happy to see them having the spirit to learn more beyond the motorcycle trade."



“I can share my skills so that they can also benefit just like I am doing.”

Daniel Mwanda (middle)

It is brilliant to see the enthusiasm of experienced trainers being passed to our trainees; we hope this continues for many years, enabling generations of trainees to expand their knowledge and support future tradespeople.



Our new project: Mobility Sierra Leone

According to the 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey, the prevalence of people living with a disability is 4.3% of the population. Furthermore, the World Health Organisation World report on disability states that persons with disabilities are at higher risk of living in poverty and being unemployed compared to the general population.

In a new project launching next year, Tools for Self Reliance and Mobility Sierra Leone (MSL) will work in partnership to provide vocational training, business skills and sexual and reproductive health and rights education to 20 people who are themselves disabled, or who live with a family member or dependent who is disabled. **The project will focus on providing women – who are the most likely caregivers to those with mobility challenges – with the means to earn money and achieve financial security for their families.**

An additional challenge for disabled people is gaining access to assistive technology, including wheelchairs and walking aids, which improves their functioning, independence and well-being. MSL supplement government efforts to produce and supply assistive technology

(AT) and are helping users gain access to repair and maintenance services.

As well as learning either Hairdressing or Tailoring, the women will be taught how to make repairs and adaptations to mobility carts, such as correcting wheel alignment and fixing punctures. Under supervision by MSL instructors, trainees will spend one day per project quarter offering free mobility aid repairs to members of their local communities. It is anticipated that in time the repair skills will be cascaded to other members of the community.

The project aims to ensure that AT is safe and reliable, that persons with or affected by a disability are able to earn a livelihood, and to change the perception that those with disabilities cannot be productive members of society.

Look out for details soon on how you can support this project online through this year's **Big Give Christmas challenge**



SIERRA LEONE

Community outreach

We work with partners to understand the issues that most greatly affect their local communities. The prevalence of HIV among persons aged 15-49 years olds in Malawi was 7.7% in 2021 (World Bank data). The Government of Malawi is scaling up active index testing and assisted HIV self-testing, using community-based health workers to help identify more people with HIV who don't know their status.

In 2020 we commenced a project with Lilongwe Youth Organisation (LYO), to increase awareness of HIV and Aids in Lilongwe and the surrounding communities, and to improve the physical health of participants through delivering training in sustainable farming methods and nutrition.

Joining the project was a life-changing event for 37-year-old Isaac Banda. Following a period of sickness, he was encouraged by LYO to go for an HIV test, and when the result came back positive, they helped him access the counselling to come to terms with his diagnosis. He began taking antiretroviral medication and is positive about his future.

The agricultural training he received is helping Isaac to pursue a healthy lifestyle. He learned about organic manure production to grow healthy food and now tends a household garden and a plot of land, full of vegetables and fruit – some with medicinal benefits. After a good yield Isaac is in a strong position to start a business and aims to rent a shop and employ two friends.

Alongside this, Isaac is determined to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS encouraging others to go for testing. He has joined a local drama group which visits communities and helps spread knowledge of prevention and testing through performance art. When our next project with LYO starts in 2024 Isaac will be involved as both a trainee and a mentor, helping a new cohort of trainees begin life-changing journeys.

“I would like to be part of the next project as a motivator so I can help others.”

Issac



MALAWI

Fundraising

Thank you once again to everyone who supported this year's **Tea for Tools** fundraising event and turned out in the heat for our main event at Netley Marsh in June. Together with match funding from the Dalglish Trust, your donations, tool and tea purchases helped raise an impressive £25,000 to support our work!

With a constant stream of tool donations to the workshop all summer, our volunteers have been busy sorting, refurbishing, pricing and packing unusual and surplus items ready to take our **Tools on Tour**. A big thank you to everyone involved with our sales at festivals and events across Wiltshire, Hampshire and Dorset. We have found new homes for hundreds of tools and generated over £16,400 which will help fund our vocational training projects overseas.



We are always looking at ways to support trainees and apprentices entering into vocational trades, and this also applies to the UK. If you – or someone you know – is in need of a **start-up tool kit**, visit www.tfsr.org/start-up-tool-kits to see how Tools for Self Reliance can provide good quality refurbished tools at affordable prices. Each purchase not only helps an apprentice here but also an artisan in Africa.



New Merchandise designs

Have you seen our latest t-shirt, hoodie and tote bag designs? These **sustainable print-on demand items** from Teemill are made from natural materials using renewable energy. Plus, when it's time for your garments to retire, they can all be sent back to Teemill to be recycled and reborn as something new! Every item you buy raises funds that support our projects so visit **www.tfsr.org/shop** and click the link to browse our collection today.

Leave a Legacy



A gift left in your Will to Tools for Self Reliance can unlock a fantastic future for many young people in Africa for generations to come. **To date we have supported over 23,000 people into training and given them the tools to build a sustainable livelihood.** This work has only been possible thanks to the generosity of our supporters and notably those who have chosen to support our work by leaving a gift in their Will.

These very special gifts are crucial to making sure our vital projects can continue in the future. We've partnered with Farewills, the largest Will writer in the UK, to offer an exclusive free Will writing service to our supporters. Visit www.tfsr.org/support/leave-a-gift-in-your-will to find out more.



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