



NEWSLETTER

of Tools For Solidarity

Give a new life to your old tools!

TOOLS FOR SOLIDARITY



Newsletter
April 2014

Tools For Solidarity

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The views in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of Tools For Solidarity

Welcome and Goodbye

Since the last newsletter we gave a big welcome to Fabiana (Italy), Katie (Chicago), Pino (Italy), Conal (Belfast), and Noel (Belfast).

Also we sadly said goodbye to Oskar (Germany), Cristina (Belfast) and Victoria (Belfast).

So, the current volunteers of TFS in Belfast are: Francesca (Italy), Sofia (Portugal), Oliver (Germany), Rubén (Spain), Anna (Spain), Sarah (France), Boglárka (Hungary), Giulia (Italy), Laura (Spain), Christie, Conor, Stephen, John, Peter, Thierry, Liam, David, Conor, Daniel, Larry, Peter, Jim, Sam, William, Anthony and Nancy. Thanks also to the volunteers in Downpatrick, Mourne Grange and Isle of Man.

Thanks!!



Tools For Solidarity on the Sunny Side

After so many years of research to find our own place, TFS is now the owner of our own building! 55 A Sunnyside Street is the new place to be and we are so proud and happy about it!

Moving from the Crumlin Road to the Ormeau road, will not be an easy task! But our volunteers already started to load the van!

First step was to put down the shelves in the back room, where all our sewing machines were stored. We had to count them, code them to make an inventory, and finally the machines were stacked in boxes, waiting to be moved out.

One of the problems that you can have when you don't have





much space and you have to empty your shelves, is that you don't know where to put everything! So every square metre was used and finally we made it! The back room is almost empty!

Sad feeling to see that room empty when you are used to see it full of machines... but that sensation is going away every time we are working in our new building! Machines in boxes are now moving to the new workshop where the shelves that Mr. Gillespe has let us are ready to welcome them!

Slowly but surely, the space is taken by hundreds of Sewing and Knitting machines... Tools will come soon!

Before that, we will have to do a "bit" of work in our new home... The roof needs to be patched up; the electric system needs to be redesigned to fit with our activity, a bit of paint on the wall, insulation, a kitchen and dining area to install.

Hopefully we will be there before the summer...

Ready to welcome all our volunteers and friends for this new step of the organization.

If you want to have a look on our new workshop, feel free to ask us when we will be there!

NB: We received our first sewing machine last week while we were working on the building! Thanks a lot for this historic donation!



Germain



Shipping to Malawi

During the last 10 years TFS changed its approach and its way of providing support to artisans. Instead of sending kit to individual groups we decided to develop a programme that can provide as well training and back up service to the artisans.

However we occasionally support small groups through other Northern Ireland charities working in development.

On March 13th TFS sent its kits number 500, 501 and 502 to Malawi. The kit had been sent through ZAP to the Bwalo Initiative based in Zomba, South Malawi.

Counting 65 members at present, the Bwalo Initiative is a no profit organisation established in 2004 with the aim to help street children to change their lives through vocational education and job opportunities.

Bwalo contacted TFS earlier this year to seek for support with tools and materials for their vocational training programme in carpentry, joinery and tailoring.

The kits sent over contained 6 sewing machines including an electric Zig-Zag machine and two Straight Stitch machines fitted with a treadle. Together with the sewing machines we also provided material and accessories such as buttons, needles, pins, zips... A carpentry kit of 85 tools has also been sent.

All the tools and the sewing machines sent had been refurbished in TFS workshops in Belfast and Downpatrick by the volunteers. It took a week of intense work to get the three kits (and boxes) together but finally on the 13th of March we delivered the boxes that are currently on their way to Zomba.



Bwalo Initiative Street Children doing Vocational skills at the centre



Two of our volunteers, Katie and Fabiana, preparing one of the boxes for Bwalo



In Memoriam

Natania



We were shocked and deeply saddened to receive the news of the sudden death of Natania on Saturday 25 January.

Natania first contacted us in December 2010 asking about becoming a volunteer. From the off her enthusiasm, energy and commitment were inspiring. She started one afternoon a week but very soon she was in the workshop every day.

