

TWAM

Tools with a Mission

Our news

**“If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together.”**

Winter 2018



A Christian charity sending tools across the world

Welcome to TWAM News



In this edition of TWAM News we are focusing on the power of community. A popular saying in Africa is **“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”** Fast is good for the sprint, but not for the long race. People

trying to break free of poverty know that this is a long hard race and one that is only won together. We recognise that too which is why we work with groups and communities that support each other for the long term. The same is true of TWAM as we work together; staff, volunteers and supporters, to go far together to achieve livelihood creation across Africa. I hope what I am sharing in this edition about groups I have met will encourage and inspire you.

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 always need local collectors and volunteers in our refurbishment centres. Please contact Ipswich for details. 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. Gifts can be sent to Ipswich and Direct Debit and Gift Aid forms requested.

Prayer support

TWAM depends on prayer. Please pray for us.

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (ESV)

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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When you face a long gruelling journey, the biggest challenge can be the first step. Stepping out on your own can make a journey seem almost impossible, but the task can be transformed if someone takes your hand and offers to walk with you. We can face great challenges if we know they are just for a short time, but when we know those challenges may be for a lifetime, it can be unbearable. That is the heart of the African saying:

***“If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together.”***

For the women of Vowezo, an ultra poor suburb of Lusaka in Zambia, this summed up their dilemma. Women are often expected to remain in the home with little social contact outside the family. Their home life is often very hard, especially if their husbands are unemployed and heavy drinkers. This can lead to a lack of confidence, inadequacy and an overwhelming feeling of lack of control and helplessness. Shut away and alone they

see no way out, until someone comes along who offers to go with them on their journey to self-respect and dignity through livelihood creation. But when they do, then they can go far!

This was why Mr Banda, a local Church minister decided to set up the Vowezo Voluntary Welfare Organisation. First he found Carol Mwalimu (centre in the purple) who is a force of nature, and together they visited all the homes in the community to invite the most vulnerable women to join their tailoring group. They found women of all ages, some widowed, others school drop outs, but all who were isolated and alone.

Then they applied to TWAM for 10 sewing machines, 2 knitting machines and 2 computers which they received in 2015. They started two classes, five days a week, one meeting in the morning and the other in the afternoon, in a small rented room. There are 12 women in each class. They raised all the money needed to open the centre themselves, which was no small feat in an ultra-poor community.

Meet Brenda Wambela (and her daughter Dawji)



Brenda joined the group after Mr Banda visited her home to invite her. He recognised how she was struggling trying to support three children and never having enough money to send them to school. Home life is hard for Brenda as she admits her husband has found it hard to find work and 'is not doing well' as a result. She says:

"I joined the group because I wanted to support myself and my children.

I want to send them to school.

I would like one day to open a shop in the market, but when I complete my course I will work from home making traditional outfits."

Brenda is typical of the women Mr Banda asked to join the group. He recognised her potential and the difference the group would make not just by training, but by allowing her to flourish in a loving, uplifting environment. It is hard to appreciate the years of struggle Brenda has experienced.

Meet Hellew Bwalya



Hellew (pronounced Hello) is as friendly and welcoming as her name, but the pictures hides the harsh future that she faced. She is a school drop out and thus found it impossible to find work. This makes young girls very vulnerable and older men take advantage of their family's desperate state to ask to marry their young daughters for a 'gift'. Not long after the marriage the men disappear, invariably leaving the girls pregnant.

Her cousin told Hellew about the group and she tells us why she applied:

"I already had an idea about tailoring so I was very happy to apply for a place. I really wanted to be a nurse and I applied to train and was offered a place, but I could not afford the course fees and had to decline. I am very happy doing tailoring as tailoring is in my heart and I will never stop. I live with my parents and hope to work from home so my neighbours and community bring me work.

I have not yet decided if I will do tailoring for the rest of my life, or whether I will use the skill to save enough to train as a nurse, but whatever I do, I will always continue tailoring."

