

TWAM

Tools with a Mission

Our news

Supporting the people who break the cycle of poverty

July 2021



Empowering people with the tools that create livelihoods and transform lives

Focusing on the groups behind the individuals



In this edition of TWAM News we are focusing on the groups that train the individuals. I hope this will help give you a better understanding of what we do and why we do it. We speak so often of the value of tools and their ability to

transform lives, but here we focus on the people and groups making that transformation possible.

Without the drive, commitment, determination, vision and sheer hard work of these groups, what we do would not be possible. So we thank the hundreds of groups across Africa working with us and recognise them in just a small way through the projects featured in this TWAM News.

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.

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up."

Ecclesiastes 4v9-10 (NIV)

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.



The women of the Kamuli Group

'When it is ten sticks, they will not break'

At the very heart of TWAM is the determination to help the people who would find it the hardest to access support from anywhere else. People like the women of Kamuli in rural Eastern Uganda. They live in a village without roads, electricity, piped water or school. None speak English, few have been to school and none have ever seen a computer. So it would be virtually impossible for them to put together a business plan or sustainable project proposal, required by many, before offering support. But, they know exactly what they need to do and how to do it.

But these are the very groups TWAM works so hard to find and support. We consider it a privilege to be able to support the groups at the very bottom of the economic ladder.

This is certainly where the women of Kamuli fit in; and we make a huge mistake, if we equate lack of education and computer literacy with lack of ability and vision. So when the women decided they must do something to change their lives, they approached TWAM's long term partner in Eastern Uganda, Andrew Gabula. A personal visit is by far the best way to help communities with a culture of oral, not written, communication.

When Andrew visited they shared that they felt isolated and lonely, shut away in their homes and powerless to bring about change because they had no money, no value, no influence, no skills and nobody to turn to. One of the group members put it very succinctly when she said:

“When you are one person you cannot manage, when it is one stick it can break, but when it is ten sticks they will not break; this is why our group is so important.”

So with Andrew’s support they applied to TWAM and received several sewing machines. This enabled them to start a tailoring group, which their husbands gave them permission to attend as they saw the economic advantage of this.

But for the women, it needed to be about so much more. It needed to provide friendship, mutual support, protection and access to Government services such as health advice.

The group meets every Tuesday and Friday to train, make dresses, sanitary pads, mats and bags. They have also learned to make babies’ porridge from maize, beans and millet. This has made a huge difference to babies’ health and life expectancy. They make enough to sell the porridge as well as clothing to the surrounding communities to raise money to buy materials and pay school fees.



Anna standing proudly by her friends

One of the group members, Anna, shares with us:

“I joined the group, because in the group you learn a lot. I learned about nutrition, as before I could not even make porridge. Now my health and my children’s is much better. The difference in my life is that I have friendship and I have learned new things. I have learned how to protect myself.”

Her comment on protecting herself is the huge problem of domestic violence. Many women suffer violence at the hands of their husbands, especially when they are drunk. Shut away in their homes, they were powerless to defend

themselves, but once they join a group, can together confront an abusive husband and collectively defend their friend. This is the background to the comment: *‘but when it is ten sticks, they will not break’*

Another group member, Sylvia, put it so well when she said to us:

“I wanted to join the group for friendship, information and knowledge. I wanted to be dynamic and earn money for myself and not suffer much. I cannot do sewing as my eyesight is not good, but I learn to make mats and porridge. We sell together in the market. The difference it has made in my life is that I have friends and when I have problems I have people to help me.”

We may send out sewing machines and toolkits, but they are never just about learning tailoring and skills. They can’t be, because that is just one of the needs that has to be met if lives are to be truly transformed.

So this is why TWAM chooses to work with small groups, because the challenges are so great, but the determination to meet them is greater. The Kamuli women have achieved so much since their first sewing machines arrived. They are no longer victims of poverty, powerlessness, or violence, for now they are victors. Yes, they still struggle with poverty; their lives will always be hard, and sometimes will be filled with violence, *‘but when it is ten sticks - they will not break’.*



Sylvia confidently among her friends

Why we do what we do

In this edition I have introduced you to some truly inspiring groups working with TWAM to transform lives across Africa through skills training and tools. Here I would like to take the opportunity to share with you the reason why we do what we do. I'll do this by answering some of the questions I am regularly asked.



