

TWAM

Tools with a Mission

May 2025

Our News



A story of Zambian courage

Burundi – our first toolkits

What is a country coordinator?

Giving communities tools to build a future for themselves

Welcome to TWAM News

Dear Friends

It would be impossible, in one newsletter, to share with you TWAM's full impact. It is humbling to hear about the impact we have on so many lives and livelihoods.



I am delighted to bring you just a quick snapshot of some of those lives. In Zambia, the story of Evelyn reminds us of the limitless courage shown by people in the most dire of circumstances. We are so grateful to the team for our first ever shipment of kits to Burundi, and look forward to sharing with you the impact of those kits very soon.

Our operations in-country are so important, as we rely on the generosity and partnership of many different people and organisations. Among these are our invaluable country coordinators - you can find a little more about them on pages 8 and 9.

We can share that we shipped out 18,500 toolkits in 2024 and worked through 500 community organisations, supporting over 2,000 individual causes. All with the generosity of your support

It leaves me to wish you the very best on behalf of everyone at TWAM, and to assure you of our prayers...and to ask you to pray for us.

*"Build up, build up, prepare the road!
Remove the obstacles out of the way
of my people." Isaiah 57:14*

Much love

John Noble

Chief Executive Office



Tools with a Mission

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twam.uk

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About us

We are a Christian charity that collects donated usable tools, refurbishes them, sorts them into trade kits and sends them to the developing world for livelihood creation.

We support local people, meeting local needs with life transforming skills training projects. We supply tools to equip training centres and to give to trainees when they graduate. With this support we see long-term sustainable livelihoods created.

Thanks to over 500 volunteers in the UK and your support, we will continue to transform lives and communities.



Time to donate?

We are always looking for more volunteers to help in our centres.

At present we particularly need volunteers in our refurbishment centres. Please visit **[twam.uk/volunteer](https://www.twam.uk/volunteer)** to browse our available roles or call us on 01473 210220.



Tools to donate?

To find your nearest collection centre, or to contact a local collector, have a look at our website or call our Ipswich office.



Financial support

We keep our costs very low, but we still need a lot of support. We value all gifts, whether one-off or regular. You can donate online, send donations to our Ipswich postal address, or request a Standing Order and Gift Aid form.



Prayer support

TWAM depends on prayer. If you don't currently receive our quarterly prayer diary and would like to, please contact our Ipswich office.



Thank you to our volunteers!

Our volunteers, like Lee Pound, pictured above, are the backbone of what we do. Lee is one of our Uganda country coordinators, as well as a tool refurbisher - one of over 500 men and women across the UK and Africa who give their time and energy to our life changing mission, and we are ever thankful to them.

Could you join us?

TWAM is a Christian charity that welcomes people of all faiths and none. We are always looking for new volunteers to support us. No matter what your experience or skills, there is something for everyone.

If you would like to find out more, please get in touch on 01473 210220. You could support us in our offices, at our tool benches or as a member of our van team.

More details can be found at [twam.uk/volunteer](https://www.twam.uk/volunteer).

“I no longer go home empty handed”



Evelyn Nkhoma knows how to make beautiful things out of nothing

And as an uneducated nineteen-year-old woman in rural Zambia, ‘nothing’ literally meant just that.

With her mother unable to support her, and with no formal qualifications, her prospects seemed grim. “My mum was selling newspapers, and my brother was looking for work as a driver,” she recalls, while busily working away at a trusty Brother sewing machine. “My father is not with us. We don’t make much money. As I got older, I wanted to have a way to support myself.”

Determination and courage

Fiercely independent at heart, Evelyn - pictured above - took matters into her own hands by searching for a lifeline. After a fruitless four months of looking for work in a ruthless economic environment, she tracked down one of her aunts - a former tailoring instructor - who suggested she get in touch with the Tiyanjane Women’s Club, a small community centre that teaches skills in haberdashery. Plucking up her courage, she journeyed several miles to the club, asking if there was a place where she could stay and learn.

She was warned her enrolment was only temporary, as money was tight. Yet four years later, she is an instructor there, and runs her own little shop - the Torched Garments Tailoring Shop.

“ I used to find that there was no food at home, nothing for us to eat at all. All I needed to help my family was my own machine. Tailoring will help all of us to make sure we can eat every day. ”

Evelyn's journey, like those of so many other women, was helped by TWAM. The club, one of many such organisations that provide shelter and skills training for vulnerable young women, applied for five sewing machines and a knitting kit from TWAM, which they received, along with a selection of haberdashery accessories lovingly sorted and packed by our volunteers. “Before TWAM sent their machines,” Evelyn tells us, “people shared one old machine. But it was so inconvenient. We all had to earn a living but there were thirty of us in one group. This machine I have here was one we waited for.” It was a long wait, but Evelyn's smile shows it was worth it.

