



FORGING LINKS

**NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2024**

Since our charity began in 1979, we have sent tools to the value of £3 million to six countries in Africa and trained over 25,000 people who have each left our projects with skills and qualifications to build resilient livelihoods. But none of this happens in isolation.

In this edition we take you behind the scenes as we meet some of our volunteers, project partners and project trainers, who are instrumental to the success of every trainee and without whom Tools for Self Reliance would not be the charity it is today.

Read on and travel across the countries as we find out more about the passions that drive our partners, Programme Manager and trainers and what motivates our volunteers.

ZAMBIA: ELIASHIB RESTORATION ORGANISATION



We caught up with Evelyn Sichilima (pictured left), Programme Manager at Eliashib Restoration Organisation, which was a real pleasure. We wanted to understand more about her drive to support her trainees and the people working on her project.

“Initially I needed a job. Then after learning more about the organisation it has become a passion for me. When you look at yourself and all the opportunities you have, and then look at the community, you realise you can help transform lives for people who have fewer privileges. Now I have been working with Eliashib for 12 years.

“The introduction of the nursery school has been the greatest achievement. We found out that it was better for learning to have the babies looked after while the trainees were in school. Initially, trainees would miss school if there was no-one to look after their babies. Then they would bring

their babies with them to the training, where they would play in the classroom and the mothers would be distracted. Now, the trainees can focus in the classroom, confident that their babies are being well looked after.”

Evelyn remembers a particular group of trainees with fondness, from 2016. They were formed of a husband and wife and two other participants. The wife has since gone on to become a trainer herself in a local prison, teaching tailoring to a new cohort of trainees. Evelyn took real pleasure in recounting this story of transformational change with inmates now being upskilled.

We asked Evelyn with all the knowledge and experience she has acquired in her time at Eliashib, what advice she would give to her younger self. She said; *“I think I can just follow my Dad’s advice, I still follow it, which is ‘Embrace the challenges that come but above all believe in yourself that you can do whatever it is that you want to do.’ And he would encourage me to put myself out there. And I still have that. I really want to do more. Every opportunity that comes, I just try to think of how I can take it, what I can do, and see if it works.*

“Life is a journey and you really have to persevere in order to get what you want. It doesn't all just happen at the go, or when you want it. There'll be things that take forever, even when you look at Eliashib. When I joined them, the place was just a building, it never had windows, it never had electricity. But today it's a different story. There are windows there, the place is painted. We even have a playground. So all that has happened because we've persevered. It just didn't happen overnight, to say 'we want this' and 'boom', it happens. It's been a journey.”

Evelyn knows that a lot of the change that has been made is possible with support from donors like you. She wanted to share this message: ***“Thank you so much for just being there transforming lives, changing communities, and just creating a sustainable environment for us, even for our trainees.”***



MALAWI: FOUNDATION FOR COMMUNITY AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



In Malawi, our vocational training project with FOCCAD uses an apprenticeship approach to training young men and women in targeted trades, including Tailoring, Electrical Installation, Bricklaying, Carpentry, Motorcycle Mechanics and Welding. Artisans

are selected to host up to 8 trainees at their workshops, supporting them as they form business groups and start earning an income. Africa Programme Manager, Cecily Bryant, met Johannes Kabango (pictured above), at his welding shop in Mkaika Trading Centre, about a half hour drive from Nkhotakota.

Johannes learned welding from his father, who learned welding from his father before him. In 2007 James started “J & K Welding Shop”. He began teaching youths from the local area, offering a 12-month apprenticeship before taking them on as salaried employees.

In 2023 Johannes was chosen by our partner FOCCAD to take on welding trainees as part of our formal vocational training project. He has taken on 4 male and 2 female trainees, first teaching them theory before giving them practical tasks to complete under supervision. With a wide range of projects undertaken at the workshop, from manufacture of window frames to motorbike frame maintenance, trainees gain experience in many different welding applications.