At first she took her time to learn the skills of tool refurbishment but it was clear for all to see how much she was excited by what she was doing. She developed her skills rapidly and became adept at refurbishing all kinds of tools and machinery - in her last week with us she had started to dismantle a Pillar Drill! She even became adept at refurbishing sewing machines - one of our very few volunteers to learn both skill sets.

However Natania brought much more to the workshop than her superb manual skills. She was great with people and provided support and empathy to the other volunteers. She particularly demonstrated this when she worked with





the school children from Ardmore School. They responded really well to how Natania related to them - sharing her own enthusiasm and interest to inspire them. Working with young people became something of a passion for Natania and led her to undertake a youth course in Belfast.

Natania had an amazing singing voice and kindly performed a solo spot at a benefit night when Jane - the manager of the MSTC - visited us in November 2012. I remember getting the pints in to calm her nerves but she didn't need them. She was a pure natural. All who were there will remember the beauty and power of her voice.

The workshop in Downpatrick is there as a space for people to come together, to work helping others and to support one another. Natania represents all that is good about what we try to do. The workshop and everyone who goes there will miss her.....

Six months after she started at Tools Natania was interviewed by the local paper about why she had taken the step to become a volunteer. It is fitting to finish with her words of inspiration and hope...

I volunteer as it feels so good to know that what I do can help provide a new lease of life for people that otherwise wouldn't have the chance to change their lives on their own.

The highlight of my volunteering to date has been meeting the people I work with - from the local people to the visitors from other countries... I have made new friends and had a lot of good times

Her family and friends have been organising events to raise funds for ourselves and PIPS , a charity that supports family dealing with suicide. In March they handed over cheques worth more than £600 to the Downpatrick workshop. Natania's sister Lorna and the family have also been campaigning on behalf of those with mental health conditions seeking to improve the support and services they receive. We want to thanks all of them for their support and wish the family all success in their campaign.



Stephen



From Berlin to Belfast!

From the 20th of March until the 11th of April a group of 6 students between 17 and 19 years old from Berlin were sent by the WeTeK project to do volunteer work at Tools For Solidarity (TFS). The main objectives of this visit was on the one hand that this group could develop new skills that could be useful in their day to day but on the other hand it also intended them to create a critical consciousness with regard to issues such as inequality, sustainability and solidarity.

In this sense the TFS team drew up a activities plan that attempted to include all these topics but that also had in mind the expectations and preferences of the group. During these three weeks the group could learn and/or improve their knowledge in areas such as:

- Refurbishment of sewing machines (singer 15k)
- Refurbishment of tools (saws, hand drills, G clamps, chisels...)
- Making wooden boxes

It was possible to see the enthusiasm and motivation in these young volunteers learning these new skills. As Kevin said:

I liked working with sewing and I also could learn how to sew.

We thought that it was also important to show the group the propose of the work in TFS. To that end there was a slide-show given illustrating the history , the projects and the philosophy of the organisation.

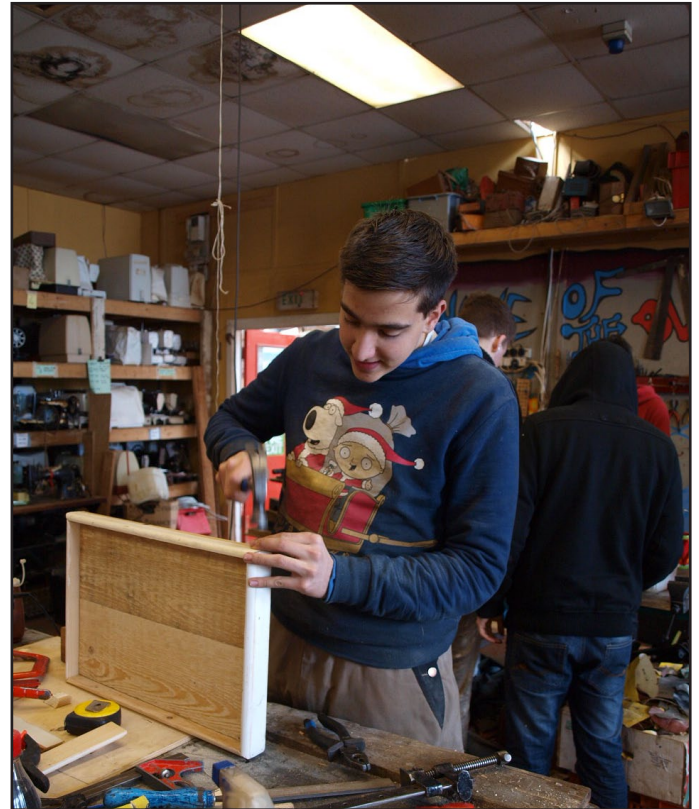
Furthermore we also ran our Education for Sustainable Development programme (ESD) where for three Wednesdays we developed activities related to poverty, inequality and exploitation of natural resources. One of the most popular activities was the 'Trading Game' the concept of which was to demonstrate the imbalance between advanced and developing economies.

