

TWAM

Tools with a Mission

Our news

Giving tools – *Creating happy stories*

July 2020



Empowering people with the tools that create livelihoods and transform lives

Welcome to TWAM News

Giving tools - Creating 'happy stories'



The theme for TWAM throughout these challenging times has been 'happy stories' and our desire to spread a little happiness to all who volunteer with us and support us. I hope it has been a welcome

reminder that even in dark days our world is full of kind people, acts of compassion and most importantly hope. So please read and enjoy this special edition of 'happy 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.

“When doubts filled my mind, your comfort gave me renewed hope and cheer.”

Psalm 94:19 (NLT)

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

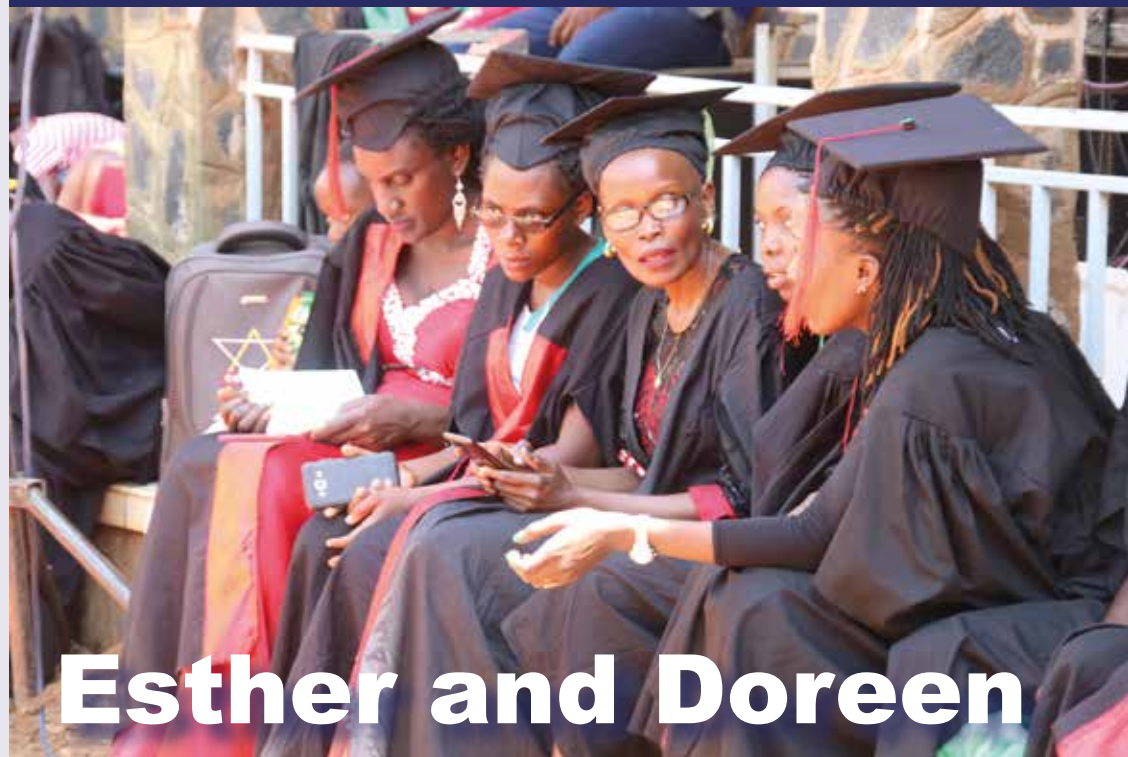
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TWAM is grateful to the Aall Foundation for their long-term generous support of our work.

Our happy stories:



Esther and Doreen

In January this year, Mike Griffin, (CEO) along with Simon Danks (Chair of the Board) had the pleasure of attending the annual Graduation Ceremony of our partner charity in Uganda. The small compound shared by 'Mindset' and TWAM houses their training facilities, for over a 100 tailoring and catering students, and the TWAM storage containers and offices. It's always busy with classrooms full of students and recipients of TWAM coming to collect their tools.

The guest of honour was Vincent Kayanja, the Mayor of Entebbe and as he started his speech, he said something very important...

“Education without a skill is almost completely useless.”

But the busiest day of the year is Graduation Day when hundreds of current and ex-students and their families join with local dignitaries to celebrate the successful completion of courses and exams. A brass band led a parade of students down the road, a choir and dancers filled the air with music and lots of awards, competitions and speeches followed. It was a very happy day! But happiest of all, were the stories of the students graduating. Let's meet just two of them.

Hello, I'm Esther and this is my 'happy story'...



I am working from home as I do not have the money to start a business. I am looking forward and need to do the best for my family; with more work I will need more skills as I love fashion.