Hellew highlights one of the huge problems for the ultra-poor, they may have the passion, enthusiasm and skills to achieve so much in their lives, but never the means to make this possible.

Vowezo Voluntary Welfare Organisation is thriving because they are journeying together and supporting each other. They have found skills, but they have also found friendship and community. But all of this is only possible because they have also found the tools to make it happen thanks to Tools with a Mission.

We can only support them because the same is true of us; we can only go far and support groups like Vowezo if we go together. Together as supporters and volunteers. We can only provide these tools if volunteers collect them, sort them, refurbish them and pack them into trade kits. We send these overseas if other volunteers process applications and build relationships with applicants. If other volunteers prepare detailed shipping documentation to ensure safe passage through customs, while other volunteers support the admin and ensure TWAM works efficiently and cost effectively. Finally, our volunteers across Africa, receiving our containers, distributing tools and supporting the local groups.

And of course without our supporters giving so generously to meet the costs of the Refurbishment Centres, van fleet and expenses of the mission, none of this would be possible. Last, but by no means least all those who uphold our work in prayer.



Tools with a Mission goes far, only because we also go together.

Thank you for supporting us and journeying with us, so others like Brenda, Hellew and all the women of Vowezo can start their journey together.

Together we'll succeed

Unemployment in rural Uganda can be near 100% due to a lack of electricity and therefore no potential for industry and offices. Tarmac roads are almost non-existent, with rural villages cut off during the rainy season. This, combined with very low school attendance, means work is not available locally and men are not qualified to find work in the towns.

Tragically, this has led to a huge problem of drunkenness and gambling, using the little money they, or often their wives, earn or that they can borrow. This puts huge strain on the family and in particular the wives. The men of Bubhuhagmwa village saw the success of the Women's Tailoring Cooperative (supported by TWAM) and learned a lesson from it. So, rather than start their own group they asked if they could join the women's group and work towards opening a carpentry workshop. They were looking for advice and encouragement. The women were all embracing!

There are now 5 men in the group, supporting and encouraging each other to focus on learning carpentry skills. They have managed to find a small workshop and Mukakadasi, their leader says:

"We started because we wanted to become self reliant and to support our families. We have very little income, because we have little knowledge and rely on agriculture. We have very little land and there is very little food left to sell to pay for school. There is no paid work."

The men hope when the women visit schools to ask for uniform contracts, they will be able to go with them to ask about making school furniture. They also hope to go to the market with the women. By sharing the cost of transport, it will be easier for the group to pay.





Mukakadasi continues:

“We joined the group for friendship and mutual support. We support people when they are ill or have a problem. One of our group lost a child to a motor accident and we all supported her. We give money to help, and friendship. It is so good being part of this group. This group is our family.”

The carpentry group has men of all ages and abilities from several local villages. On their own they are convinced they could not succeed, but supporting each other they believe they can. This is the power of community and knowing if you fall, there is somebody there to pick you up. The women proved this to the men. Two of the group share with us the reasons they joined.

Meet Gabusibwa

Gabusibwa says:

“I joined in 2016. I knew carpentry as I learned at the technical institute, but I could find no work and came home. My father owns the workshop and we can use it to make furniture. We have already learned to make tables, chairs and coffins. We sell to schools and the local hospital, few people in our community can afford furniture. At last I can use my skill and support my family.”



Mbira in the light blue shirt

Meet Mbira

Mbira says:

“I joined because I knew I must do something to support my family. Now I can support my family from what I earn. I have a wife and six children to support. I can now afford to send them to school. It is good for me to send my children to school, I feel at last I am being a good father to them.”

Mukakadasi concludes

“The only work for men is carpentry. We want to train more boys, as many come to our workshop and ask for help. We do not have the tools, but hope we will soon get some more from TWAM.”

