

# **TWAM**

Tools with a Mission

# Our news

**We've bounced-back and we're VERY HAPPY!**

October 2020



**Empowering people with the tools that create livelihoods and transform lives**

## Welcome to TWAM News



To say that this has been a challenging year is an understatement for all of us. Personally, I just want to see this year end and the world begin to recover from Covid 19. Seeing TWAM forced to shut down was incredibly hard for all of us, but the bounce-back

has been a joy. It has been very hard and costly on so many levels; but we're back! The life-debilitating challenges we are facing, our friends across Africa face every day of every year. So this edition of TWAM News focuses, quite rightly, on how they are "bouncing-back" from their life challenges. I hope you enjoy reading their stories.

*Mike Griffin, Chief Executive*

### Tools to donate?

To find your nearest collection centre or to contact a local collector check our website or contact Ipswich.

### Time to donate?

We are in particular need of drivers at our Coventry Refurbishment Centre. If you are interested please contact the Ipswich office, we'd love to hear from you.

### Financial support

TWAM operates seven refurbishment centres across the UK and sends out over 20 containers of tools a year. 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 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 the Ipswich office.

"The God of my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; my Savior, You save me from violence."

*2 Samuel 22:3*

### About us:

Tools with a Mission is a Christian charity enabling people to earn a living and support themselves and their families. In many countries people have few skills, little education and no means of earning a living. A switch from aid dependency to self-sufficiency is impossible without help. TWAM started over thirty years ago, and has since provided this help by collecting and refurbishing tools and equipment no longer required in the UK and sending them overseas. Through collectors and centres across the UK, our team of dedicated volunteers and supporters help transform thousands of lives every year.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

### Tools with a Mission

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*TWAM is grateful to the Aall Foundation for their long-term generous support of our work.*

**twam.uk**

[facebook.com/toolswithamission](https://facebook.com/toolswithamission)

# We've 'bounced back' and we're all very happy!



We are so pleased to see TWAM back and busy again. We reopened in August with volunteers returning to our Centres. Thanks to all our collectors we quickly filled to the brim with tools. Our vans were out collecting again and it was great seeing them arrive every day.

With the constraints of social distancing and keeping everyone safe, we have had to reduce numbers in the Centres and this has affected our output of tools. We're not able to return to our pre-Covid schedule for sending out containers, but hope we can build up to this by the end of the year.

Wonderfully, on 11th August our first post-lockdown container left Ipswich for Uganda and since then we have sent several containers to Zambia and are now preparing for Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Our bounce-back appeal in July was really important to us and a great success and thank you to everyone who supported it. We are all so grateful.

We cannot underestimate how challenging it has been to restart TWAM, and how hard everyone is having to work to keep it going. This is not just true of our UK Centres, but also all the independent Centres who work with us and our partners and teams who work overseas.

However, the message is clear... TWAM is back and recipients across Africa are excitedly waiting for their tools kits and the transformation of their lives and communities. Thank you, to everyone who has helped us and continues to help us bounce-back.

# Bouncing young lives back from war and landmines

Uganda has had more than its fair share of tragedies to bounce back from. The terror years of the dictatorship of Idi Amin; the lesser-known, but brutal conflict of the ADF rebels based in Western Uganda; and the constant violent insurgencies across the border from the DRC. And the ongoing legacy? Thousands of landmines.

Bernard from the **Kasese Visions of War Victims Association** decided he must help the landmine victims and their children bounce-back and he turned to TWAM for support. He decided to help those who had been left disabled by offering them work and their children skills training. He offers training courses in carpentry, shoe making, tailoring, welding and simple mechanics.

