



FORGING LINKS

NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN 2024

Welcome to your autumn edition of Forging Links. In this issue we introduce our Sustainable Project in Northern Ghana (SPRING) where shea nuts and sweet potatoes are changing lives for women. Our project in Sierra Leone is empowering disabled people and their caregivers. Graduates are going on to great things in Malawi and trade skills are transforming futures in Uganda. We meet more amazing volunteers in the UK and celebrate a successful fundraising season and the launch of our brand new lottery.

SPRINGING INTO ACTION IN NORTHERN GHANA

In the hot dry climate of Ghana's Upper East Region lies the community of Pelengu, where the ready availability of shea nuts makes shea butter production a viable and potentially lucrative source of income. In partnership with Trax Ghana, our Sustainable Production in Northern Ghana project is helping 50 women from female-headed households through shea enterprise development and agribusiness. The women, who are already small scale producers of shea butter, are being supported to: increase production efficiency through the supply of quality machinery; build and strengthen links to local markets; and build financial resilience through development and membership of a Village Savings and Loans Association scheme.

As part of their training, participants are visiting local businesses which started small and have grown into thriving producers and exporters of shea butter products. Following a visit to Asheba Company Limited (which began in 2012 and has become a successful co-operative) TRAX Programme Manager, Dorcas Zoogah, told us *"the visit served as a practical learning platform, allowing the*

*women to see how a professional enterprise operates and maintains its standards. **The business learning experience was not only educational but also empowering, instilling a sense of hope and determination among the participants.** The women were particularly motivated by seeing fellow women thriving in the same field, making significant contributions to their communities."*

Additionally Dorcas helped organise an event to address market challenges faced by rural women through partnerships and value chain development. Attended by the media, businesses, the Ghana Food Agency and key community members alongside the trainees, the women left with a commitment of support from the chief's Queen Mother and other important stakeholders as well as gaining sage advice from panel discussions.

Our project also supports trainees in diversifying their income streams, that is, not putting all their shea nuts in one basket! Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potatoes (OFSP) are a nutritious food source which grow readily in the shallow, low fertility Pelengu soils. Our trainees have learned to cultivate OFSP vines to produce food for themselves and their families, as well as generate a readily marketable crop. Trainees have each been given 300 vine cuttings to cultivate and multiply, both at home and on communal land, and together they have repaired



visit served as a practical learning platform, allowing the

a well to ensure a sustainable water source to service the crops year-round. Over the coming months the trainees will engage with the local community, taking their OFSP into schools where they will teach students the health benefits of eating these sweet potatoes and distribute nutritious recipes to take home.

In addition, participants are planting a range of tree species which will help mitigate the effects of flooding and soil erosion, as well as provide crops for future income generation. Participants learned about the environmental benefits gained from planting trees in their communities and how this can help mitigate the impact of climate change. On their recent visit to Ghana, CEO Sarah Ingleby and Africa Programme Manager Ash Phillips observed the tree planting in operation, and

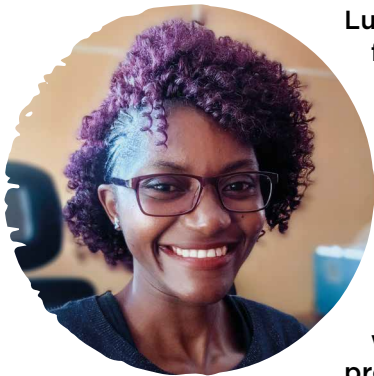


Women collecting Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potato vines

building of stone walls around the young plants to ward off would-be sapling eaters. Protected from the local nibbly goats, the trees could reach maturity in as little as five years and begin to yield fruits and nuts to take to market.

As global weather patterns are set to become more unpredictable, being able to successfully raise multiple crops is essential and agricultural projects like this will help trainees ensure harvestable crops and meet financial challenges head on.

ZAMBIA: MEET LUTE



Lute Mbewe joined the Tools for Self Reliance team in May 2023 as our in-country Project Officer. Based in Kabwe, Zambia, Lute is our MEAL and safeguarding lead. She joined us with a wealth of experience in partnership projects. We caught up with her as we head into new project scoping in Zambia.

