

# TOOLS FOR SOLIDARITY

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## Give a New Life to Your Old Tools

Tools for Solidarity (TFS) is a small organisation, which supports self-reliance by providing high quality recycled hand tools and sewing machines to working people overseas, promoting international solidarity, and challenging global inequalities through critical analysis of devel-

opment issues, environmental sustainability and ethical working practices.

From 1984, we have collected tools and sewing machines all over Ireland and sent them to Sub-Saharan Africa and Central America answering the requests of people in need of tools to change their lives.

As already men-

tioned, the organisation has only been able to support such developments overseas with the help of international volun-

its highest ever number of international volunteers working for the organisation. The number of requests from people to come and work for the organisation has also increased. This has enabled TFS to look to the development of new projects and to look to streamline the storage and flow of materials into and out of the workshop.



## 10th Shipment to Tanzania

teers who continue to carry out the majority of the work within our workshop. Over the last year TFS has had



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Tools For Solidarity



@21s4s

## WELCOME & GOOD-BYE

From the last newsletter we gave a warm welcome to our new international volunteers Juan (Spain), Ruska (Republic of Ireland), Suzanne (France) and Sophia (Germany) Alvaro (Spain), Aminata (Belgium) and Selim (Turkey). We also had the opportunity to welcome Tony, a new local volunteer. Moreover, we were delighted to say hello to some of our new supported volunteers Jack, Alexander and Robert. All of them are from Belfast. Last but not least, Elena, our former Russian volunteer is on board for another year.

Unfortunately, we had to say goodbye to Gabriella (Italy), Morgane (France), Jan (Germany), Fidelis (Germany) and Eleonora (Italy). We also needed to say farewell to Aristote (France), Laura (Germany), Juanho (Spain) and Saara (Finland).

We thought that it would never come but Francesca from Italy, who was one of our core-volunteers playing a key role in the life of TFS, has left us. All of them have finished their projects.

The current volunteers of TFS in Belfast

are: Aminata (Belgium), Sophia (Germany), Juan (Spain), Alvaro (Spain), Ruska (Republic of Ireland), Selim (Turkey), Elena (Russia), Laura (Galicia), Suzanne (France), Boglárka (Hungary), Conor, Stephen and John Wood, Peter, Liam, Jim, Larry, David, James, Trevor, Stephen, Darragh, Jack, Alexander, Robert, Sam, William, Anthony, Nancy and Michael. Many thanks to the volunteers in Downpatrick, Mourne Grange and the Isle of Man.

Thank you!

*"The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention."*







## HERE COMES TO SUN

### Tools Goes Solar

It has long been our dream to be able to generate our electricity through renewable means. We have always striven to be as sustainable and environmental as we can – in all that we do but

shading the roof?

Many thanks to Cye Bannon for his encouragement, technical expertise and support. He carried out a roof inspection and produced the financial breakdown which showed that if we could prune the tree

ited the panels were installed on time at the end of September.

All that was left to do was to take the tree – we finally got permission for the owners that we could go



TOOLS GOES SOLAR

have not always had the possibility to make this happen. By owning our own building we finally had the chance to do something! However there were a number of obstacles to overcome – could we afford it, would the roof be suitable and what about the large tree

we would be able to pay off the scheme with 5-6 years.

Although we did not have time to seek funding everyone agreed that we should use our reserves to go ahead. Thanks to Charlie and the team at EcoTech Solar Solutions Lim-

ahead and prune it. Thanks to Conor, Philip, Gary and everyone who helped with this.

If you want to see how the panels are doing you can go online and see them operating!  
<https://goo.gl/EnXs9W>



## Wealth Distribution in the World

It is a fact that the population of the world is growing fast. In 1945 there were 2.3 billion people on earth, in 2006 there were 6.5 billion and today there are 7.5 billion with a projected 8.5 billion by 2028.

On the other hand, "sharing skills" are not growing at the

people in the world own the same wealth as the poorest 3 billion people in the world. Data from 2003.

But the situation is getting worse, last year Oxfam warned in its report "An economy for the 1%" that the number had fallen dramatically to 62 of the richest people in the world own-

*worse off and widening the gap between rich and poor."*

How is the gap between the rich and the poor getting bigger and bigger despite the effort of governments and organizations to reduce it? The 5:50:500 concept compares the amount of money given to the developing world through charity/aid to how much is taken from it. The idea behind 5:50:500 is simple:

- 5 billion is the amount of money given to the Developing World by non governmental agencies (voluntary aid) every year for the past 10 years.

