



NEWSLETTER

of Tools For Solidarity

Give a new life to your old tools!

TOOLS FOR SOLIDARITY NEWSLETTER

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Women's Rights Initiative Uganda

By Stephen

In May last year myself and Chris had the opportunity to visit the Women Rights Initiative (WORI) in Jinja, Uganda as part of our field trip to vocational training colleges (VTCs). As with the other VTCs that we had met we had discussions about the work of each others organisations. Rose, the manager of WORI then took us to see their small VTC and off we headed on boda boda - motorbike taxis - Rose holding her baby sharing a bike with her work colleague and the driver!

Although we could not meet the students - it was holiday time - we did get to see the few sewing machines that they had and to meet the teacher. At the moment they only train girls in tailoring though they hope in the future to train both boys and girls in carpentry.



Of all the VTCs that we visited we were most impressed by WORI - by their commitment and their organisational structures and management. The sewing machines were the best maintained of all the groups.

Since our return we have been working with WORI to form a partnership with the intention of setting up a small scale sewing and training centre in Jinja, based on the MSTC model. We are

planning to send 40 sewing machines there in the next few months. Meanwhile someone from WORI will go to Mwanza to receive one month's training in sewing machine maintenance and repair. This person will then refurbish the machines that we ship out and train the women that will receive the machines in maintenance and operation.

The work of WORI

Women Rights Initiative (WORI) is an action oriented organization founded in 2007 by three young women. The organization was created to arise the challenges of human and women rights: capacity building in leadership at grass root levels, fighting poverty, creating awareness on sexual reproductive health rights; K WORI's main aim is to enhance the capacity of women and support their efforts towards achieving their own development and good health. The organization has a special interest in the plight of women as

they are most susceptible to vulnerability in all areas (psychological, physical, social and economical).

Our goal is to build and strengthen the capacities of women and youth by advocating for their rights, capacity building, through SRH&R, economic empowerment, and supporting them in ways that increase access to policy and decision making, quality health care and rights representation.

TFS travelling outside the workshop!!

By Jasmin

As, I am sure, you know, TFS is a big happy community! That's why we do not only work together in the workshop but also enjoy ourselves having a great time outside the workshop. And not only outside of the workshop but in general outside at all - just like on the trip 16 lucky TFS volunteers from Belfast had in December last year.

In a minibus, organised and perfectly driven by Anthony, we went to the coastal town of Carlingford, just south



Volunteers from TFS taking a lunch break

of the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland - so we even went to a foreign country and had to bring foreign currency with us.

From the car park - situated directly at

the sea and with a beautiful view over bay - we started off for what "Norn Iron"-speaking people might call a "wee dander". Through the town and uphill a mountain nearby we had a nice walk of around four hours "C even though after the first half (and the picnic lunchbreak) some of the participants due to rather unpleasant and for walking unsuitable temperature (perceived temperature: -20 degrees) had to turn back and change the beautiful environment of the mountain for a warm cafe in town. After another short stay in the pub as soon as the more endurable hikers among us had returned from their walk, we headed back to the minibus and home to Belfast. Thanks a lot to

John for organising this enjoyable day out (even though, for the next time: please not in December!) and to Anthony for organising the minibus!

Christmas party

By Jasmin

Christmas vibes in Tools for Solidarity! No Christmas break without getting in the right mood "C and for us this means, having a proper Christmas party in our Belfast workshop, before even the last remaining volunteers are off for holidays. So, on Thursday 22nd of December, the Belfast volunteers, full-time, part-time and even some volunteers and friends we hadn't seen around the workshop for quite a while (but who are of course always very welcome), gathered in the warm workshop kitchen to spend some time getting christmassy together.

After an opulent and delicious tea-and-food-break in the early afternoon we had a good time and enjoyed ourselves playing funny games (inter alia related with chickpeas, a snowman, carrots and blindfolds). After the main part some of the volunteers apparently felt under pressure in terms of work to be done, so that the end of our wee party was accompanied by the noise of saws and hammers rather than Christmas songs; but that could not affect the relaxed mood of the other volunteers, who had another enjoyable toasty teatime "C and at the end of the day, left the workshop perfectly ready for Christmas break. Many special thanks to Martina, who organised this nice event for us!