Johannes used to just repair the items brought into his shop, but he soon got to thinking on how they could be upgraded and improved. He is currently busy making food processing equipment, including groundnut shellers, maize shellers and soya de-podders. Johannes is designing his own groundnut presses to make cooking oil and wants to design a briquette maker to use up all the unused peanut shells for fuel. A small groundnut sheller will sell for MWK 1.7 million (c. £780) and a big one for MWK 2.8 million (c. £1,300).

Johannes's business has gone from strength to strength; he says his father would be so proud to see how well it is running now. But beyond the success of his own shop, Johannes draws great satisfaction from seeing his apprentices learning skills that they can use to earn an income. Already there are four shops in the region set up by his former trainees and we can't wait to follow the progress of his graduates in the future.

A GIFT IN YOUR WILL



Our projects are made possible by you, our supporters. **A gift in your will** is not only a way to leave a lasting legacy in your name, but make a significant difference to trainers, volunteers and trainees across Africa and the UK. You will be enabling us to plan for the long term and unlock the skills future generations need to build sustainable livelihoods.

After ensuring your loved ones are looked after, leaving a gift of any size will mean a great difference to people facing poverty. To find out more about leaving a gift, visit our website or email katie@tfsr.org. Your gesture today could change a life tomorrow.

GHANA: STREET GIRLS AID



In Ghana's busy capital, Accra, we work with Street Girls Aid (SGA) to support street-connected women and girls. We asked Dr Vida Asomaning Amoak (pictured left), SGA Executive Director, to share her thoughts on SGA's work spanning over 30 years, their impact, and how working in partnership is changing lives.

"I find satisfaction in seeing the positive impact of my work in the lives of the girls and young women we work with. The power of transformation of these girls, sometimes the unintended positive outcomes of our work with them, in fact the change stories of these girls is what keeps me going year after year.

"Take a 14 year old girl who gets assistance to deliver her baby under very daring conditions and moves on to learn a skill - looking at the before they came into contact with us and the after always moves me to tears."

SGA has worked with young women since 1994. Their holistic approach to training, from adapted timetables to childcare provision, has been so successful that now other organisations are replicating their model. Vida told us:

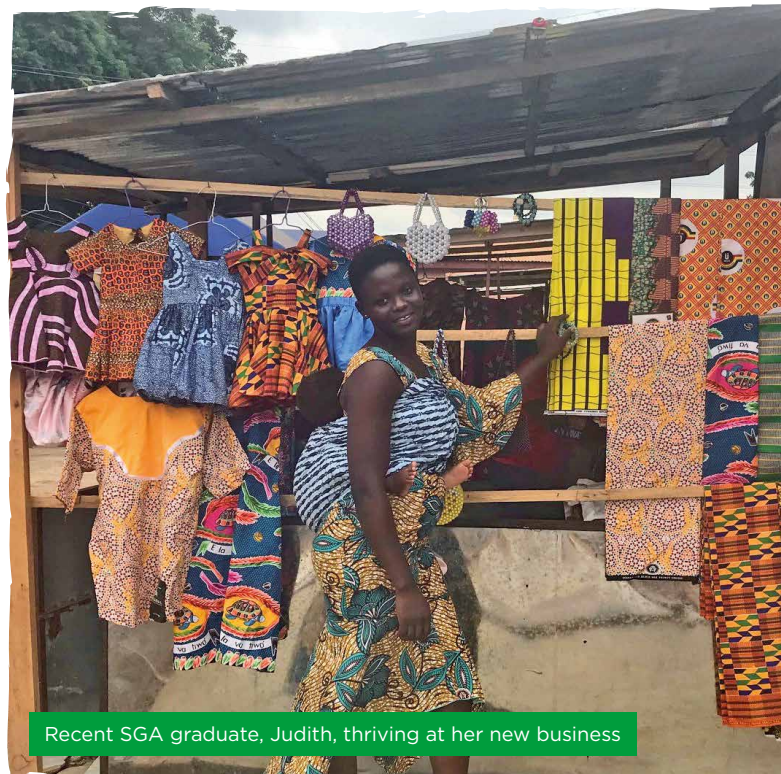
"By providing resources, support, and opportunities, these girls and women can be empowered to improve their lives and break the cycle of poverty. This not only benefits the girls themselves but also their children and the wider community.