The trading game was very exiting. I think it was the activity that I liked the most. I learned that other countries need help and Europe does not understand it. (Vincent)

Another aspect of the daily routine was the preparation of lunch and tea breaks. Every day one of the Germans volunteers was paired with one of the TFS volunteers to make lunch for up to 25 people. This was not always an easy task but everyone was left satisfied by the offerings.

The opportunity was also taken to tell the visitors about the history and culture of Belfast in a guided





tour. Stephen provided a comprehensive overview of the entire history of the city and took the visiting party to view the murals of west Belfast.

I liked the experience to leave in another country with a different culture. (Mark)

During the last three days the group had the chance to make some presents for their family and

friends which was a good opportunity to put into practice the skills learned in the workshop.

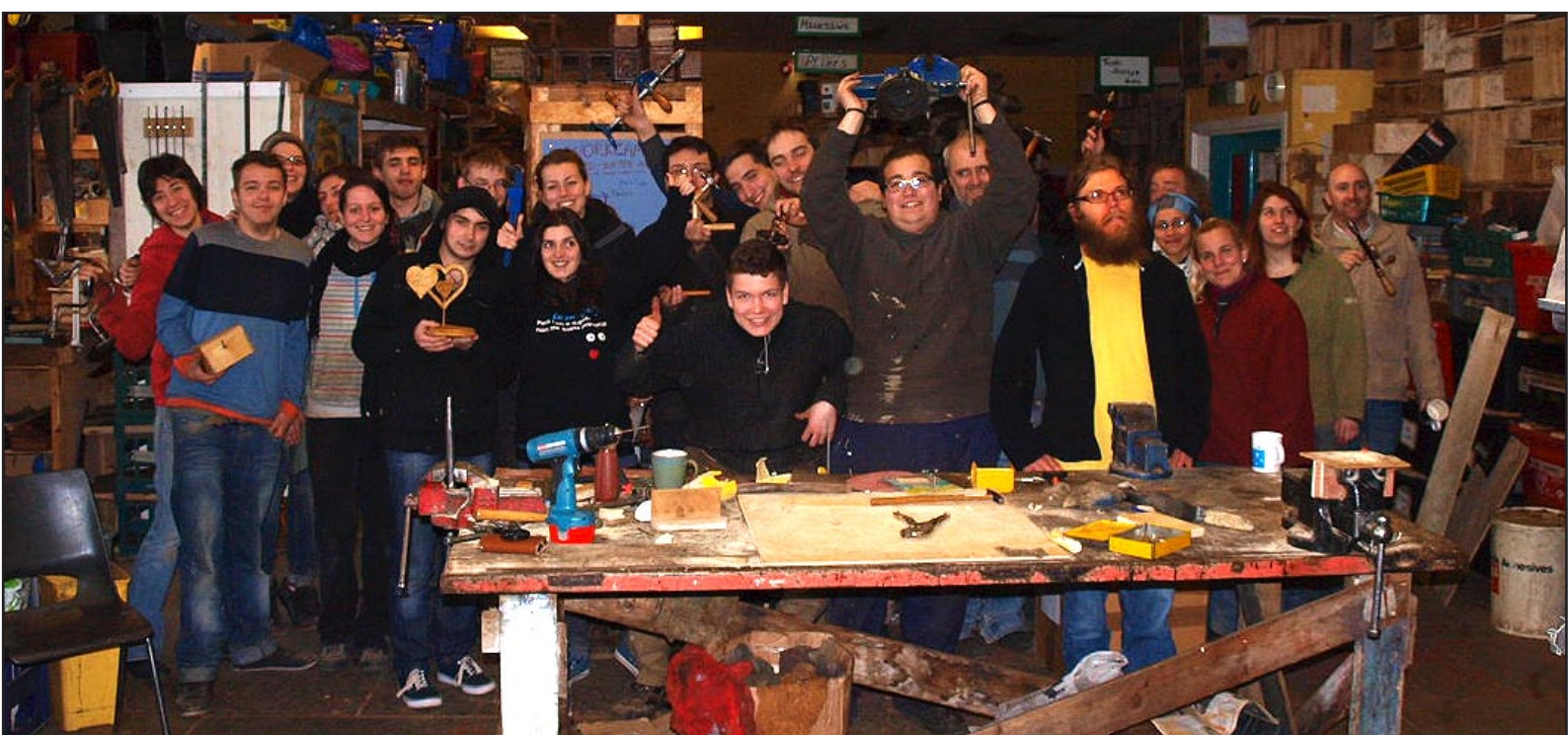
I enjoyed making the present. I made a wallet for my mother. (Timmoar)