Mike with group founder Godfrey in Zambia

Wouldn't it be better to give money to the people you support so they can buy their own tools and support the local economy?

- In many of the rural areas where we work there are simply no places where you can buy tools.
- If you can buy tools, they are very expensive and cost almost the same as they do in the UK, which puts them well out of reach for the many people who survive on less than a pound a day.
- The quality of many of the tools available is very poor, and well below the standard we enjoy. I have often seen tools bought locally which have broken the first time they are used.

Do you have any idea of the value of goods in an average container?

- Incredibly hard to answer, but with an average of 650 tool kits, boxes of tools and machines and based on the value of our alternative gifts, this would be very roughly £23,000.

It seems to cost so much to send a container to Africa. How can you justify this?

- It then costs an average of £8,500 to ship, pay customs, duties and transport to send a container to Africa. It sounds a lot but consider this: It's 7200 miles by sea and another 1200 miles by land to our busiest distribution centre in Kitwe, Zambia. That works out at 89p per mile. Whereas, if I were to catch a train from Ipswich to London in peak time, it would cost me around £55 to travel 63 miles. That's 87p per mile. Which makes an entire container for 89p a bit of a bargain!

Wouldn't it be better to buy tools in the UK rather than spend so much money collecting and refurbishing old tools?

- It would cost literally millions of pounds to buy new tools. The best example is the 3000 sewing machines we collect, refurbish and ship to Africa for around £25 each.

A new machine would cost around £300 which is an eye-watering £900,000 per year. We estimate the 1000 carpentry kits we send each cost around £45, but new, would be nearer £450 or £450,000 per year.

- The quality of new tools does not compare with old tools. People request our tools because they last a very long time.
- Environmental responsibility and sustainability is at the heart of what we do, and we save hundreds of tonnes of perfectly good tools from going to landfill every year.
- It's a great comfort to so many who donate tools. We receive a lot of phone calls from people recently bereaved who have a shed full of their husband's cherished tools that nobody wants. It brings joy in a time of great sorrow to know they will be passed on to someone in Africa who will love and cherish them again. This could even be a refurbished sewing machine.
- It gives a sense of purpose and value to hundreds of people who volunteer with us every day to collect and refurbish tools. Some find a purpose in retirement and for others with mental health issues, it is a life saver.

Len Palmer, the Halstead Refurbishment Centre manager keeping the mechanics kits flowing, despite all the challenges of 2020.



All of these things matter to us and why, for all sorts of reasons, collecting, refurbishing, sorting into trade kits and sending donated tools to Africa is the very best thing we could ever do.

What we do is so simple, so straight forward and so utterly life changing for people across Africa and also across the UK. I hope you agree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike'.

Mike Griffin, Chief Executive

Training, tools and ‘much more’ equals success!



Tailoring students wearing clothes they have made

One of the great privileges for TWAM is working with groups over many years and seeing them grow from small beginnings to large enterprises.

One such group is Skills Link Uganda that has been working with TWAM since it was formed in 2011.

It was set up in a very poor community on the outskirts of Kampala, where poverty leads to so many related problems. The founder of Skills Link, Godfrey, tells us:

“Youth unemployment and working poverty (not earning a living wage) are persistent and growing challenges. In our area these issues are especially critical and disproportionately affect the youth.”

This means few children go to school and almost none of their parents work. The threat of life-long unemployment leads young people with few choices into crime, sex-work and underage marriage. It is an act of pure desperation and one that leaves emotional scars and physical injuries.

Into this seemingly hopeless situation stepped Skills Link with their aim to empower young people with the vocational skills that lead to successful employment.

Like so many TWAM-supported groups this meant skills training in carpentry, mechanics, tailoring, computing, hairdressing and much more. But Godfrey tells us, that is not enough. He continues:

“Many young people have the drive and energy to succeed, but due to limited experience of good management practices, their businesses are stuck. This negates their enormous potential to grow and create critical jobs for more youth. Young people lack the knowledge, experience, capital and mind-set to successfully get their enterprise off the ground.”



Godfrey in an empty classroom during lockdown. A poignant reminder of why businesses need to learn resilience.