Lute has been a vital part of onboarding our new Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning system, to provide information on project progress enabling partners to access real-time data on their impact. She has been working closely with Eliaship Restoration Centre who have been utilising the software in the design of their new project which she is excited to see started.

Lute has also played a big role in scoping out potential partnerships, leading on the initial visits and compatibility analysis. Our UK based team are heading to join Lute in October where they will be meeting with these organisations to explore impactful training projects.

We asked Lute what her most proud moment has been with us so far. She told us she has found it very rewarding to see a project through its entire journey, right from the design to the implementation. As part of this process Lute has been directly involved in the communities from where trainees will be drawn. She is proud to have designed new projects that will *“genuinely and directly meet the needs of the community”*.



All smiles as Lute joined our Zambian partners for training

She has also been pleased to help partners navigate changes and make improvements to their projects. She feels that not only does this impact the immediate goals of the project, but ensures that

projects fit in with the overall programme strategy and work that Tools for Self Reliance wants to deliver. Lute told us that a lot of her enthusiasm comes from her niece and nephews who *“light up a room and keep her motivated to push on.”*

Our Programme Manager, Ash Phillips, told us, *“Lute’s work in Zambia is of vital importance to the future work and impact of Tools for Self Reliance in the country. Having Lute locally available to support partners both established and new has been crucial in building partners’ capacity, driving impactful project development, and troubleshooting with partners as we roll out our new Monitoring and Evaluation system.”* We are excited to see how Lute will develop our programme in Zambia.

GIFTS FOR CHANGE



Starting from just £10, our Gifts for Change have the potential to make a real difference to a trainee or support a graduate as they transition to work. Choose to print at home or post directly to your gift recipient.

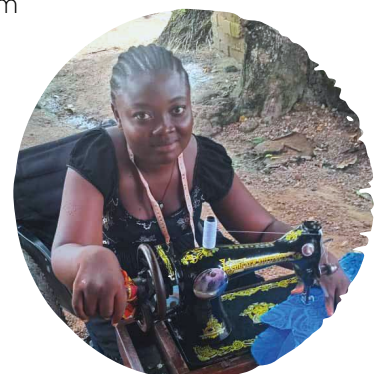


WOMENS EMPOWERMENT AND DISABILITY SUPPORT IN SIERRA LEONE

Having the means to earn an income and build financial resilience is more challenging than it sounds when you haven’t completed your formal education and have few opportunities for employment. It can be even more challenging when you have a disability, or if you are the primary carer of a person with a disability.

Our project with Mobility Sierra Leone (MSL) is providing 20 women – most often the primary caregivers for disabled people – with the power to earn an income from a trade; either hairdressing or tailoring, both of which are trades with proven success rates for women in Sierra Leone. Alongside the essential technical skills, trainees are learning business skills which will help them manage stock, set prices for their goods and services, make investments and savings, and market their enterprises.

Grace and Nancy are two trainees affected by poliomyelitis. Grace (pictured) has acquired muscle weakness and impaired movement. She is learning tailoring so she can sell her designs to members of her community and beyond. With a trade and an income, she has also increased her status within her family. She is now included in important family meetings and is actively encouraged to contribute to them.