Together they are succeeding, but it is a long journey from poverty to a successful workshop and a transformed community. The men recognise they needed the women to support them and they all recognise they needed TWAM to give them the tools that have made it all possible. Thank you for your partnership in providing the tools to make ‘togetherness’ work.

Together we're stronger

Meet Anna

"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."

These are the words of Sarah, the leader of the Women's Tailoring Group in Jinja, Uganda. The group started in 2010 with the support of Andrew Gabula, one of TWAM's volunteer Area Development Coordinators. Andrew works with rural communities across Eastern Uganda.

The Women's Tailoring Group was started in response to the huge needs of the community and the complete lack of resources to meet them. The women come from a huge area and to ensure they each have support and encouragement they meet locally everyday in small groups of 5-6 and centrally as a whole group of 30-40 twice a week.

Sarah explains the problems they face:

"Women do not have sanitary towels, so cannot leave their home during their periods. There is no proper food for babies, so they grow weak and many die. There is no money for school fees or extra food when our crops fail. There is no money for the essentials of life."

So we meet to sew dresses and make sanitary pads. We make porridge from maize, beans and millet for babies' nutrition. We use these ourselves and sell to others. We also make dresses, mats and bags to sell in local markets to raise money to buy materials, and also to pay school fees and provide all the essentials."

To help them TWAM sent them 8 manual sewing machines (there is no electricity anywhere in their community). Three members of the group share the impact the group has had on their lives.



Anna stood to open the meeting in prayer before continuing to tell her story. She said:

"I was told by a friend about the group. My friend had been invited to the group by her friend. The difference in my life is I have friendship and I have learned new things. I have learned how to protect myself."

What a beautiful way to describe what it means to be 'stronger together.' It is the transforming power of community when friends invite their friends to join their group. The strength of groups like this, is that everyone is welcome and supported, whatever their background and whatever their challenges. It would be simple to assume community just happens in rural African areas, but in reality it requires hard work and an openness within the whole community to come together. Anna explains this when she says 'the

difference in my life is I have friendship' which she did not have before.

But the group is about so much more than friendship, she continues:

"I joined the group, because in the group you learn a lot like nutrition, I could not even make porridge, so now my health is much better. I have two children and I sell the porridge for my children's school fees. I have also learned about family planning, HIV and health."

Anna's life has been transformed by the group, but the group only began when the sewing machines were received. They were the tool, Sarah and the other leaders needed to get the women to believe change was possible and that their lives really could be so much better. A sewing machine means so much more than a means to make clothing.



Meet Sylvia



Sylvia joined the group in 2016. She tells us:

"I saw the group and asked to join. 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 have three children who I can now afford to send to school. I cannot do sewing as my eyesight is not good, but learned to make mats and porridge. We sell together in the market. The difference it has made in my life is I have friends and when I have problems I have people to help me."

Meet Timugibwa



Timugibwa joined the group in 2012. She tells us:

"I wanted to be self reliant. I have learned sewing to make mats and bags, and can also make porridge. I have also learned health information. The difference it has made to my life is new skills and crafts and friendship. An improvement in my health and nutrition for my family."

Once again by working together, TWAM, our volunteers in Africa and local community groups we can transform lives, build friendships and change communities through livelihood creating tools.

We'll give Sarah the last word, she says:

"The sewing machines have made such a difference to us. We really appreciate everything you do for us and the support for our village. May God bless you."



Together, we can learn

TWAM supplies hundreds of boxes of school books and Scholar Packs to schools who often have no books or stationery. A community has little chance to lift itself out of poverty if it cannot educate its children. One school decided this had to change and approached TWAM for help. It was Mulobezi Primary School in Zambia.

Violet Muchmba, the head teacher sent us a lovely letter which explains why they applied and what the impact has been, not just on the school, but the whole community. She explains:

"We have a nursery school and your materials have made work easy for our nursery school teacher as most of the materials are in pictorial forms. Pictures speak volumes. The response from the children has been very good as they are now able to differentiate one letter from another by using pictures on letters for example letter 'A' for 'Apple' with a drawing of an apple, letter 'B' for 'Banana."