Finally we did a leisure evening where the TFS team and the German group played bowling and it was good craic!

This journey was fast but it was very rewarding to work in cooperation with this friendly group of Germans. Even though sometimes there was a language barrier it was a good chance for the group to improve their English. A special thanks must be given to Oliver who patiently translated and acted as an intermediary- vielen Dank!



Sofia and Christie



A new challenge in the ESD group

During the last 3 months the ESD group has been working with Park Lodge Primary School and Cliftonville Integrated Primary School in Belfast, Ardmore House Special School in Downpatrick and Drumlins Integrated Primary School in Ballynahinch.

The ESD continues to work using three sessions “Poverty and Inequality, Exploitation of Natural Resources and Critical Thinking”. However a new session has been added to the activities.

One teacher informed us that her students had been studying Fair Trade for the past few weeks and she is very interested in that topic. Since the ESD had been wanting to implement a new activity related to this topic for quite some



time we considered it the perfect opportunity to develop a new pilot session for the programme: The Fair Trade Cocoa Game.

The debut of the new activity took part on February 3rd at Cliftonville Integrated Primary School (Belfast) with the P6 classroom. The general objective of the game is to experience the injustice of the current market system and recognize the benefits of buying fair trade products.

The game consists of a role-play of 60-75 minutes, during which the children have to take on the roles of farmers, companies, the supermarket and shoppers. Doing so the students can feel the unfair situation of the farmers versus the Big Chocolate Company and realise the better deal that the Fair Trade Company offers to the farmers. They also feel the benefits that the Cooperative Farmers receive compared to the Independent Farmers.

During the development of the game and the final discussion we could see that the children felt the

unfair distribution of money, the injustice imposed on farmers by big companies and the benefits of buying fair trade.

In general, we are very happy with the delivery of the sessions in all of the schools. The students' and the teachers' feedback told us that they enjoyed the sessions, they learned more about global issues and they definitively would recommend the programme.

The members of the ESD and the schools are particularly pleased with the results of the new activity “The Fair Trade Cocoa Game” and now we are thinking about the possibility of adding a whole new session to the programme specifically for this game.

Please contact us for more information. We are very happy to work with your school!!



Laura

Comments from teachers:

- Great project and activities. Thank you for coming to our school, the children enjoyed the sessions.

(Cliftonville primary school, Belfast)

- We enjoyed the programme and pupils had an excellent insight into tools, poverty and exploitation of natural resources. We also enjoyed the warm up games. Excellent presentation.

(Ardmore House Special School, Down Patrick)



TFS Football match!