- 50 billion is the amount of money given to the Developing World by governments (official aid) every year for the past 10 years.

- 500 billion is the amount of money that the Developing World loses on average per year over the past 10 years as a result of the current unjust international economic system.



*The 8 richest people in the world are men and own the same wealth as half of the world's population*

same speed. According to the network therules.org, 300 years ago rich countries were 3 times richer than poor countries, during the 1960's the rich countries were 35 times richer than poor countries and today rich countries are **80 times** richer than poor countries. As a result the 300 richest

ing the same amount of wealth as half of the population. Today it is even worse, a recent publication in the guardian said "the number has dropped to **eight** in 2017 because new information shows that poverty in China and India is worse than previously thought, making the bottom 50% even

## Wealth Distribution in the World

So, in short, for every \$55 billion transferred to the Poor World by the Rich World, \$500 billion is transferred in the op-

worldwide organizations and networks where we can be informed on how small changes in our actions can create a positive impact.

cooking a new and exciting series of activities aimed at teenagers to provide them with a deeper understanding of sustainability and empower

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posite direction. (Detailed information about the 5:50:500 concept can be founded in [developmenteducation.ie/shop/5-50-500/](http://developmenteducation.ie/shop/5-50-500/))

It seems clear to me that the economic system needs to be changed and we really urge people on board. There is a full range of local and

Tools for Solidarity's Education programme, known as ESD, has been working for the past 4 years with schools and other groups within the community, teaching them about inequality and spreading the feeling that we have the power to change the world. Currently the ESD programme is

them to start questioning and challenging the world today.

In 10 years time these primary school and GCSE level children will be adults entitled to vote and work. We hope some of them will make informed and powerful decisions that will make the unequal world that we are liv-



### Community and Solidarity

I moved into Stoneybatter, a neighbourhood just west of the city centre in early 2014. It was, I don't know, the 13<sup>th</sup> of 14<sup>th</sup> place I've rented in Dublin. Most of my friends have moved around the same amount, not putting roots in any one area or feeling part of a community. Yet this was a time when community mattered, when campaigns

been lost. After the financial crash, the government hiked taxes and cut services to give money to banks and property developers. The average family lost a fifth of their income, and nothing we had done had stopped the government taking more. We had badly lost the campaign against the household tax and

Except it didn't happen. Against all expectations, the campaign to stop the water charges succeeded. There were six or seven massive marches – the largest involved about 200,000 people countrywide – but the reason we won weren't the marches as much as the small local actions in every

*How we won the Irish Water War !*



based in local communities defeated the government's austerity plans in the fight against Irish Water.

It didn't look like this was on the cards in early 2014. It seemed that the fight against austerity had

their next austerity measure was to charge us for our water. Once they managed to meter it and make us pay for it, they would inevitably privatise water as they had sold off other public services and resources.

community. In order to get us to pay for water they had to put water meters outside people's houses – 'installing austerity into your footpath' as a friend put it. This gave us something concrete to fight against in our own neighbourhoods.



### Community and Solidarity

When the water meter installers came to Stoneybatter, we first tried blocking roads to stop them. When that didn't work we blockaded the whole neighbourhood. This way, we managed to keep them out for a month. Other areas were stronger and the water meter installers were kept out permanently. Either way, these actions created a sense of

or they honked their support for us, local cafes gave us free coffee and buns, people from other communities came over to help us – as we would help them when they were threatened by Irish Water. I got to know Stoneybatter in that month and the months after, sitting down on the roads to stop the

up, area by area. It meant that when the bills started coming in, non-payment was so high that it sank Irish Water.

So you could say “the community stood up against austerity”. The thing is, at the beginning most people involved didn't have a sense of community – a lot of the

*How we won the Irish Water War !*



ourselves standing in solidarity with our neighbours against austerity. I mean this literally, we were stood in the middle of the road every day for a month -at all the entrances to the area - to stop the installers coming in. Neighbours joined us

trucks from getting in, knocking on doors and chatting to people to get them not to pay their Irish Water bills, leafletting the area again and again to tell people what the campaign was up to. This was how the campaign was built

campaigners were political people like me who'd moved around from place to place. Even those who came from the area didn't feel much part of a community – at least not at the beginning.