"Like one of the greatest scholars in Ghana, Dr Kwagir Agrey, said: 'if you educate a man, you educate an individual. But if you educate a woman, you educate a nation'. Thus, when street connected girls and women are healthy,

well-informed and empowered they will in turn bring up children who are healthy and well-informed children and eventually break the cycle of poverty.

"Working with street-connected girls and women is a step towards a more inclusive and equitable society."

Vida adds that working in partnership *"allows Street Girls Aid to amplify our impact, reach more individuals in need, and work towards lasting change, foster self-sufficiency that enable the young women and girls to contribute to society. It is a partnership that brings together shared values, goals, and a commitment to making a difference in the lives of street-connected girls."*



Recent SGA graduate, Judith, thriving at her new business

Thank you to everyone who supports this project and the women working hard to deliver change.

AFRICA PROGRAMME

Cecily Bryant (pictured below) joined Tools for Self Reliance in 2021, with over 30 years of experience in international development. We asked Cecily how her role as Africa Programme Manager for Malawi and Uganda is both challenging and rewarding.

What do you like most about working in partnership with organisations?



"I never fail to be inspired and moved by the creativity, imagination and sheer determination of so many of the partners and trainees we work with. As they

have so few resources at their fingertips, they have to approach their work in a different way. I really enjoy working with the partners during the process of new project design, looking for opportunities and learning from recent programmes."

"Because so many of our partner staff are members of the communities they work with or are graduates of the programmes which we support, they are steeped in rich knowledge and experience. Bringing fresh ideas, new approaches and tested models from other locations and adding this into their work, sometimes challenging their understanding and their work practices, creates a potent mix of the familiar and the new."

Being based hundreds of miles away from your projects and partnerships, what challenges do you face in your role and how do you manage to stay connected?

"Connectivity for many of our partners is difficult, unreliable and expensive. It's not unusual for calls to drop in and out and I've had partners resort to sprinting



Cecily visiting FESODEV trainees

down the road to a local hotel to get better Wi-Fi halfway through an important call – especially if the weather is bad during rainy seasons. I have one partner in Malawi who sometimes has to sit outside under the trees to keep a signal connected – when I'm working from home, the chickens clucking outside their office wake up my dog and drive her nuts!!"

"Many of our partners share their stories and photos which are a great motivator, and regular calls, emails and WhatsApp messages keep us all connected. Partners sending in unexpected photos of a key moment of success for a trainee is always a real boost. Having lived in Malawi and Uganda and having met all the partners during visits, it's also much easier to picture partners and trainees as their projects progress and to have a real sense of the context of their work. Sharing individual updates of trainees we've met and catching up with partner staff during regular calls makes the work very real, even from this distance and planning during the build up to events, like an outgoing shipment of tools, a new project launch or an upcoming visit keeps the adrenaline flowing."

What do you feel has been the biggest positive impact from our work?

"In Malawi, introducing women to Village Savings and Loans Groups has had a real impact on their confidence in managing money and accessing loans, both critical elements which underpin

business success. Similarly, training in effective business management and upskilling for members of small/micro-enterprises with self-taught trade skills has had a profound effect on their revenue, with up to a 3-fold increase in their customer base and regular income."

What aspects of our projects excite you most?

"The combination of high-quality training in a well-chosen vocational skill, guidance and follow up for effective and realistic business plans, and timely access to a start-up kit and grant have had a huge impact on the success of young people who had dropped out of school and whose future prospects looked bleak. I'm really excited to explore further steps in business creation through our Transition To Work projects. Learning a skill is only the first step in securing an income, so it has been very exciting to track the progress of the new graduates as they seek employment or set up their new businesses. I also love the palpable sense of joy the partners share in their celebrations when trainees graduate and the evident pride of the whole community when they see their son, daughter or mother holding a hard-earned certificate and a new tool kit."



To learn more about our Transition to Work schemes and how you can support them head to our website.

OUR UK VOLUNTEERS

Our UK operations are reliant on the loyal dedication of our network of volunteers who collect pre-loved tools and sewing machines from donors' doors across the country, sort, refurbish and pack them into kits ready to send to our projects.