The last 10 of March the “Tools people” met to play a football match in Leisure Centre (North Belfast) at 9 pm. Basically we went all the people from volunteers house and Newington Ave.

In the same field they were meeting players from France, Germany, Belgium, Scotland “Oh jah”, Hungary, United Kingdom, Italy and Spain.

Probably it was not a Premier League football match but at least you could find John, Oskar, Peter and Ruben doing a warm up exercises but not too much. Thereafter John had decided to create the teams. He formed the teams dividing the people who had black T-shirt or not but another detail that all of you should know is that Peter and Ruben were wearing the strips from F.C Barcelona (Ruben) and Real Madrid (Peter) so they were a rivals.

Dates of the match: 10th March 2014, 9 p.m kick-off

Black Team TFS: Laura, Oliver, Germain, Oliver, Francesca, Anna, Peter.

Multicolor Team TFS: Fabiana, Giulia, Christie, Oskar, John, Ruben, Sarah.

Spectators: Boglarka Benke, Connor Cleeland and the guy from the cleaning service.

Place: Leisure Centre (North Belfast).

The match had been started with a slightly advantage for the Black Team because its star Oliver Schnatz began to play seriously. In 4 minutes the black team had got a goal. The defensive lines from the Multicolor



Team was destroyed already. But John with his capacity to stand up his teammates organized them again and with the strategy some minutes after they got the tie on the scoreboard. After the goal the Multicolor found a providential help when Christie “Highlander” joined them. The match began to be more balanced at the end nobody knew the final result. At least we enjoyed a intensive and awesome match where we could find hard individual matches between Oliver and John, the big fight to have control of the ball between Germain and Ruben, the great capacity of Francesca to get the right position on the field and defender “Viva il Calcio”, the cooperative game from Anna even though she didn’t get a score, the great and awesome goal keeper Laura Río basically she was the “Wall”, the elegant game from Christie “The Lord of the fields”, the important help for the Multicolor team from Sarah, Fabiana and Giulia, etc.

It probably was not a Champions league football match. Probably the quantity of spectators were not enough to full “Wembley Stadium” but at least we can say that during those 60 minutes it was one of the most nice matches that we have had play in our lives.



Rubén



Living Sustainability: A New volunteer's Experience

Two months have passed now but it feels like I have been working at Tools for Solidarity for much longer. I arrived to Tools in February eager to live in a new country and get my hands dirtier than they were as a social worker in Chicago. Little did I know I'd find more than just fellow volunteers and interesting work. The dedicated people here have become family, and I see each day that Tools is an even more unique, dynamic and sustainable organization than I had expected.

Initially I learned how to refurbish and sharpen various tools, such as hammers and chisels, from John and Giulia. I gained new tools-related vocabulary and skills in those first few days. We shared some good laughs (as always at Tools!) at my mistakes like when I accidentally oiled the wooden cover for the chisel sharpening stone and then wondered why it wasn't working. (Thanks John for enlightening me on that one.)

A few weeks into working at Tools, I was walking around Belfast City Centre gazing at everything in my vicinity thinking, "I wonder what tools were needed to shape the concrete of that curb... to weld the metal on that fence... to carve the shop name into that wooden sign." I've gained a new way of looking at the world. We are indebted to tools for virtually everything we use to survive. I had never truly appreciated the invaluable role that tools play in our modern, industrialized world, and therefore the implied privilege certain communities have simply because they can access the necessary tools to construct and more importantly maintain a functioning society.

The trick that keeps life here at Tools ever-engaging is that the work is always varied. I have been involved in the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) team, the Tools workshop in Downpatrick, the supported volunteer program, and the move to our new location in south Belfast.

In the past I had often been disillusioned with a reoccurring theme in development/charity work. We cannot work for sustainable development in other pla-

ces and work for the equality of other people without first consciously living sustainable development and equality ourselves and in our own communities. Tools makes an impact on people's lives not only through Wori and MSTC in east Africa but locally in Northern Ireland for supported volunteers, young children, and international volunteers like myself. At the Tools workshop and volunteer house people are happy to put in the extra time to recycle, compost, share responsibilities like cooking/cleaning, buy fair-trade when possible, and make vegetarian meals for the group (even if everyone isn't necessarily vegetarian!).