“Saying goodbye and hello at the same time...” *By Marta*

If something is characteristic in Tools For Solidarity, it is to see how fast time is going by. In this microsphere you can see new people arrive and leave very often. You can see arrive new volunteers who, at the beginning, are a wee bit clumsy with the use of tools, but at the end, they are able to build a shelf, repair different brands of Sewing Machines, to create amazing wood boxes...

So let's go to start talking about the Masters who, unfortunately, have left our “warm” workshop, but not before sharing their knowledge with all of us.

Claudia, our elegant woman from Italy who is able to kill someone with her amazing look at the same time that she refurbished a chisel, left us before Christmas break. The workshop is not the same without her sarcastic and smart humor and since she left, Tools section has discovered that no one is able to refurbish chisels with the same charm and touch as her. But not only these tools are crying without Claudia, the editor of this Newsletter is missing her too and of course the TFS website, which responsibility Jasmin takes over with rigorous professionalism ;)

The next to leave us was Florence. The French diplomatic and charming blue eyes went back to France at the end of January. For those who know our workshop, they have seen that order is not the main point in our organisation. However, Florence was able to sort all the spare parts in the Sewing Machine section (not an easy task and I start to believe that she had some amazing magic powers), finding time to write to

the New Project in Uganda, fix some sewing machines and build the big boxes for the next shipment (her record time was to build three boxes in three days!!!).

Finally, the last one to leave us (but that doesn't mean the least important) was Ana. The small but strong and smiling girl from Mallorca had to leave at the end of February. Without doubts, some of us call her “Master of refurbishment”, because of her amazing skills with sewing machines. The Yellow Room is more quiet since Ana left, because her noisy but contagious laughter was part of our working time....definitely we miss her....

Let's talk now about those who had been for longer in TFS and they are arriving at the end of their project. Coco, our Frenchman, is the person in charge of coordinating the Tools section. This means that while the others are fixing the big amount of tools that we have at the workshop, Coco is just walking around, singing some repetitive song and swearing in French :))) Seriously talking about him, we can say that he became the Master of tools and wood boxes. He is also specialist in arguing with John about the lack of free space. Even if he knows that he is not going to win, what would be a Frenchman without complaining?? :)

Miro, our Swiss genius, is able to build a shelf at least in half an

hour!! He has become masterly in hammers and electrical check for sewing machines (aye, tools people are not really happy about that while sewing machine team is trying to attract him to the dark side – also known as the “yellow room”!!)

Martina is well known for being a wonderful cook. Nonone can deny that her hands are in perfect harmony when she has to bake a cake or fix a tool. Even if she is here only two days par week, Martina has become the master of hand drills.

And...What about the volunteers that are in the middle of their project?? Michi, the Eirene guy who enjoys make us laugh when he tries to dress up himself with the material that we have at the workshop, has succeeded establishing an order inside the back-room!! I know, this sounds incredible, but now we even have a nice system inside the messy paradise.

Jasmin has a lot of qualities, but especially one that all of us would like to learn. She is able to work really fast and hard in a shortest time....maybe because like that she can stay longer drinking tea and playing UNO?? :) In any case that

quality makes her the perfect person to continue Coco's legacy in Tools section!!

And right now, I know that all of you are asking themselves....but, who is

GUESS WHAT?

Coco says, at least, 54 times par week a bad word in French!

going to continue Marta's legacy in Sewing Machine Section?? And the answer is...Claudia!! Our cute Italian rugby player, has the perfect hands and patience to make all the sewing machines work that arrive to her. Even if sometimes we may think that Claudia is getting crazy because she talks with them, seems that her technique works out perfectly!

Arriving at the end of this article, I cannot forget the new volunteers who are starting a new year at TFS. William, from France, arrived in February and is the new Sewing Machine's team mem-

ber. He begins to know all the secrets about this complicate tool and I am pretty sure that in a short time he will gain these skills. He is aware of everything that happens in the workshop, asking every few time that he doesn't understand something.

Finally, our last volunteer to arrive is Omar, from Palestine. He has been initiated in the art of fixing hammers, a task that he develops really well while he rolls his cigarettes with a perfect small machine, because as he says..."I like symmetric"...good attitude in TFS!! :)



Let's go local!

By Coco

Even if our lunch that we take in the exceptionally warm kitchen has almost always a strange and European taste, this doesn't necessarily mean there are only European people in the workshop. In fact there are more local volunteers from Belfast than "those foreign people" who try to cook something else than potatoes and baked beans.