With lot of books for them to read our older pupil's vocabulary has increased and the teachers have observed that pupils are now married to books."

We assume 'married to books' means, the children cannot put a book down once they have started it! Violet continues:

"Not to tell a lie, since the establishment of Mulobezi Primary School in 1961, the school had not at any time had a library. To us this is the greatest help we have received from you and it will remain in the history of the school. This gives our children the chance to interact with materials that will help them with their life and be equipped with reading skills."

The Scholar Packs have been a great blessing to the vulnerable and orphaned pupils. The packs came at the time when the Zambian education curriculum changed telling us we need calculators - and you have supplied them. Our grade nine pupils



will be sitting their final exams in October and now have the pencils, rubbers, sharpeners they need. Being a poverty stricken community, many of our parents cannot afford to buy their children all the materials and equipment needed for their educational purposes. We want to point out that you have removed a hook from our throats by providing such materials like calculators and mathematical instruments.”

Violet describes the despair of the teachers, pupils and community in not having any books or equipment to teach the children, as being like a fish caught by a hook and being helpless to escape or change its future. The community felt as gripped by poverty, as a fish by the fishermen. It is a message of despair, transformed by the arrival of books and Scholar Packs. It is a wonderful picture of the beginning of the transformation of

a whole community. Violet explains how everyone in the community has benefited from the books:

“The many books you have sent us have not only helped the children. With the introduction of the books at the school, many people come to school spending some time reading children’s story books. Now we see many adults from our community come to school, to meet the teachers and read the books. This has helped us build good relations with our community.

We want to say that you have not donated the materials to Mulobezi Primary School only, but to the whole community. We say this because we have also as the community benefited from the same donation both indirectly and directly as we have access to the quality literacy skills that we were deprived of in the past. We want to

mention that your donation is timely because it has come at the time when the society demands that everyone must possess literacy skills.

Your partnership with our school has extremely motivated and inspired us to see the value of education in our lives. The negative attitudes within our community towards education has been judged wrong by your support. We want to tell you that you are really an inspiring organisation aimed at meeting educational needs of many.

With courage, we want to say that you are really our God given helper. With these few remarks, we want to say, let this overwhelming

partnership continue so that many of the generations to come can also be served. We also wish you God’s blessings in your endeavours to provide support to the most vulnerable. May the Almighty God bless you.”

Violet beautifully describes the power of community, in this case brought together by their primary school and the gift of books. Most of the stories in this edition focus on communities coming together to apply for tools, but here we see a community coming together as a result of books being gifted to their school.

We are very grateful to Violet for sharing this wonderful story with us.



I want to support a community to go far together

With your support we can help people to work together to change their own community. In this edition we have shared how communities can transform their future with the gift of tools. We have read amazing stories and with your help we can read many more. Please help us provide the tools that turn the hopes of communities into inspiring stories of success.

I want to imagine what I can do through my gift of:

- ☐ £7 could provide a Scholar Pack
- ☐ £10 could provide a box of School Books
- ☐ £25 could provide a Sewing Machine
- ☐ £35 could provide a Carpentry Kit
- ☐ £240 could provide an entire Carpentry Workshop Kit



Please accept my gift of £ _____ **(Cheques payable to Tools with a Mission)**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Email: _____

- ☐ I would like to Gift Aid my donation, please send me a Gift Aid form (please tick).
Or you could donate through our online tool kit donation store at twam.uk.

We'd love to stay in touch

At Tools with a Mission we take your privacy seriously and will only use your personal information to administer your account and to provide you with the communications and services you have requested from us.

From time to time we would like to send you our magazine and other mailings and/or our regular e-newsletter by email. If you consent to us contacting you for this purpose please tick to say how you would like us to contact you:

Please contact me by ☐ POST ☐ EMAIL (tick as appropriate)

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