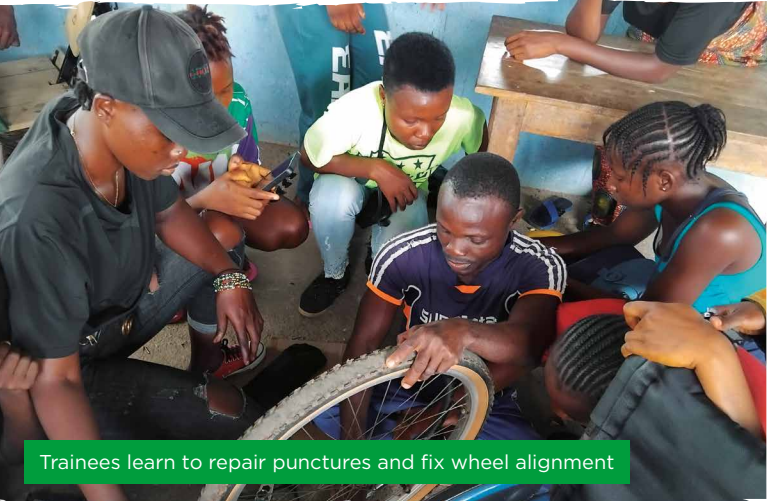


Nancy (pictured), who has mobility issues, is participating in our hairdressing project. After her husband left her with their young child, Nancy struggled to make ends meet. Now she is earning an income from braiding hair and is able to support her daughter and pay rent.



Beyond acquiring a trade for the future, our trainees are also learning to repair mobility aids such as wheelchairs and mobility carts, from adjusting wheel alignment to mending punctures. This service, which they are providing to local communities, offers a lifeline to disabled people who live too far from

MSL's centre in Bo and have no other means of accessing safe assistive technology. To date our trainees have visited four communities, distributing mobility carts and making running repairs. As the service continues for the remainder of the project, it is hoped that the skills will be cascaded to others and so benefit more and more disabled people in the surrounding districts.



Trainees learn to repair punctures and fix wheel alignment

This project was funded by donations to the Big Give Christmas Challenge 2023 and our Christmas Appeal. We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who donated; your gifts are helping to change lives and promise a brighter future to our trainees and their dependents.

TAKE ON A CHALLENGE

Your sponsored run, walk, swim, knitathon or silence could raise vital funds to support our vocational training, business development projects and tool refurbishment programme. Tell us about your event, big or small, and we'll send you a fundraising pack and promote you on our socials!



TRANSITION TO WORK WITH FOCCAD

In 2023 a new cohort of trainees joined our vocational training project with Malawi partner, Foundation for Community and Capacity Development (FOCCAD) to learn skills in bricklaying, carpentry, electrical repair, motorcycle mechanics, tailoring and welding and form working business groups.

Eighteen months on they have graduated to our Transition to Work project, which supports newly qualified artisans to secure formal employment or start building businesses from their trades in Nkhotakota district.

76 graduates from 24 businesses across all six trades are attending workshops to prepare for employment or self-employment, including strengthening financial

skills. FOCCAD staff make monthly visits to the graduates at their business locations, and provide mentorship in business management, troubleshooting and advice to develop graduates' confidence, and knowledge in running their business. Each business also receives a monthly technical up-skilling to address any skills gaps identified in the day-to-day business operations and product demands. With the support of our project, participants are already turning their skills to profit:

Charles Jefu Saidi (pictured) once faced the daunting challenge of providing for his family with only sporadic piecework to rely on. His life took a transformative turn



when he joined our project to learn tailoring and design. With the start-up sewing machines and materials provided to his business group, Charles has become one of the finest tailors in his community. His dedication and hard work has led to production of high-quality garments, including dresses, shirts and school uniforms, earning him recognition.



Secret Bomeni repairing a motorcycle

registered artisans for business networks and continuous skill development.

We are working to deliver Transition to Work projects to even more of our vocational training graduates. Your support of this year's Tea for Tools campaign means we could run up to four more projects in 2025. Read on to find out how much this year's appeal raised.

Charles told us: ***“Previously I was burdened by worries about how to feed my family, now I find stability and prosperity through this newfound trade”***. Today, with a steady monthly income, Charles can easily provide for his family needs, marking a significant turnaround in his life.

Secret Bomeni lives at home with her parents and two young children. With her parents' encouragement, she joined our Motorcycle Repair project having no previous experience in mechanics but a lifelong passion for tinkering with and fixing things. On graduation

from her vocational training, Secret formed a business group with fellow trainees and is now earning an income fixing maize mills and motorcycles. She told us that from having no savings when she joined our project, she is now saving most of her earnings and her financial resilience has increased.