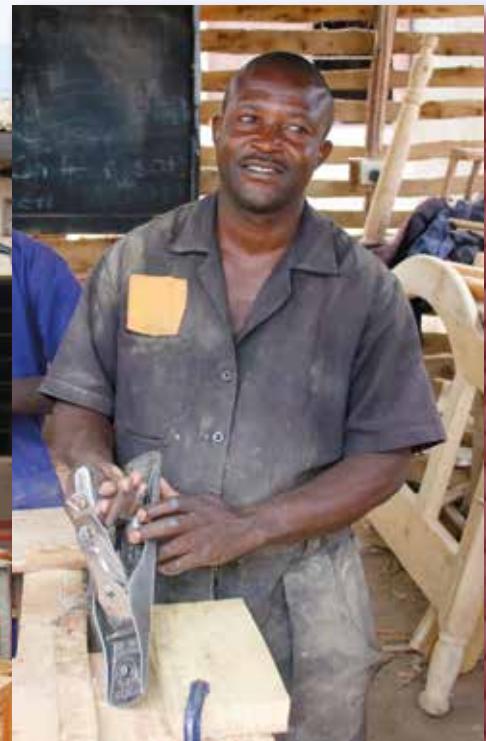


Bernard tells us why:

*"Farmers went back to their land after the war because that is all they have, but it is so dangerous and they get hurt when they dig up landmines. Then they have nothing left and no way to survive; so I decided I must help them. If they have to leave their land because they have lost their legs, I offer them work and find them somewhere to live. If the breadwinner has been left disabled, we make crutches in our workshop and I help them apply for artificial limbs."*

*I offer skills training for their children and help them find placements in local industries. If parents remain in the hills, children rarely return as it is too dangerous and their parents prefer them to stay in the safety of areas not affected by landmines. So I help them settle in new towns.*

*I know I must do this and try to do good when others have done so much that's bad."*



Bernard applied to TWAM twice for tools and sewing machines to equip the Centre.

In this edition of TWAM News we'll meet some of the carpentry trainees who are trying to bounce-back from war.

They are all on a six month course, followed by a six month placement with a local business and then help to find permanent work.



## Meet Solomon

He tells us:

*"I came to learn a skill just to survive. My family are farmers and were displaced by war. When we tried to return, my father stood on a landmine and lost his leg. He died and my mother could not cope, so we moved to a town, but she could not send me to school. I have failed in my life and have not felt welcome anywhere. I have been very unhappy."*

*"When I heard about this course, I thought it was my one chance. I was offered a place and have learned so much and been made to feel so welcome that even though I have finished my course, I have stayed on to help other boys and to make furniture the Centre can sell for income.*

*"My plan, when one day I leave, is to have my own workshop; and with all my skills I know I can do this. I am very happy and see my life has a future - far away from landmines."*

Solomon is bouncing-back from a traumatised start to his life, thanks to the vision of Bernard and the tools TWAM has been able to provide. When he leaves he will have his own tool kit and all he needs to put his cruel childhood behind him.



## Meet Benson

*"I am 15 and a victim of the ADF war, as my father was shot while digging in his field. He has bullet fragments in his body which means he has been left disabled. With little money I could not go to school.*

*"I wanted to come and learn carpentry so I can learn a skill and because I know I have to support myself. Boys who leave here find work and I hope Bernard will help me to find work and start my life."*

Benson does not expect to ever return home to see his parents because it is just too dangerous and they do not want him to risk his future. Without Bernard and the tools you have helped provide for Benson, his future would be to live on the streets and be recruited into a criminal street gang. It's hard enough for him to bounce-back now, but if he had joined a street gang it would have been almost impossible.

Perhaps the most challenging of all bounce-backs is that of Zerone.



## Meet Zerone

*"My life is very challenging as I am deaf and dumb. I wanted to learn, but had to leave school as they could not cope with me and I could not learn there. My family does not know how to help me and no one could talk to me. My life was very lonely.*

*"I found out about this place and somehow managed to show Bernard what I was struggling with and that I wanted to learn carpentry. He accepted me and together we have been learning sign language. With his help I can now talk to people. The boys here are my friends and I live nearby and am very happy.*

*"After the course, I want to get a job. I know how hard it will be and that I can only do it with Bernard's help."*

Zerone was easily the happiest boy in the class and had the biggest smile. He is not a victim of war, or affected by war related disability, but that does not matter to Bernard. Will Zerone be able to find work locally when he completes his course? To be honest it is very unlikely as few employers would be willing to put in the work required. So will he *bounce-back*? Yes, because Bernard will make sure he does, even if he has to employ him, himself.