So besides skills training, they offer 'much more' including business planning, entrepreneurship courses and strategic thinking. This has enabled hundreds of young people to break free from the cycle of poverty.

But even this is not enough; it still requires 'much more' because they still have to address the emotional, mental and spiritual scars caused by the desperate choices of poverty. So, Skills Link offers long term counselling to help heal deep wounds. This includes ongoing mentoring in 'soft skills' such as being trustworthy and reliable. All of which helps students find value and the self-belief to fulfil their potential and start resilient successful businesses.

Godfrey is leading the way by developing a good relationship with local Government which has helped start a platform where young people can meet with officials to discuss issues affecting them and suggest innovative ways to address them. One such idea is to set up a market, just where young people can trade and establish their businesses.

All of this helps graduating students leave, not just with their training and tools, but with the life skills to overcome the challenges they will face.

Skills Link Uganda is a wonderful example of how TWAM can work with ambitious local community-based charities, to support their growth and development. Skills Link has grown from a small group of volunteers, working with just a handful of young people, to a large organisation supported by a number of like-minded charities and helping hundreds of young people every year. They have seen their work expand to help vulnerable women, orphans and young people from across Kampala. They have developed from a purely skilled-based work, to a truly holistic life-transforming ministry caring for all the needs of the young person.



TWAM sewing machines ready to be distributed

Once again the vital message is that, not only do our tools transform the lives of individuals, but also help to transform the charities that receive them.

We are delighted to be able to play a part in the growth of Skills Link, as well as the life-transforming growth of the young people it serves. They are a great example of TWAM's long-term partnership goals.



“We said to each other - why should our community be the poorest?”



Some of the ladies of Neath at home in Lusaka with some TWAM sewing machines

“We went home and identified some of the poorest women and offered to train them in tailoring. But there was a condition, all the women had to agree to help set up and join a community club. Then each club was given some sewing machines to share.”

The reason the women had to join a community group was because the widows of Lusaka understand the crippling effect of loneliness felt by many widows. They recognised that poverty took many forms including emotional and spiritual harm. By bringing the women together they instilled friendship, support and a shared determination to change their lives.

Alongside tailoring, the Lusaka widows taught them business skills and each trainee had to come up with a business

plan on how they would earn an income, before they could graduate and be given a sewing machine. This formula has been very successful and many women have seen their lives transformed. Finally, Nawina tells us:

“We need to help each other. We are determined to help them; we are determined to do something. It is the will of our group to help them.”

The NWP is exactly the type of group TWAM looks to support. A group with the skills to identify a need and the ability to put into place a long-term plan to meet that need. But, crucially, who also take a holistic approach to meet all the needs of the people they help. With your support, the widows of Lusaka will continue to transform so many lives with TWAM sewing and knitting machines.

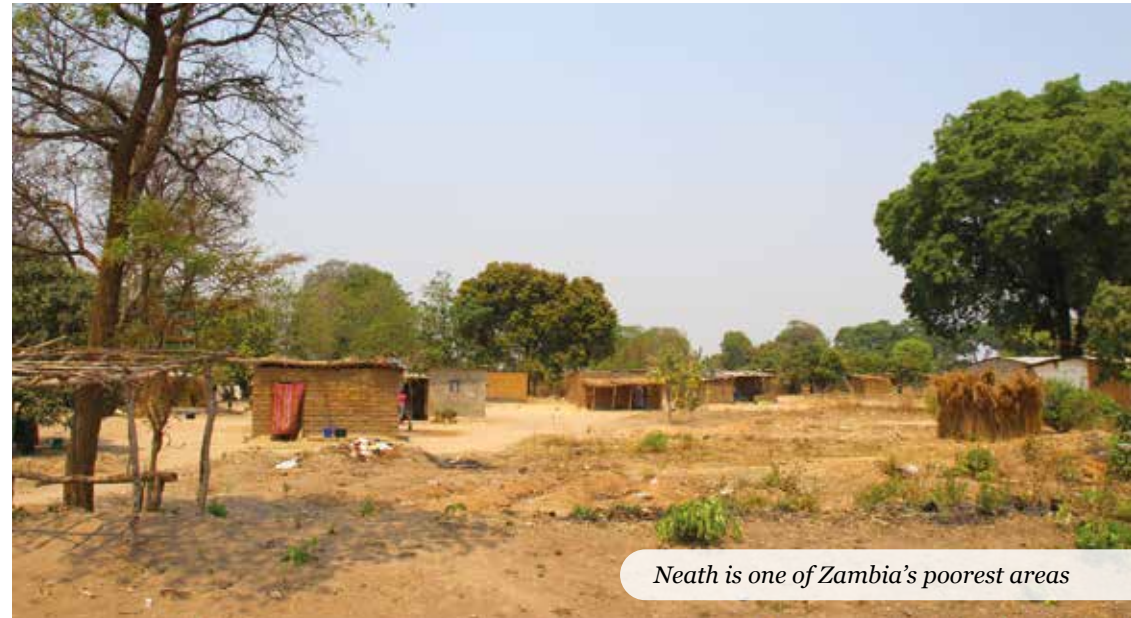
The central factor in everything TWAM does is the formation of community groups who recognise a need in their community and are then determined to meet it. Many would share the motivation of the Neath Women's Project (NWP) who have done just that and placed TWAM at the heart of their work.