Esther's happy story is wonderful:

- She had an empty saucepan and now feeds her children good meals every day.
- None of her children went to school and now all of them have some education.
- She was on her own and now she has Maureen and 'Mindset' as her family.
- She had no hopes or dreams and now she has her own tailoring business.

A happy story indeed, thanks to 'Mindset' and the gift of a TWAM sewing machine.

Doreen's story starts not with the sorrow and pain shared by Esther, but with the struggles experienced by millions across Africa. The struggle of growing up in a rural community relying on subsistence farming. Many rural communities are effectively 'no money' economies, where families grow all their own food in the small areas of land around their homes. If they do well, they have more vegetables than they need and can sell some to raise money for school fees, clothes and other essentials. But, if they do not, then their children are forced to drop out of school, the family goes hungry and even loses their home. Doreen tells us her story:

"I live with both my parents and six brothers and sisters. I am the oldest. We are subsistence farmers but the land we own is not enough to produce the food we need and to sell some to pay our rent. In recent years there has been a drought every year which affects our crops, and during the rainy season we have had floods that wash our crops out of the ground.

"I heard about 'Mindset' from a friend. She told me, because she knew I did not have a job and I was sitting at home doing nothing. I had no job, because no-one has any work in my community. She also knew of all my troubles and how I have struggled to send my three children to school and how my saucepan was always empty.

When I approached 'Mindset', I did not expect to be accepted, as most students are young and I am much older. But I was accepted and Maureen (founder of Mindset) has become a mother to me. I have also become a mother to the younger girls and they come to me for advice.

I am on my own, because in my country, some men have more than one family, but keep it a secret. This is not allowed, but it happens. My children keep asking questions and I do not know what to tell them. I have so little support and feel very alone. This has caused me great pain and still causes me great pain. But what can I do?

We used to go without food all the time, as no one would help us, and it was terrible, but since I have been at 'Mindset' and have started to earn money we now have lunch and supper. I now send all three of my children to school.

Before I graduated, I had my sewing machine from TWAM. It is my personal tool and no one can take it away from me.

Hello, I'm Doreen and this is my 'happy story'...



I wanted to help my family, so applied for the tailoring course at 'Mindset'. The course is free, otherwise I would not have been able to come. Since starting the tailoring course I have learned to make dresses, t-shirts, shirts and shorts.

I can now earn between 20,000 and 50,000 Ugandan shillings (£4-£10) per week and this means I can provide little extras for my family including food, soap, sugar, medicine, as well as buy material to make clothes. Before the course, if one of the children was ill, the decision would have been 'food or medicine' but now we can choose both food and medicine."

Once again, a wonderful 'happy story', as Doreen can provide 'little extras' (but would you consider food, soap and medicine to be 'little extras'?) A complete transformation for an entire family, thanks to Mindset and a TWAM sewing machine.

Doreen's happy story:

- Having to choose food or medicine, and now choosing both food and medicine.
- No food when crops fail and now money to buy food when crops fail.
- Always fearful of homelessness, but now comforted with money to pay rent.
- No hope of anything better, but now experiencing a better life with the oldest child skilled and earning money.

Thank you, that through your support, stories of tragedy and stories of struggle can become 'happy stories'! And all through the gift of a donated sewing machine - costing us around £25 to collect, refurbish and ship to Africa.

Thank you.

I've started my 'happy story': Joseph

Joseph is a trainee at Kasese Baptist Skills Centre and currently on placement in the workshop of Aziz, a former trainee of the Skills Centre. What is so often encouraging about our 'happy stories', is that one person who has seen their life drastically change is willing to support others who need their stories to become happy too.

Aziz has trained many young people at the request of the Skills Centre and others who simply turned up and asked if he would help them. This is a great sacrifice in a small community, as every person trained, instantly becomes competition. One of the young men, soon to become Aziz's competition, is Joseph.



Hello, I'm Joseph, I've started my 'happy story'...

Joseph has big plans as he knows this is his one chance to change his life. He lives in one of the poorest and roughest communities in Kasase and one of the few places in Uganda, I (Mike Griffin) would not want to visit unaccompanied. It lacks basic amenities and suffers very high unemployment and crime rates. Joseph's life was clearly going in just one direction and that would mean the writing of a tragic not a happy story.

I'll let Joseph tell his own story:

"I am a school drop-out. I often could not afford to go to school, as my parents had no money. I had to stop and then go back many times, so I did not complete primary until I was 17 (should have been 11). My father is an agricultural day labourer, which pays little money and often provides no work."

(Agricultural day labourers are the most perilous of all day labourers, as they are only ever guaranteed one day's work at



Students displaying their wares (with green TWAM storage container behind and office front right)

a time, and are only employed when crops need planting, occasional maintenance and for harvest. The rest of the time they have no work. Day labouring is designed to pay one day's living cost for one day's work, so no work means nothing to live on, hence Joseph could only go to school when there was work and had to stop when there was not.)