*Bouncing-back* from a disaster in your life, whether that be health issues, life changing injuries, loss of employment, relationship breakdown or any number of other things is very hard. We all know that. For many, such as Solomon, Benson and Zerone, they can only do it because someone came alongside and offered to start the bounce going! That someone was Bernard, but he could only do that because in turn TWAM offered to start his bounce going with the gift of tools.

Thank you for supporting the *bounce-back* of TWAM. In so doing you have helped the *bounce-back* of Solomon, Benson, Zerone and all the other students at the **Kasese Visions of War Victims Association**.



# How high can I bounce?

## Alkangel's story

Alkangel's (pronounced Archangel) story is linked to the previous story about the victims of the ADF rebels in Uganda. Alkangel lives in one of the few towns in the hills bordering the DRC. It was started in 1996 when a terrible escalation in violence forced people to flee from the hills to refugee camps. The camp Alkangel's family ended up in, eventually turned into the small town he works in today. The army and rebels fought for the camp, resulting in many deaths and huge numbers of orphans. The vulnerability of orphans allowed many to be forced into sex work and that brought HIV/AIDS into the camp.

You might wonder how they could possibly bounce-back from this, but shortly after the war ended, a small church in the community opened a Training Centre for the children and this is where Alkangel learned carpentry. The biggest challenge for the Centre was and remains, the mindset of war, and the belief that violence and criminal activity is the only way to get ahead.

Crispin, the leader of the group tells us:

***"Getting young people to think skills and not criminal activity is very hard."***



But that was never going to be the problem with Alkangel! He wanted to learn and wanted to do the right thing. He tells us what his challenges were:

***"My situation was that I was deep in the hills in my village and could only do work burning charcoal. There was nothing else and this is not good work. I have never been to school and neither have any of my brothers and sisters. We never had a house to live in, but we lived under a thatched cover which leaked during the rainy season. When it got wet, the grass rotted and it was no good for us."***

We would probably have forgiven Alkangel, with no education, skill or hope, if he had decided violence and criminal activity was the only way to achieve anything in his life. But this was not the bounce-back he was looking for. He continues:

***"When I heard about the Training Centre, I came and asked if they would train me. I told them without training and opportunity I would die, as carrying heavy logs to make charcoal is so hard and my body would give up."***

***"They agreed and I loved learning and using tools. When I completed my training, I stayed in the project for 10 years helping them to train other boys. Then I needed to support my family so I started my own workshop under a tree and stayed there for three years as I saved money and earned a good reputation. Then I got my workshop and I have been here for five years. I make furniture and coffins and now employ six people, who I have trained myself. I have trained twenty people since I opened this workshop. They will be competition for me, but I just think of the situation I was in and feel very sorry for those still in that position and want to help them."***

# Bouncing back our children

## Christians of Grace Ministries



Alkangel now has plans to expand his workshop so he can employ more people. No one would have believed the traumatised young boy living in fear of his life under a leaking shelter in the midst of a terrible civil war would ever aspire to this. What an amazing *bounce-back!* But, what about his family - still living under the tree?

Alkangel continues:

*"I still live in the same village and have built my parents a home and am paying for my younger brothers and sisters to go to school. I also have my own family and live in a house with a proper corrugated iron roof, and all my children are at school. I want my children to study well and have a good opportunity to achieve much more than me. I would like one to be a doctor; one a Revd Father; and the youngest a teacher. But my children*

*can choose. I just want them to have the opportunity. I am so happy."*

- But where would his bounce-back be without tools?
- Where would his children be, with no opportunities?
- Where would his parents be - still living under a leaking shelter in the rainy season?