The NWP is made up of 12 widows living in the capital Lusaka. Their income is meagre by most people's standards but far surpasses that of their home community. They all moved to Lusaka from the rural area of Neath, which is one of the poorest in Zambia. In Neath, most people rely on growing their own food, which is a perilous existence, at the best of times, with unreliable rains and nutrient poor

soils. Thus, harvests fail and people starve. When the ladies visited Neath they could not help but be impacted by what they saw and slowly started to form a plan. The group leader, Nawina (black and white striped top) tells us:

“We live in Lusaka with electricity and water, and we said to each other - why should our home community be the poorest? We must help.”

They realised the people most in need of help were widows and vulnerable women like themselves. So they applied to TWAM for 20 sewing and knitting machines and then returned to Neath to start their project. Nawina continues:



Neath is one of Zambia's poorest areas

“I want to give the rejected a second chance”

There are always the obvious needs and those that attract the most praise and support, but then there are the other needs. One of the key advantages to the way TWAM chooses to work is that we are able to help truly inspiring people who choose to meet needs which are often unwelcome in their community.

Pastor Edward in his shop with one of his trainees



Pastor Edward from Lusaka, Zambia is a great example of this as he tells us what the Lord laid on his heart. He says:

“I wanted to work mainly with ex-offenders because it is very hard for them when leaving prison. They are not welcome and cannot find employment. I think that if we cannot help them in the first three months then they may end up going back to prison. So I invited ex-offenders into my home and saw their struggles and how hard it was for them to change. So to help them, I started New Life Harvest.”



Soweto Market is a perfect location for the workshop

Through New Life Harvest, Pastor Edward offers skills training in tailoring. He has rented a small workshop in the main Soweto Market where he trains ex-offenders and where they can also sell their goods. He offers counselling and spiritual support to show them they are loved and that he cares about all their difficulties.

On completion of their training each student is given a sewing machine. Pastor Edward recognises without this huge investment in them, they stand little chance of achieving anything. He has had some great success stories as a number of students have gone on to set up their own tailoring businesses in the same market and truly put their life of crime behind them.

He is now hoping to expand and take on a bigger shop so he can increase the number of ex-offenders he can train, at any one time, to 15. Pastor Edward is typical of the people who have big generous hearts and the determination and ability to fulfil their ambitions, but can only do so with the tools provided by TWAM.

Pastor Edward came to us, because he knew we helped small projects get off the ground and support them as they grow to be even bigger projects.

It is a privilege to be able to support Pastor Edward and we thank all our supporters for standing with us and him to give ex-offenders a chance of a new life in Zambia.

Giving Power to the Powerless

In this edition we have focused on the amazing groups TWAM supports with tools, and people like Sylvia (pictured) whose lives have been transformed. We have, literally thousands of groups like these asking us for support right now. We can only support them with your help. Please help us, help them, if you can.

Please accept my gift of:

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

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

You could sponsor an entire container filled with wonderful "stories in the making" - for £7,500. If you would like to, we'll update you on the container, as we prepare it and ship it out from here.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

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Please send me the TWAM **Supporter e-news**

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