Pat Ward (pictured left) moved to Hampshire in 2007 in his retirement. As an active chap in his 70s he said he "still had a lot of desire to keep busy". After a recommendation from a friend, Pat headed to our HQ to find out what it was all about. He's been here ever since!



Pat is very humble about his fantastic achievements. He said: *"A big thank you to our supporters, for considering Tools for Self Reliance worthy to take on their tools and money. I mean, they're entrusting us with their tools, many of which have real sentimental value. So once [their donation] is in our care, it's our responsibility to do good with it."*

In our early tool shipments, our tool crates were somewhat varied in size. When Pat began volunteering in the wood shop, he fashioned a jig, enabling all our crates to be built to a uniform design. Some ten years on, this brilliant device is still being used, and has been pivotal in the construction of thousands of crates!

Pat's enterprising spirit didn't stop there. Keen to ensure that all our donated tools get a new lease of life – even those that are unsuitable for our vocational projects – Pat explored working alongside traders to generate income. He quickly found he had quite the knack for it – even handing over a cheque for £2,000 to our CEO in his early ventures. Since then, he's gone on to be a star eBay seller for the organisation, raising over £40,000 from the sale of surplus or unsuitable tools.



Nestled in the lovely backdrop of the Peak District, the Bakewell Volunteer Group has been supporting Tools for Self Reliance since 1983 – nearly as long as the charity itself has been going. The Group has sent thousands of tools and hundreds of sewing machines to our headquarters, recently supplying us with what they estimate to be their 600th box of tools.

Across the years, many volunteers have given their time and support to the Bakewell Group, but there has been one constant presence throughout: Mary Pope (pictured right). Mary started supporting Tools for Self Reliance through the Bakewell Volunteer Group in 1985, after seeing a poster in the local library.

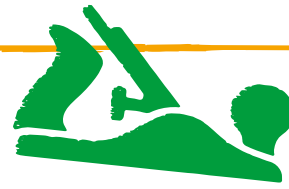


Having previously taught woodwork and metal work, the idea of refurbishing tools was immediately attractive, and she felt it was something practical and useful she could turn her hand to. Mary quickly realised the importance and responsibility the charity had for supplying good quality tools that could be depended on for years.

Mary has been instrumental in keeping the Bakewell Group in operation. When their original premises (in 'The Crypt' beneath a local church) were declared unsafe in 2019, she negotiated with the District Council for permission to renovate a disused toilet block situated in an agricultural business centre. Her drive and determination helped secure the required funds and building permission, ensuring the Group are now able to continue their amazing work.

Mary herself highlights that it is the Group's collective drive to keep going that has brought them through. She said, *"being useful in good company is a strong incentive, it's what holds the Group together"*.

TOOL SHARPENING TO SUPPORT OUR FUNDRAISING



In an effort to keep quality tools in use, providing them a longer lease of life and reducing items sent to landfill, we have launched a new **weekly sharpening service** led by our volunteers at Netley Marsh. Every blunt object that you have sharpened, will help raise funds for our projects. Find out more about our Tool Sharpening Service on our website or email info@tfsr.org.



Barry Dennes (pictured left) knew from the age of 5 that he wanted to work with wood. After a fulfilling career as a carpenter and joiner, he's still exercising his woodworking skills in his retirement, as a volunteer at Netley Marsh. Barry has been volunteering for over 4 years, building the crates and

boxes that keep our expertly refurbished tools safe on their voyage to our trainees overseas. We asked Barry to tell us what volunteering means to him and why he keeps coming back!

"I have always tried to help others, as part of my beliefs. For me, the motivation for volunteering here is seeing the potential difference that I can make. When a person donates the tools that belonged to a loved one, they are not just lost. They are given a new lease of life. From those tools, someone abroad is able to learn a trade and earn money for themselves."

"We give people the potential to have self-worth, through learning skills that they can use to earn an income."