For me, now, Tools for Solidarity is an ever-evolving example of how we can simultaneously work for and genuinely live what we believe in, so long as there are some mistakes and laughs along the way.

Thanks to all my new friends at Tools for making me feel so welcome. Cheers!



Katie





TFS has a new representative in CADA

Tools For Solidarity was involved in the organisation Coalition of Aid and Development Agencies (CADA) in Northern Ireland from the very beginning. Nowadays we haven't been so active but we are very excited because in March one of our volunteers, Laura Rio Fernandez, was voted to be a member on the board of CADA.

CADA's main objectives are to promote sustainable development, social justice and equality in local and global contexts. The two main areas of work are to influence policy at local, national and international government level and to enhance awareness of development issues in Northern Ireland.

CADA has as well an education sub group call GENNI (Global Education Network NI) whose aims are to provide an environment to share resources and stren-



gthen communication throughout the global education sector in Northern Ireland.

Laura has been a volunteer in Tools for Solidarity for about one year and a half and currently is the coordinator of the Education for Sustainable Development, a role

that we think fits very well with being a CADA member.

As a member of CADA board Laura attended at the General Annual Meeting of the organisation, a Board Meeting and a conference "How to make effective an NGO".

At the moment Laura has attended meetings and has asked to be part of the preparation of educational events. She is looking forward to taking an even more active roll within CADA.



Laura

30 Birthday! 20th-24th August

There will be cake. There will be music, and dancing, and treasure, and above all the meeting of friends old and new. Our birthday celebrations are going to last over four days, and we want as many people as possible to join in celebrating thirty years of Tools for Solidarity. Thirty years! How did that happen?

Well, if you're reading this newsletter you have probably contributed something to the making of TFS. It's taken the efforts of thousands of people, as volunteers in the workshop and in other tools groups, in schools, women's institutes and trade unions, and as fundraisers, collectors of sewing machines, tools and materials, donors, and supporters in all sorts of ways.

The Wood brothers have driven this process all along, keeping the spirit of voluntarism, of questioning, of sustainability and above all, solidarity with our partners in Africa, through three decades of change. They have enabled the "Tools family" to grow – somehow involving people from all five continents while creating an organisation that transcends community issues in Northern Ireland and supports volunteers with all sorts of needs. John and Stephen would be quick to say "Ah, but it's not about us, it's about all the people who work for Tools." Well, of course! But let's just give them credit on the run-up to the 30th Anniversary events.

BELFAST presents... this AUGUST, at 55a SUNNYSIDE STREET...

30th Birthday

of Tools For Solidarity

COME AND JOIN THE CELEBRATIONS!!



RUNNING FROM THE

20.08.14

TO THE

23.08.14

WEDNESDAY 20th: Development Education event – **DEBATE AND DISCUSSION** -time and venue tbc

THURSDAY 21st: **PUB QUIZ** at 8.00pm, St. Malachy's Old Boys, 442 Antrim Road

FRIDAY 22nd day-time: Exciting **OPEN DAY** in the new workshop
 FRIDAY 22nd evening: **BAND AND DISCO** in the Dockers' Club, Pilot Street with **TIM MC GARRY** as MC

SATURDAY 23rd: City **TREASURE HUNT**, fun for all the family!

+ INFO IN FACEBOOK/TWITTER OR IN WWW.TOOLSFORSolidarity.COM

And how wonderful is it, that the birthday party will be combined with the opening of the new workshop? TFS is continually evolving and is stronger for it. It has grown thanks to the hard work and intellectual input of people like YOU. So, please do your best to join in the celebrations from 20th to 24th August. We have planned events to please all kinds of people – to educate and entertain, and strengthen our sense of solidarity and belief we should keep working for a better world.

Book your tickets, arrange time off, be there if you can! The programme will include a fabulous open day in the new workshop, a development education event, a pub quiz, music and comedy night, and treasure hunt for all the family. Check our facebook page for up-to-date information.



Nancy



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