Crucial to a trainee's ability to start a new business is having access to start-up capital. All 24 businesses will be offered a business grant tailored to the input costs of their respective trades. In addition, they will be introduced to a local network of

GIFTS IN WILLS

A gift in your will means a great deal to people facing poverty, enabling us to plan for the long term and unlock the skills future generations need to build sustainable livelihoods. Visit our website to find out more or email katie@tfsr.org today to help change a life tomorrow.



TA CRUSADE – REINVENTING YOUTH IN THE LABOUR MARKET

In the heart of the bustling Mukondo District of Uganda, 62 participants on our project with TA Crusade have demonstrated improved literacy skills and are confidently moving forward with vocational training in in-demand trades like tailoring, masonry, and digital technologies.

Levister Mayanja, M&E Officer at TA Crusade shared his six month report with us. ***“These rural youth and women, severely impacted by COVID-19, have shown remarkable courage and determination to reinvent themselves in the labor market. With literacy training underway, they've gained the foundation to explore new opportunities.***

“We've witnessed remarkable transformations in trainees who struggled to read but now excel in their vocational training. Our project's impact extends beyond individual success stories. Beneficiaries are applying their new skills to improve their communities, demonstrating the project's positive ripple effect.

“We're continuing vocational training and entrepreneurship training will commence after the sixth month. Apprenticeship attachments will follow, providing hands-on experience and job placement opportunities.

“We're excited to see our beneficiaries' progress continue, and we're confident they'll create a brighter future for themselves, their families, and communities. We look forward to sharing more updates on their journey!”



Welding trainee

THE BODGERS BALL WAS BACK!

This year, the annual Bodgers Ball took place at the Weald & Downland Living Museum in Chichester, and once again was a great event for us to attend. Volunteers Tracey Morris and Shelley Wright (pictured alongside James and Bob) coordinate the charity's attendance at the event and shared their experience of the day.



"It was Friday 11th May, it was five to five, and it was...manic! What amazing weather this year! Far too hot for me but still Bodgers were queuing outside the marquee for first pickings of the tools.

"The Bodgers are woodworking craftsmen and women creating chairs, bowls, spoons, fan-birds, pegs and more, so we take along the appropriate tools to sell: billhooks, axes, drawknives, wooden spoke-shaves, dividers, augers and natural stones.

"This year Shelley and I were again joined by volunteers James, Bob, Jenny, Roy – plus Vicky from the staff team at Netley Marsh. We had a great weekend, wonderful to catch up with all the regulars and to meet some newbies who had heard rumours of our fantastic stall.

"Shelley begins sorting for the Ball around September, and her hard work traveling to and from Netley Marsh and various UK volunteer groups is reflected by the amazing sales and funds raised. Although we didn't have quite as many tools to bring and sell this year, we had some really nice donations from the Bodgers and were able to raise our best total yet."

Thanks are due to the Bodgers from the stall organisers, set up superstars, pricers and other practical supporters; and all the UK Groups and volunteers at Netley Marsh who support with quality stock for the event. The event raised just under £8,000 so a huge thank you goes to all involved!

HABERDASHERY HEROES

Sisters Sue and Julie tell us how they came to volunteer in the haberdashery department at Tools for Self Reliance and what's it's like volunteering with a sibling.

How long have you been volunteering with Tools for Self Reliance and what prompted you to join the team?

Sue: "I started volunteering at Tools for Self Reliance about a year ago. I originally came to donate some unwanted tools and I was staggered to see how much good work was being done by a happy band of volunteers. I immediately knew I wanted to be part of it."

Can you tell us a bit about what your volunteering role entails?

Julie: "Together with Sue, I look after the fabric donations that come in. Another haberdashery volunteer, Jenny, puts all the material in a big fabric bin. We come in once a week and look through it and measure it up. We price up the big bits for selling in the shop, keep an eye on the stock levels and change it over for seasonality. The smaller pieces are sent out in sewing starter kits for tailoring trainees. Any that isn't good enough to



sell or send either gets used to test the refurbished sewing machines or goes in a fabric recycling bin. There is very little fabric wasted."