First of all, let's talk about the fabulous "Wood Brothers", for who is more local than Stephen and John Wood, the two "core-dinator-volunteers" of the association, who created Tools For Solidarity about one century ago. Stephen is the computer and treadle master, you can hear the "wood" step of his indispensable slippers from the other side of the workshop. By answering the phone he is also our only connection with the external world - because let's face it: in the workshop we tend to feel like in a world of its own, a bit like Neo in Matrix. Then what about John? What can I say but that he has one of the best skills ever: He is able to finish his lunchplate in less than 4 minutes, which will give him remaining 26 minutes of the others' lunch break to fix another sewing machine. He is also probably the only person in the world who tried to cut his fingernails with an electric plane - without much success. Fortunately, his fingers are better now.

Then comes Peter Atkinson, the "tools sorting" man. Whatever kind of messy-box-full-of-different-tools-noone-ever-knows-how-to-use people bring into the workshop, Peter is the man: he knows everything about every tool, he can sort it out.

Another thing about Peter that must be mentioned is his love to French music: the days he is in, you can listen to more than 100 songs of Edith Piaf (obviously 100 means five times 20 of them)!

Jim, James or Seamus is the man for the accounts, he comes in two days per week: one day to say that we have enough money in the bank, the other day to complain about money disappearing on the account - is he trying to hide the fact that he stole most part of it? No, only joking there - sorting out the account is probably at least as hard as finding a blue vicegrip in the workshop. Jim has also a very special sense of humor. He occasionally tries to familiarise the international volunteers with it, but mostly this only creates very confusing situations...

New year's resolutions were quite common among the local volunteers this year: After Christmas Patrick Sanchez, Peter Duffy and Liam "B." (Boss or Boy?) Harrison all together quit smoking. No more cigarettes after tea breaks, a really hard task. But by the time this article is written they were all smoking again. No offence guys, a strong state of mind is required to stop smoking, even just to try, hopefully the next time will be the good one for you. Let's say something about them now.

GUESS WHAT?

Stephen doesn't cut his hair since he met Nancy (12 years ago!!)

Liam, the most constant volunteer after the "Wood Brothers", he is definitely the treadles master. Sending, linseed oiling, brushing, painting, screwing... he knows everything about them. And now, with his special treadle trolley shelf, there is no chance that you would ever again find some treadle part on the floor. Another reason making Liam very precious to all the other volunteers: He is the official Thursdays biscuits fundraiser - as long as he brings not only WagonWheels..

Peter is coming in once or twice every week. After we decided that sorting out chisels was not exactly the most useful thing to do (sorry about that Cla), he had to give up his beloved work on cleaning & sorting chisels with Claudia, so that he is now helping the rest of the tools section in the "Boxing Tools" movement. In the name of all international volunteers I apologise to Peter, because even if we know that he doesn't like the "green stuff" (in other words: most vegetables), we keep preparing strange healthy meals in the kitchen. Patrick is for sure a local man, because I meet him almost every day but not necessarily in the workshop. He arrived in Tools during the month of November.

Coming in at the beginning only on day per week, he is now already a real tool addict and is having lunch with us almost every day. After successfully

completing the apprenticeship to a box expert, he is now trying to fix many different kinds of tools, with a special attention for the braces.

What about the Tuesday Guys, Gary and Richard? Even if they are in only one day per week, nothing could keep them away at this one day. Gary is very brave because even if he usually starts to wistfully talk about his bed at 10 am, he always stays until 4 pm oiling more than 1000 tools a day.

Richard is a smart guy, he actually arrives around lunch time, like this he can start his working day with a break (is a break really a break if you do not work before? For German people this question yet needs to be clarified, doesn't it, Jasmin?). He loves the workshop so much that he not rarely tries to hide himself when the taxi-driver comes to pick him up.

On Wednesdays we have Thomas and James who have been

coming in for more than three months now. Officially though they joined the main workshop after Christmas Break, because Thomas needed some time of adaptation. They are now plane-refurbishing professionals, even Jasmin can not believe her eyes.

On Thursdays Paul is coming to the workshop, he likes to learn about treadles with a very good teacher: Liam. But sometimes he is also surprising everyone by

demonstrating his cooker skills, and preparing the lunch for everybody. Unfortunately we have not seen him so much since Christmas Break.