'Learning' and 'potential' are major themes in our conversation with Barry. He explained how he feels that these concepts are crucial to the work we do here. He said: *"The tools and the vocational training together have the power to transform lives. You can't just send the tools and expect people to know what to do with them. You have to have someone to teach them, and once they have learned new skills and how to apply them then suddenly you have given freedom to their potential."*

Barry's passion is palpable in the workshop, shining light into every corner of the warehouse. It's not just his contribution to our transformational projects that Barry finds rewarding. He told us how much he enjoys the company of his fellow volunteers, and how he feels there is a common purpose to our work that brings a feeling of satisfaction.



Barry, in his element in the woodwork shop

"The people I work with here all have such interesting stories to tell. Where else can you work with people from such different backgrounds and working careers? [We] have all come together with one goal, to help others. It's the feeling that each and every one of us in the organisation has a part to play. Without that one person it would be like a machine missing a cog and the whole thing wouldn't work. So knowing that each of us here is integral in making the machine work properly is very satisfying."

None of our volunteering or project activities would be possible without you, our valued supporters. In a time of great financial difficulty for many, we are truly grateful for the donations you provide, the activities you undertake, and the efforts taken to spread awareness of our work. Barry had a heartfelt message of thanks he wants to share with you. He said: *"Never ever stop donating. You're changing someone else's life. You're giving people the key to the door, to unlock a future for them."*



If you too would like to join our efforts to change lives, head to our website for more information about our volunteering opportunities.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sierra Leone

Our shipment to Sierra Leone has set sail and is making its way to our project Partner **Mobility Sierra Leone** who have kick started their latest project for 20 young women in hairdressing and tailoring training. Thanks to huge support for our Big Give Christmas Challenge in December, these young women, all affected by disability, are beginning their 12-month vocational training in the bustling city of Bo.



Trainees joining the MSL team for their first training day



Zambian Correctional Facility unit

Zambia

Through our upcoming project with partners **Prisoners Focus Foundation** we will be reaching some of the most underrepresented members of Zambian society by delivering vocational training to prisoners in Mumbwa correctional facility. Zambia's prisons are overflowing with individuals incarcerated for activities linked to poverty and unemployment, most of these non-violent crimes are committed as a last resort to feed themselves and their families.

Uganda

This spring, 125 budding tradespeople will be joining **TA Crusade** who are providing 12-month vocational training in a choice of eight different trades as well as business and sexual and reproductive health rights training. Following huge success in previous projects, TA Crusade will be providing childcare support allowing trainees to focus on their studies. The project is also designed to support the wider community as trainees will hone their skills by making reusable menstrual pads, bunk beds for the local hostel and restoring the restaurant facilities for their fellow catering course mates.



Construction trainees building their future

You can follow the progress of our project and trainees on our social media channels

UPCOMING EVENTS

We're excited to take our tools on tour again this year, taking part in a selection of shows and events across the country.

Our tool sales at Head Office are a great opportunity to grab a bargain and find some truly unique items.

If you're feeling creative, be sure to add our Craft to Craft events to your calendar. Workshops are held on the third Thursday of the month, at just £15 per person to include all materials and refreshments. Our volunteers host a wide range of craft events and are suitable for complete beginners. Learn all the skills you need to begin a new hobby, from knitting and crochet to handmade Christmas crafts. And all while you tuck into tea and cake.

Bodgers Ball

11th & 12th May | Chichester, West Sussex

Tea for Tools

22nd June | Netley Marsh, Hampshire

New Forest Folk Festival

3rd-7th July | Plaitford, Hampshire

New Forest & Hampshire County Show

30th July-1st August | Brockenhurst, Hampshire

The Oak Fair

24th-25th August | Stock Gaylard, Dorset

Romsey Show

14th September | Romsey, Hampshire



TEA FOR TOOLS MATCH FUNDING OPPORTUNITY



Tea for Tools is back again in June!

Join our national tea celebration where **every donation will be matched by the Dalglish Trust, up to £10,000.**

Keep your eyes peeled to find out how you can get involved this summer. No matter where you are, you can join in the fun and help raise vital funds to support our projects and trainees, building sustainable livelihoods for years to come.

PREFER TO GO DIGITAL?

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