Is your role building on skills and interests from elsewhere in your life or are you learning new skills?

Julie: "I have had an interest in sewing and dressmaking since an early age. Our mother used

to make all our clothes when we were children so we grew up watching her sew. I studied textiles and design at A-level and later started making my own clutch bags. I never used a pattern, I just worked it out from first principles. Our parents were very much like 'have a go and work it out', so that's how we grew up, just figuring it out. Now I enjoy learning about all the fabrics and haberdashery bits and bobs. I would also like to get involved in refurbishing the donated sewing machines."

Sue: "I also enjoy sewing projects, and art projects using found materials. I'm a keen recycler, so this suits me perfectly knowing that as far as possible, donations can be repurposed for the greater good."

What do you most enjoy about volunteering for Tools for Self Reliance and what motivates you in your role?

Sue: "I love the positive cheerful atmosphere among the volunteers, the chat, banter and meeting all sorts of interesting people. And I love reading the stories of trainees who have improved their lives by learning new skills. This motivates me, knowing my small contribution is helping others. It's a good feeling."

What is it like volunteering alongside a sibling?

Julie: "It's lovely working with Sue because I lived abroad for many years and we are making up for lost time together. We have a good chat, and a laugh."

WEEKLY LOTTERY

Play our new Weekly Lottery! Entries are just £1 per ticket with the chance of winning up to £25,000. Every play will help to transform the lives of our trainees and support them to build more financial resilience. All while you can win cash prizes - head to our webpage for all the Ts & Cs and for your chance to win. First draw will take place in November, just in time for your Christmas bonus!



FUNDRAISING EVENT ROUNDUP

We have raised over £25,900 from taking our tools on tour to shows this year. The tools, materials and sewing machines making their way to external trade shows and events are surplus to requirement or unsuitable for our projects, and every sale makes a big difference - by keeping good quality tools in circulation and supporting young people into vocational training courses equipped to build a sustainable livelihood.



TEA FOR TOOLS GRAND TOTAL

On a hot Saturday in July we held our annual tea, tools and haberdashery sale at Netley Marsh. This year's event was in aid of Transition to Work projects supporting graduates with start-up capital essential for securing trading premises and acquiring stock. Your donations, together with a £10,000 match-funding pledge from the Dalgleish Trust, raised an incredible £35,781.45.



MICRO VOLUNTEERING

It's the little things in life that can make the most difference, so why not donate an hour or afternoon of your time to Tools for Self Reliance? From placing a collection tin in your local shop, attending a local talk, sharing our social media posts on your local Facebook group or even helping to proof-read or edit some of our work, we have plenty of options for you to get involved. To find out more, please contact fundraising@tfsr.org

SIGN UP FOR E-NEWS

Our monthly project updates and stories from our trainees, delivered straight to your inbox.

Visit our website to subscribe in time for our October bulletin. You can change your mailing preferences at any time; just contact fundraising@tfsr.org or call us on **02380 869697**.



COMING SOON: THE BIG GIVE CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE

Our training tool kits are more than nuts and bolts – they can help single mothers, people living with disabilities and many people without access to formal education to build a sustainable future. But it’s costing thousands more each year to refurbish, reuse, and ship the tools to our projects across Africa.

The cost of equipping trainees for their future has sky-rocketed. With the cost of living crisis alongside the Red Sea shipping crisis biting into budgets, it is harder than ever to ship quality materials, machines and toolkits to our projects. Shipping costs have escalated dramatically, with a recent shipment to Uganda increasing

in cost by 300% including the additional clearing costs caused by delays at port. But tools are an important component of our holistic training model, with proven success in unlocking the potential for a trainee to start a business.

So this year, and for one week only, we are taking part in an online matched funding appeal. **From the week beginning 3rd December, we will be joining The Big Give Christmas Appeal.**

We’re aiming to raise around £20,000 to support us to send two containers laden with tools to our projects. We can only do this with your help. Please keep an eye out for our appeal for your chance to support us.



Tools reach their destination in Malawi



PREFER TO GO DIGITAL?

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