## Community and Solidarity

After knocking on the doors, I realised that most people I talked to felt separate – not part of a community either. Perhaps in more settled areas, there is more community. But perhaps not. Mostly, even when people feel there is 'a community' in their area, they feel out-

to an area and feel real solidarity with the people in it. Solidarity still exists, but at the beginning of the water campaign it was a very abstract and stretched notion of solidarity. A broad feeling that we were the 99% or whatever,

cause of it. Without doubt it was this, the feeling we were defending our newly-found community that ensured we kept the faith, kept setting the alarm clocks for five in the morning and shoving leaflets in letterboxes. I guess

*How we won the Irish Water War !*



side it. There's nothing surprising about this. We live in a world where we're isolated, moving around, constantly decentred and dislocated. It's a world where it's difficult to build up attachments

and there was something to mobilise for. It was only when campaign went on that this solidarity became grounded in our local area and was strengthened be-

this is the big thing I learned from the campaign. It's not just that acts of solidarity are based on a sense of community. They build up that sense of community.



## Green Future Organisation

*Return to our roots  
and respect the  
environment..*

The story of creating the Green Future Organisation started on a small farm we visited on holiday. We realised that the taste of vegetables that we bought from supermarkets was not the same as the taste of vegetables that we ate on this little farm. The vegetables on the farm were so much more delicious than those we bought in supermarkets. After the trip we began to question why supermarkets sell tasteless vegetables instead of vegetables like the ones we ate on that little farm. We found the reason for it to be 'factory farms' which take advantage of lower business costs and increase their production by using chemicals but producing low-quality food because of these chemicals. This use of chemicals can contribute to health problems and pollutes the environment. It also negatively affects small farmers who still use traditional methods and what's worse is

have begun to use chemicals on their farms to compete with factory farms, but these farmers often don't know enough about chemicals to safely use them, further damaging the quality of produce. These things worried us a lot and this combined with our realisation that we spend most of our time in big cities locked away from nature led us to decide to establish the Green Future Organisation.

As members of the GFO we want to reconnect with nature, return to our roots and respect the environment. Some the methods that we think could change the disadvantages of farmers were permaculture, eco-life, eco-village, organic farming, and free economy. But we had no experience with farming or agriculture. The only thing we knew was that human activities consume resources and produce waste. The main problem for farmers was not ob-

about organic farming or ecological life in this age of technology, the problem was the farmers ignoring this information. We were a small organisation who could not change the entire system but we believed that we could be a drop in the 'changing sea'. We decided to go to a little orchard, which had belonged one of our member's grandparents, in a small village to discuss and develop ideas with young villagers. We aimed to gain an understanding of the role of sustainable and ecological life in giving the youth the chance for positive change in their personal lives, exploring the potential and limitations of eco-life and sharing experiences and the realities learnt from those experiences. We also tried to begin to improve young people's chances using permaculture, eco-building and eco-villages.



## Green Future Organisation

The first thing we did after we set up a campsite was to collect garbage that villagers had thrown out around the village. We made a monster using the garbage we had collected and put it near the entrance of the village. We had two aims in making this, the first aim was to teach children, who had grown up on superhero cartoons, about recycling. The idea was that we were telling the children "if you want to be superhero, you must stop the monster that destroys your village and rest of the world. The only way that can stop it is recycling." The second aim was to attract the attention of young villagers and to increase the visibility of our work in the village.

*Return to our roots  
and respect the  
environment...*

We achieved our first two goals easily. We then became a group which consisted of a mixture young villagers and young urbans. Most of our activities were based outdoors. We did farming, scouting,



recycling activities, eco-building, cooking etc. All the experience exchanges were done through methods of non-formal education. The activities started with brainstorming, demonstrations, role-playing,

teambuilding, ice breakers and many others. All of our work was non-hierarchical and all of the methods we used were based on the concept of learning by doing.



## Green Future Organisation



One of the main topics we talked about was what kind of place we wanted to live in. After initial discussions, we separated into small groups and tried to build different village models by using cardboard boxes, fallen branches or any kind of trash. Our aim with this activity was to try and teach the villagers how their disregard for the environment causes problems for their village and how these problems would only increase with the continuation of this way of life.

After a while one by one we young urbans started to leave our eco-camp which had no hot water, electricity,

internet connection or mobile phone signal. During the camp period we did not use any kind of chemicals. We made our own shampoo, toothpaste, cleaning products etc. GFO didn't have the finances to



continue this project but hoped that our time there was enough help them to improve their way of life. We could not teach a lot to the young villagers but we tried to teach them to ask the important questions.

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