“My family just does digging and I thought this would be my life. My parents did not want me to do this and wanted me to learn a skill, so when I heard about the Skills Training Centre from another student, I decided to go and see them. I wanted to have a skill and look better in the community.

I am still at the Skills Centre but I have also been with Aziz for six months. I have learned so much and am earning good money now. I am helping my family and buying clothes and better things for myself. I am planning ahead and am buying chickens to raise for eggs and if I need extra money I can sell a hen. I plan to start buying some land next.”

Life digging is a terrible existence, plagued with back and muscle problems, plus a plethora of other medical conditions resulting from poor diet and overwork. It is the lowest work, hence the shame Joseph felt when that was his only option as a school drop-out and unskilled labourer. But no more! Joseph, with the support of the Skills Centre, Aziz and his TWAM toolkit has written a new ending to his story - a happy ending!

- From school drop out to skilled craftsman.
- From the shame of day labouring to the pride of sought-after carpenter.
- From the struggle of digging to the joy of creating furniture.
- From ultra-poor young man to budding entrepreneur.

With the help of his TWAM carpentry kit, Joseph is starting his ‘happy story’. Thank you for helping make this possible.

“I’ve planned my ‘happy story’”: Agatha



Agatha has her ‘happy story’ all planned out. She is an object lesson in the truth that poverty means lack of resources, not lack of intelligence, ability, determination or vision. Agatha is rich in these and thanks to El Shaddai Church Training Centre and TWAM, her richness is being rewarded. Agatha needed someone to see beyond her poverty and be willing to invest in her young life. Pastor Ruth from El Shaddai and TWAM were willing to do that and indeed delighted to work together with her. Agatha wanted to learn knitting and be given a TWAM hand knitting pack and some wool. But, Agatha did not want to be a knitter; for her this was the end to the means of her ‘happy story’.

We’ll let her explain:

“I came to El Shaddai to learn knitting because I have a dream. My friend Lydia (to the left in the blue and green blouse) invited me to the Centre and taught me knitting and crochet. She knew I was only sitting at home doing nothing, just lazing around.

This was not good for me as I am a widow and have 3 children. I could not afford to send them all to school or even feed them every day. I have learned to make doormats. It takes two days to make a mat, but I can sell them for good money.

My oldest daughter has started coming with me and she is learning to make mats too. Learning to knit has turned my life around, helped my children with their schooling and really helped me to put food on the table.”

“My dream is to care for myself and I think that is very near now.”





We're writing our 'happy stories': Samson and Dominic

Samson and Dominic live in the small town of Damasco. Even by the standards of rural eastern Uganda it is a very isolated town being many miles from the nearest tarmac road. Many in the town still live in traditional round mud huts and the entire population are classed as ultra-poor. **Shockingly, nobody in the town has ever been able to complete their education.** This is due to loss of a parent, long term parental unemployment with no money for school fees, or forced child labour in the fields.

For Samson and Dominic this came in the form of the community project Transformation Advocacy Network Uganda (TANU). The project was set up to address the issues caused by lack of education and unemployment, namely underage sex work, crime, drunkenness and a loss of self belief and ambition.

The project teaches 6 month courses in tailoring, motor mechanics, carpentry, brick laying and electrical work. Samson and Dominic are learning carpentry. Here's their stories:

You might, at this point, be wondering exactly how this is a happy story? It is becoming one and a poignant example to all of us, that even the most seemingly hopeless situations can be turned around through kindness and vision.



What a transformation - thanks to the kindness of a friend, the support of the church and the gift of a Hand Knitting Pack and wool from TWAM. As a result, her story is turning into a happy one because:

- Her children could not always go to school and now they can.
- Her family sometimes went hungry and now they never go hungry.
- She was at home doing nothing and now she is working hard knitting mats.
- Her oldest daughter was a school drop-out but is now learning a skill that will set her up for life.

But that is not what Agatha has totally planned for her 'happy story'. She continues:

"I have been saving up for my dream and now I am going to fulfil it. I applied to college and started in January (2020) on a hotel management course. This is very good work."

Agatha is still at college, fulfilling not just her dream, but importantly her potential, which poverty so nearly took from her. And all thanks to a friend and some knitting needles and wool from TWAM.

Another 'happy story' being planned and written.



**Hello - I'm Samson
and this is the
beginning of my
happy story...**

But I also want to be successful so I can employ other people and help them have transformed lives just like mine."

Samson's happy story has begun. The final chapter will not be written until he completes his course, receives his TWAM carpentry kit and works ever so hard setting up his workshop. Then the final chapter will be when Samson:

- Has a skill, his own tools and is working for the first time in his life.
- Is paying to send his six brothers and sisters to secondary school and they become the first ever children in the town to complete their education.
- Is employing other young people in the town, so they can begin to write their 'happy stories' of skills training and life transformation.