So many people have benefited from the vision of a small church trying their best for the war orphans; the dedication of Crispin the leader of the project; and the vision and heart of Alkangel. But just as TWAM's bounce relies on tools, so did theirs. They are currently applying for lots more tools from TWAM so they can bounce even higher.

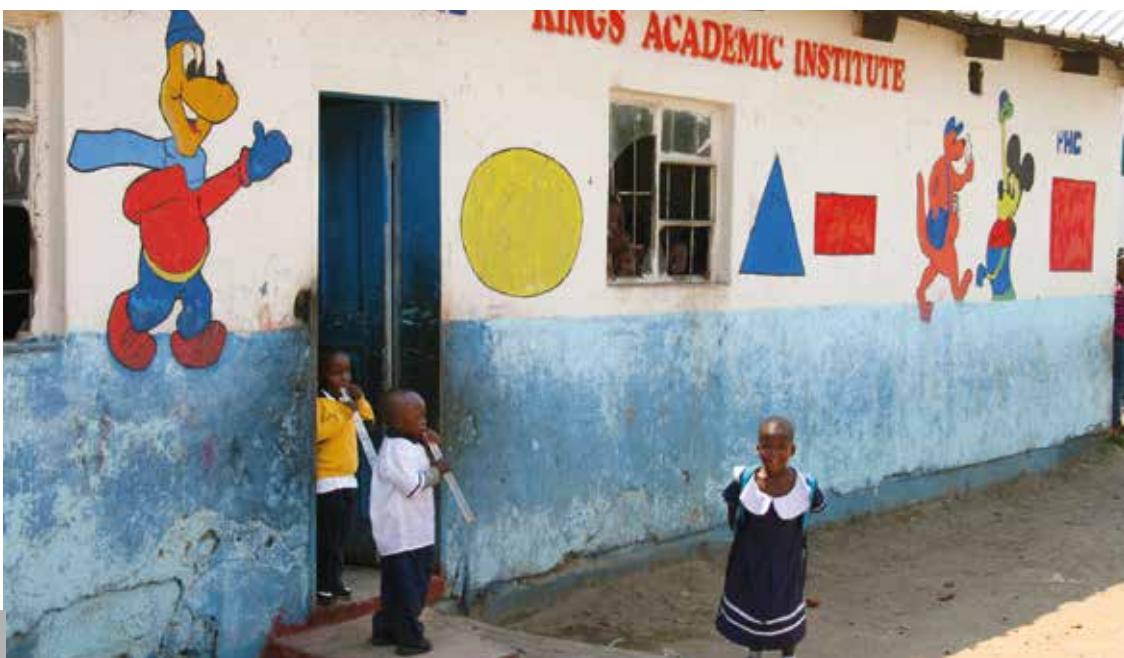
Thank you for making that possible.

***"When we visited the community we saw that many of the children were half naked, walking around in rags. We wanted to stop this and decided we would help the poorest parents to make clothes for their children and earn the income to send them to school."***

This was the first thing the Pastor of Grace Ministries said as he surveyed the community in which he lives. It was certainly one of the poorest communities

of Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. It is a community without electricity or a clean water supply to every household and where crime and forced sex work are constant threats. Employment is almost non-existent, so people barely have the ability to buy food let alone school fees. How does a community *bounce-back* from this? How can a small church with no money, but a heartfelt desire to help, do so, when they also have no money and barely survive?

The dream was to open a school and do it with no money. To ask parents to pay school fees and provide uniforms when they also had no money. It sounds impossible, but anyone who regularly reads TWAM News, knows that with the gift of tools it was very possible indeed!



To open the school they applied not for books or any kind of educational tool; they applied for sewing machines, plus carpentry, builders' and mechanics' kits.

Their plan was simple:

- **The sewing machines would be used to train the mothers to make uniforms for their children and to make clothes they could sell to pay school fees.**
- **The carpentry kits would be used to make furniture for the school; then to sell.**
- **The builder's kit to repair and maintain the dilapidated building they acquired.**
- **The mechanics kits to train parents with a skill to earn a living and provide for their families.**

Their building has a Training Centre at one end and the school at the other. A simple but brilliant idea that allows a school to educate and clothe hundreds of children without any money at all.