Friday might be the end of the week, but it is not quiet day. Since now two weeks ago, Buxton and James are coming once every week. They are both come from the United States of America, staying in Northern Ireland for two years. They visited us just once and immediately they were seduced by our work, so they decided to come again. They are now trying to improve the art of the wood boxing, but maybe soon they will be enrolled for other jobs.

Even if it is not the last of the article, this paragraph is the last one I wrote. Why? Because I almost forgot someone - hardly possible, considering that this person is the **ONLY FEMALE**

local volunteer in TFS: Attracta. She knows the association since a long time ago, now she decide to come in two days per week since the beginning of winter 2011. At this point, you should ask yourself why waiting so long to come to the workshop more oftenly. The answer is clear and simple: knowing the condition of the office, Attracta knew that cleaning it and keeping it tidy would not be an easy task. Thanks to her for creating in this room a kind of order.

Not Irish, not British, but not less local than the others, Clement and Ahmet (who just arrive couple of month ago) are walking among us in Tools For Solidarity. Ahmet comes from Somalie and lives in Belfast, he is coming in every Thursday. He knows more about ply wood than anyone else, but he is also a great box architect. John provided him with a bike, but maybe this is just to give him the

skills to fix others volunteers' bikes, who knows...

Clement definitely speaks a better English than most of the taxi drivers in Belfast, but he is still French first of all, you can notice that by hearing his romantic accent. Clement is the master of the treadle room, he actually managed to create space inside... by putting all the treadles in the corridor, such a nice trick. He makes a big effort trying to be local: he always starts the day wearing only a t-shirt, but by time of the first tea-break the French origins are taking over and he is wearing two or three layers more. Finally a big thanks to Clement, a great football player for introducing some of the international volunteers to the "Footy" on Tuesday evenings to keep them strong and healthy.



Richard and Gary during working time



Lorette and Liam working on treadles

As our most affectionate readers know, in each number of our splendid newsletter, we deal with a topic about issues which are part of our ethos such as development education, environmentalism, human rights and so on. But this time, we want to write about something different...the experience that our volunteers are living during their period in TFS! We hope that you enjoy it as much that we did!

Honey, honey, sweet honey! *By Martina*

Welcome to Tools! Oh yes, that's great, but...did you know that during the winter the workshop is absolutely...freezing?!?!?! But the journey to get to Tools starts when the alarm rings and you put your toes out of the bed, and you dress in a

rush, trying to win the record of high speed dressing up in order to not become a nice ice statue. You dress like an onion, layer after layer, and once wearing the third jumper and not being able to move properly anymore, you venture down the stairs on the way to the bathroom. In this nice place, you hope to

find a kind of relief, but... no hot water! You wash your face with what reminds me of the crystalline water flowing from a mountain's fountain, and then, you are really awake!

Next step: the kitchen, meeting point with John! The radio is on and the BBC news cheer up the atmosphere, but usually, a

couple of minutes later, an argument between two enraged conductors cools down the mild temperature of this space. In the kitchen, a very picturesque and clumsy dance starts: John, Miro and myself, still half asleep, we try to put the kettle on, to get the dishes and the cutlery without hurting ourselves with a flying buttery knife or a slippery strawberry jam's jar... not easy! When the dance is over, we eat our breakfast, and my personal source of heat is one of my nice herbal teas! Oh yes...in fact, I eat my muesli hugging the thermos! It works! Fortunately in the kitchen we have hot water, which means that we can wash the dishes calmly and with a lot of round passion-fruit bubbles! Well, it is nearly the time to leave. The bed is done, the teeth are brushed, we are now ready to go out and face the feared Belfast sky and its gray clouds. Once the waterproof trousers, the dusty boots and the helmet are on, we take our bikes and we bravely cycle towards the Crumlin Road. Rain, wind, hailstorm are usually on the menu, but, if you are lucky, a lovely view of the hills can appear and fill you with regenerated energy! After struggling against the natural forces and the wild drivers, we finally reach the workshop! Safe and with gladiator's muscles in our thighs!