Samson has huge plans to change his life, but most importantly for him, the lives and futures of his brothers and sisters. Finally, he sees a happy ending to his story and what a precious gift this is to give to a determined young man.

"I wanted to join the carpentry course because I was staying at home for a long time with nothing to do. I come from a very poor family and have no father. My mother could not pay school fees, so I have not been able to complete my education.

I have six younger brothers and sisters in primary, but there will be no money to send them to secondary school (primary school fees are very low, but secondary is often at least ten times higher.) I want to pay for my younger brothers and sisters to go to secondary school, but until now had no hope and no money.

Now I have hope in my carpentry and I believe my best option is to be successful in my skill and to start my own workshop.

**Hello - I'm Dominic
and this is the
beginning of my
happy story...**

Dominic is a very passionate young man, who told most of his story through tears, some of sadness and some of joy. This is his story:

"It has always been my vision to join a carpentry workshop. It has been my dream since a young boy when I used to watch carpenters in my village. I had to leave school early and I cried such a lot. But now I see my life changing so much.

When I finish my course, I will have my workshop where I will make roofs for people. I want to see all people in Uganda living under a good roof made by me and my friends from TANU (many still live in mud huts with straw roofs). I want to be an example to the idle youths who hang around with no skills and nothing to do.

Then I want to make tables and seats for churches as my giving and thanks. I thank God for this opportunity and when I make something I make it for God.

When I finish this course I must help my eleven brothers and sisters to go to school. I shed so many tears when I could not go to school and do not want my brothers and sisters to shed them too."



Dominic is well on the way to completing his 'happy story'. As he looks back there are still tears of pain, but when he looks forward, his face lights up with hope and dreams. The happy story he is writing is:

- To replace the pain of a lost education with the joy of a good trade.
- To replace his despair at ever achieving anything with an industrious example to the idle youth.
- To have the joy of giving back to his community and local churches
- To send his eleven younger brothers and sisters to school and spare them the many tears he shed.

What a wonderful story he is writing and we can look forward in years to come of reading the final chapters.

Both Samson and Dominic had desperately hopeless beginnings to their stories and had little hope that the last chapters would be any different. But, thanks to some visionary trainers and the gift of TWAM Carpentry Kits they have been given the opportunity to write a new ending to their stories. Happy stories indeed!

“My happy story”: Levina

Levina lives in Kasese, a large town on the border of Uganda and DR Congo. It is a major trading centre between the two countries, with people constantly crossing the border to buy and sell goods. This is both a blessing and a curse, as border towns tend to be dangerous places, but can also have large thriving markets and economies.

Kasese has several markets with one dominated by tailors. One of the busiest little shops is owned by Levina. Hers is a very ‘happy story’, but it has not always been like that. Levina begins her story:

“I used to stay at home idle because I had no money or any means to achieve anything with my life. I am married, but my husband is not around very much as he is an agricultural day labourer and has to go wherever there is work.

Day labouring is not good and does not pay very much. I only survived by people hiring me to dig their fields. Life was very hard. We could not afford to send our four children to school.

When I heard there was a Skills Centre in my community - from students and teachers going door to door

telling people - I decided to go there and see if they could help me. They accepted me and I trained as a tailor. That was eight years ago. My husband was very happy when he learned what I was doing.

I saved money as I was training and as soon as I finished training I rented this shop and came straight here on my own. I worked very hard and built a good reputation and after just one year I employed one person. I now employ three women and have been here eight years. I now have a plan to develop my business and make it even bigger.

I can now afford to send all my children to school. I could not afford fees, uniforms, or books before, but now I can. I am also supporting my whole family.”



Levina has an amazing story and no one could sum it up better than her:

“If I had never heard about the Skills Centre I would remain in poverty and shame.”

That surely is the last sentence of the last chapter of her ‘happy story’. But how many more happy chapters has she written in the last eight years? It all began with her training and a TWAM sewing machine, but what happy memories this determined and gifted woman has written.

They include:

- My children could not go to school and now they all go to school.
- I had to dig fields and now I own my own business.
- I was alone and now I employ three other women.
- Nobody supported me, but now I support my whole family.
- I lived in the shame of poverty, but now I have a life to be proud of.

Happy stories come in all forms, but few are better than this!

Thank you for your support, which has made all this possible for Levina, her family and the three extra ‘happy stories’ being written by the women she is able to employ.

I want to help write a happy story!

Please accept my gift towards providing someone struggling with the despair of poverty the tools they need to make their happy story.

Your gift can transform a life forever.

Please accept my gift of:

£15 £25 £50 £100
 £150 £250 Other £ _____

Or you can donate online at twam.uk/donate; by phone to 01473 210220; using our bank details. Please include your surname and postcode as a reference. Barclays Bank - Account: 33190994 Sort code: 20-44-51



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