With her friend, Judith - opposite - Evelyn finished her training and they now make beautiful items of clothing. The money Evelyn makes isn't much, but it improves on her situation before - and most importantly, gives her self-sustainability. As we are taken outside and shown the breathtaking clothes they make, Judith chips in: “We saw the level of poverty in our community,” she says. “Most of us are illiterate and desperate to learn. Women at home have nothing to do, and maybe no food or education. There are ten of us here now, as the others all moved away to find work. But now we can all do tailoring, knitting and repairs.”

Judith lost her husband to illness in 2010, and with him her only income. “Despite the little we have, we want to grow,” she says. Most women who join the club - just

as Evelyn did - simply turn up and ask to be trained. There is no set course length, as each individual learns at a different pace. It is remarkably self-sufficient - those members who are able to are invited to contribute a little every month, and the money is used as small loans to members in severe need. Some of the trainees who have no access to machines find employment in small tailor schools or large industrial workshops.

“ Despite the little we have, we are grateful. I do not go home empty handed anymore. ”

It only took one sewing machine to transform Evelyn's life from a penniless teenager to a confident and skilled young woman - and only six sewing machines to impact the lives of the women at the Tiyanjane Women's Club, who have gone on to spread their skills to others. TWAM receives and sends thousands of sewing machines each year. With the generosity of our supporters and volunteers, we will continue to change lives, so that anyone who wants to learn a skill can do so.



Burundi...

...a forgotten land?

In March this year we sent our first container to Burundi, one of the world's poorest countries.

The UN Human Development Index evaluates the standard of living in countries throughout the world. It looks at life expectancy and studies factors such as access to education, work, healthcare, and sanitation.

Out of the 191 countries measured, Burundi ranked 187.

For years, the country was plagued by an ethnic war between the Hutu and Tutsi - a war that killed an estimated 300 thousand people and displaced maybe a million. The war ended in 2005 but as

Mother and children on Lake Tanganyika, Burundi

with all wars, the economic and political fallout will have a lasting impact on generations to come.

Our 2025 container is the first we have sent directly to Burundi but we have reached out to the country in the past, using cross border routes from Tanzania, Rwanda, and Uganda. Now - with a more stable Burundian government in place - we are excited to be able to send tools directly to in-country partner organisations and bring hope to some of the very poorest people.

What is life like in Burundi?

With one of the highest population densities in Africa and heavily reliant on agriculture, Burundi is at the mercy of climate change. Drought, floods and soil erosion are making it even more difficult

for people to scrape together a living and this, combined with soaring food costs, means that the majority of people live below the poverty line. In 2017, Burundi was at the bottom of the Global Food Security Index, and although there has been a small improvement since then, child development is often stunted through malnutrition. The situation is exacerbated by sparse healthcare facilities and poor access to sanitation and clean water.

The one bright spot is that education is free, although only to those who have a birth certificate...a requirement that, sadly, rules out 62% of children.

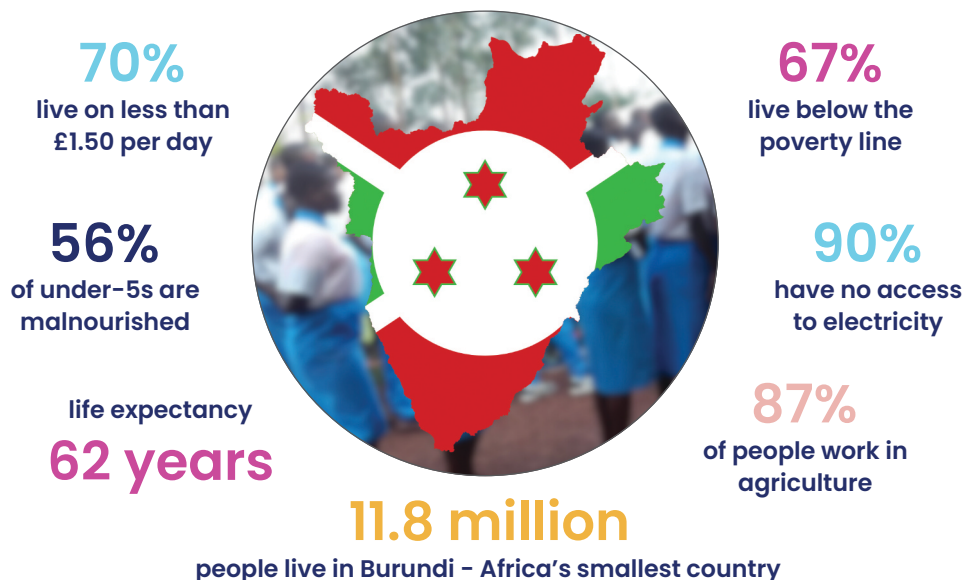
Hope in a desperate situation

Burundi is a landlocked country where the very few employment opportunities are hampered by limited resources - for example, 90% of the population have no access to electricity. You can read more on the following pages about how our