It almost sounds impossible, but don't take our word for it; two of the mums share their stories...

## Meet Alphonsina

She tells us:

***"The Pastor came into my community and told me that he had opened a school and tailoring course and asked if I was interested. I was very interested because I have six children that I could not send to school. I could not bear to see them going without their education.***

***I started the course, made uniforms for my children and enrolled my oldest in the school. I have done well and now I am making uniforms to sell to earn income. I have achieved so much and been able to help my children. Now I want to open a small shop."***



## Meet Lister

She tells us:

***"The Pastor's wife came round to me because she knew I was in great need and the only way we could survive was to beg relatives to help us. My husband cannot find work and we have seven children, three of which should have been at school.***

***She invited me to join the course. I said yes, straight away as I wanted to help my children. Now I am earning money with my tailoring and my three eldest are at school - in the uniforms I have made. My heart is filled with joy."***



The impact of tools is amazing and the bounce-back complete. From no money, no education, no uniforms and begging relatives to survive - to children at school, skilled work and food on the table - and all thanks to tools.

From a community with no hope of educating their children or any possibility of work to a life transforming school and Training Centre, and all thanks to tools. This is what we achieve together and thank you for being part of this amazing work.

# A truly great bounce-back!

# Bouncing back entire communities



**"We saw the suffering of the young people and when we shared with them we heard their many challenges, because many have lost parents to HIV/AIDS."**

This is what Diane, the Director of Youth Destiny Action, tells us. Diane and her team have set up a very impressive Training Centre in Kabwe, Zambia. They have a total of four Centres based in schools they are able to take over every Saturday. They aim to train 600 students under 35, without employment or skill and who have lost at least one parent.

They offer tailoring, building and carpentry skills. They also received computers to help run the project and bikes for the trainers. The bikes are essential as the schools are not based in a village, but between villages, some of which are 10 miles away. So you can stand by one of their schools and there are no other buildings in sight. Indeed when we turned

up at this isolated school we thought we had gone to the wrong place. That was until we went inside and saw every classroom packed with students and trainers.

The whole project is incredibly well-run with courses lasting from 2 months to one year. When courses are completed, all the students are organised into self-help groups of 10 people. Together they are given tools and helped to find a workshop. They are taught business skills and how to work together to bring success. For the first 18 months they are supported by the project and in return donate some of their profits back to the Centre, which are used to pay the school fees of local children who have lost their parents.

After 18 months the groups are independent and encouraged to stay together and grow their businesses and apply to TWAM for more tools. Diane tells us:

***"We encourage our trainees to stay together so they can better manage their resources. We also find that self-help groups are better trusted because communities see their commitment to the group and their united goals. It also makes it easier for them to get loans and benefit from micro finance schemes."***

Local government officials have been so impressed with the project they have given them land to build their own Training Centre. They also lobby local businesses to take on graduating students.

This is an amazingly well-run and visionary project that is literally transforming hundreds of lives every year. They are taking young people without any hope of skill or employment and turning their lives completely around. But this bounce-back, like all bounce-backs only happens because TWAM is able to regularly provide the tools to make it possible. Finally Diane tells us:

***"When we were discussing what we wanted to do to help the suffering of our community, we visited another charity and they told us about TWAM. Then we knew what we must do. Without TWAM's support, young people would have no hope and would turn to drink. These tools empower them to have a skill and livelihood."***



These tools are now going to be used to build the Training Centre and continue to have an incredible impact on this rural Zambian community. An amazing *bounce-back* happening every day through the gift of your tools!

**Thank you.**

# I want to help them bounce-back!

In this edition we have seen that people can *bounce back* from almost anything, if they have the help and support of compassionate, visionary people and most importantly the gift of tools. Will you help provide them with tools to do this? This is the *bounce back* they so desperately need.

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