The first meeting point is the office: nice and warm, you just would like to have an excuse to stay in there, but the tools are waiting for you, you can hear their call... you have to go! The sleepy tools come to life thanks to your warm hands, which, kindly, refurbish and warm them. Slowly, this amazing place awakes, and between hammers, chisels, planes, hand drills and sewing machines, everyone has something to do. I really like fixing hand drills, but early in the morning, the touch of the metal makes me feel a little bit like a royal

penguin in the Antarctic.... and, as this clumsy bird, I start dancing, jumping and moving in order to keep my blood circulation at a good level! Another interesting way of keeping fit and at the same time waking up my frozen feet, is to go to the bathroom...running! I can assure, the sprint from the beginning of the long corridor to the toilets is really healthy and helpful. Same thing when you come back, sport is good for health! If you are lucky, during your wandering around, you can come across a member of the sewing machines group. In this period of the year, they spend a lot of time in the Yellow Room, an exotic and warm destination where they winter cleaning and fixing beautiful old Singer sewing machines. I would recommend a tour, as the name says, it is a nice and sunny place, with Caribbean temperatures and Zen tranquility.

"Tea is up" shouts the lucky volunteer who cooks...oh yes, he or she is the luckiest! The art of cooking, what a delight...the heat of the stove, what a precious gift! Moreover, you have the absolute privilege of controlling the kettle, and you can warm your hands whenever you want. You also wash the dishes, which means that your hands will be warm and cozy for a moment. Anyway...the tea break is nice, everyone hugs the cup or the tea pot and eat biscuits or fruits, another nice way to warm...! And then, back to work! Fortunately the workshop is warming up and the metal of the tools is now less cold on your skin! The radio is on, the tools are lively, repetitive and strident noises come from the different areas of the workshop, an appetizing food smell escapes from the kitchen and in less time than you can realize a sweet voice announces that..."lunch is ready"! We all sit together around the big table in

the kitchen and between nice conversations, jokes and loud laughings, we appreciate the meal! Advice: in Tools, especially during the winter time, it is preferable to cook nourishing food, like potatoes, rice, spicy vegetable stews, thick leguminous pots and hot soups...and, remember, we are very good forks! Hour after hour, the workshop becomes darker, and, after the second tea break and the tidying up, calm and quiet, as if all the metal, the wood and the electrical cables were preparing for the night. The lights are switched off, the doors locked, just the office remains lively, but soon it will be time to go home for everyone, letting tools and sewing machines finally rest.

Tools for Solidarity...a nice name for a very nice cause. So, finally, what is Tools for Solidarity? Only cold, bobbins and boxes of tools? Not at all! I was asked to write something funny about Tools and so I decided to make a sort of parody of the hard life we have in Belfast and in the workshop (I was joking, nobody take offense!!!), but it is now time to be serious and to praise this amber hive.

Tools is an amazing place, where a lot of forgotten tools and sewing machines found their home. It's a place where a lot of useful information are shared, like a story telling would do with his fairy tales; where new skills are developed and new people are met. It is a place open to everybody, it is a space of debate, it is a source of reflexion and ethical questions. It is a good occasion to learn the difficult art of "being and working in a team" and to experience the delicate work which is behind a charity organization. It represents the possibility of helping people in a differ-

charity organization. It represents the possibility of helping people in a different way than through money donation; it shows you the importance of the meaning of concepts like "collaboration" and "cooperation" with the Third World, the urgency of "faire avec et non pas faire pour". Tools, its philosophy and its belief force you to face some inevitable and important questions, and above all, to think about your life style and about a crucial topic, which is to me, still to be deeply explored... equality. Thanks Tools and all the bees!



Special thanks

Almost everything happening in Tools for Solidarity is a group work, this newsletter is no exception.

Therefore... thank you very much to all those who put their writing skills to practice and produced wonderful articles!

A huge thanks also to our “external supporters”, who make our work so much easier!

Special thanks to our fellow volunteer in Downpatrick, Mourne Grange, the Isle of Man and Garvald, with whom we always share joy and wonderful moments while we are refurbishing tools or sewing machines!

Last but not least, thanks to all those who come to the workshop to work, laugh and share special moments with us, like Ana and Carmen from Spain!



TAKE CARE!!!



TOOLS FOR SOLIDARITY

Unit 1B1, Edenderry Industrial Estate, Crumlin Road
Belfast BT14 7EE

Tel/Fax +44 (0)28 9074 7473
tools.belfast@virgin.net
www.toolsforsolidarity.com

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