country coordinator, Rachel Patterson, is working with Georgette Butera and our in-country partners to provide practical methods of combating poverty.



Despite the many difficulties, the tools that are now on their long journey to Burundi - tools that have been sent through your generosity - will provide a lifeline. Sewing machines and carpentry tools will enable people to gain new skills, and tools for working the land will facilitate greater productivity. Experience has shown us that a skill learnt by one person can mean a change for the good in an entire community - a change that we are determined to bring.



What is a country coordinator?

As our Zambian and Tanzanian containers begin to arrive, and our Burundian container departs from Ipswich, our eyes turn to one of our most important yet unsung resources...
...our teams of country coordinators.



These teams work hard to run TWAM operations in their designated country, and without them, our mission would grind to a halt! Rachel and Georgette are, respectively, our Burundi country coordinator and country partner. We thank Rachel (pictured above) for sharing with us her insights into their work and why they do what they do.

How did you get started at TWAM?

“I was between jobs and looking for an opportunity to volunteer. TWAM seemed a brilliant concept as it empowers local people to help themselves.

“Originally, I was in the Uganda team. But when I heard the plan to expand into Burundi, I introduced Georgette, who moved to the UK from Burundi 35 years ago and has had links with my family ever since. She agreed to become the country partner and I took up the role of Burundi country coordinator.”

Can you describe your responsibilities?

“Because we get under 100 applications from Burundi each year, we don’t have a team of volunteers in-country to evaluate new applicants. I assess applications to ensure non-profit status and check that

the tools requested match the organisation’s capacity to deliver training and support their students into employment or business.

“I make sure payments are recorded to give a clear audit trail, and – if we can’t meet all the tools requested – negotiate any amendments as the container is being filled. Once the container arrives, I ensure the country partner team distributes tools to recipients and, in due course, I assess the impact they make.

“At a more strategic level, I work with Georgette to spread the word and grow the number of organisations applying.”

How does TWAM work in Burundi?

“35 years ago Georgette founded a UK charity - www.acts-africa.net - and keeps strong links with her family and community in Burundi. Among other projects, ACTS runs a technical school that trains secondary age children in academic and practical skills, many of whom are orphans or from refugee camps.

“TWAM is still small-scale in the country, but Georgette’s connections have helped spread the word. We have also benefited

from a local supporter who volunteered to become an ambassador for us and is encouraging others to apply.

“Sending the first container to a country is an unknown, and the logistics team is navigating shipping and customs partners and regulations. We have no idea how much Burundi customs authorities will charge for the container, but Georgette is hopeful that she can arrange a refund once the government there understands the value TWAM can provide.”

What is rewarding about your role?

“When I was in the Uganda team I visited the country and saw over 20 projects. To see, first hand, people being trained and talk about their hopes and dreams was very moving. Tools give opportunities to change lives and communities permanently for the better. I pray that God may take the “five loaves and two fishes” of the tools we are sending and multiply their effect a thousand fold.

“It is also deeply rewarding to collaborate with Georgette and to support her country in practical ways.

“Country coordinators have the rewarding job of contacting applicants and hearing their stories. But we could not send them anything without the donated tools or the wonderful people who volunteer every week to refurbish them. And the logistics and warehouse team are incredibly dedicated - it's a pleasure to work with them.

“I am really looking forward to the first container arriving in Burundi and being able to share photographs and stories of the tools being collected and put to use.”

IN DEPTH - the challenges

People in Burundi face many challenges: drought, flood, tribal prejudice, conflict with Rwanda and an influx of refugees fleeing war in the DRC. As a result, some organisations struggle to raise money for tools, but they still believe we are right to ask for a contribution, as that commitment highlights the value they receive.

The official currency exchange rate bears little relation to the exchange rate that people can actually get. So the amount we receive is significantly lower than the cost of the container.

Alongside country challenges, TWAM is implementing a new IT system to track applications and tools, and the Burundi container is the first to use it for picking and labelling toolkits, and managing documentation. So there is a learning curve for our teams who are used to working with spreadsheets.

95% of applications from Burundi are in French - generally the second language (English is the third). We had to draw the line at receiving applications in Kirundi!

Special thanks go to...

...Sheldon, Rachel, Lyn and Trevor for their outstanding efforts in shipping the first ever container using our new Zoho software system. Sheldon did an amazing job picking up discrepancies and queries, Rachel was great at ‘quick fixes’, and the whole team effected a data cleanse and cross-checking exercise. They truly went ‘above and beyond’!

Connecting with communities

John Noble visited Zambia in November. Here is a short review of his trip.

With 19 million people and 70 languages, Zambia sits in central Africa, bordering DR Congo in the north and Zimbabwe in the south. Zambian communities receive a significant majority of our tools - 14 of this year's 25 container loads will go there.

Teaching skills for business

In November John visited our operations in Zambia and met several groups who have benefitted from TWAM tools, including Giving Hope To Widows And Orphans, who look after some of the most vulnerable. This group, which serves hundreds of women and children, has taken the few machines we have donated to them and turned them into a thriving enterprise. This has enabled them to earn a government contract. We have been working with the instructors there, to ensure people are taught skills to start doing business and help them for years to come.

John met many different groups and spoke to partners who help vet tool recipients and distribute deliveries, as well as directors of different training organisations. One of them, Maxine, proudly said: "I am one of the instructors of knitting, and these are my students!"

"We use a Brother knitting machine, with which we make jerseys and sell them in our community. We are waiting for a new machine as we don't have enough to go around. We believe that we can do a lot more with even one more machine."

The impact of drought

John experienced first-hand the suffering caused by severe drought - a sad consequence of climate change. "Half the country is experiencing the worst drought for over a hundred years", John reports. "Many communities go up to 24 hours a day without hydroelectric power. Victoria Falls is dry." This means that many people are racing to find alternative sources of income as crops dry up and harvests fail. Our Drought Appeal subsidises the costs of sending life-changing tools and so eases their financial burden. By the end of March, it had raised almost £22,500.



John (centre) with our local leadership team.

It was a joy for us to see the very real impact TWAM has had. It is with your support - by donating - that this change has been enabled in Zambia and elsewhere. On their behalf, thank you.

Our local impact



If you are a regular supporter of TWAM you will already know a lot about our work in Africa. But how much do you know about what we do here in the UK?

Self-worth

It may come as a surprise to learn that in 2024 we supported ten organisations here at home by donating tools. While our first priority is to support countries in Africa, sometimes we have more tools than we can use, or items that are unsuitable to send abroad. If so, we support organisations in the UK that give vulnerable people a sense of self-worth, and provide skills-based training.

Our environment

Tools that come to TWAM would often, otherwise, end up in landfill. So when you donate unwanted items to us, you are helping the planet. We take sustainability very seriously and are always looking for new ways to safeguard our environment.

Well-being and purpose

We provide a sense of purpose to over 500 volunteers through our generous and caring community. At TWAM, we care about what we do locally as well as overseas. Volunteering not only helps TWAM; it helps people at home.

Support us through giving.

We are continually amazed by the generosity of our donors. It is your practical, financial and spiritual support that will help us achieve our aim to ship 25 containers this year and reach some of the poorest communities in Africa. More about giving and Gift Aid can be found on our website at twam.uk/donate, or for details about leaving a legacy to TWAM, please visit twam.uk/legacy

Tools can be donated through our network of volunteer

collectors. If you have tools you no longer need, give us a call and we will be pleased to explain how our collectors can help - **01473 210220**

How you can help

Volunteer with some amazing people!

If you have time to give, why not volunteer at TWAM? There are many different roles for all levels of skill and experience, and you are guaranteed a warm welcome. Our current volunteer roles can be found at twam.uk/volunteer

Pray for our work. TWAM is a Christian organisation that values your prayers. If you feel able, please join with us in prayer for our work and please visit twam.uk/prayerdiary

Just one toolkit can have positive repercussions for a whole community. People like Evelyn, featured on page 4 of this edition, share their skills to help create many livelihoods. Please continue to support us to ensure that every suitable tool is used to transform lives in Africa.



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ONLINE

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CARD

You can donate by credit or debit card by ringing our head office on 01473 210220. We're open Monday to Friday, 9am-3pm.

Would you like to receive our monthly **Supporter E-News**? It's packed with up to date news and inspiring stories. If so, you can either write your email address below, or go to **twam.uk/stayintouch** to sign up online.

My email address is: _____

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