
NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER, 2019 - APRIL, 2020



IN THIS ISSUE

New ESD Officer • The Impact of Coronavirus on TFS work
• New project • Affect of Coronavirus on local communities •
Interview with new former volunteer and those who left the project
• DIY: Face mask

WELCOME WORDS FROM TFS TO READERS

Back in March, when we only started to think of writing this newsletter, we couldn't even wrap our minds around the outcomes that we're facing at this particular moment. COVID-19 has changed our lives upside down and left with problems that we now have to solve.

However, let's appreciate the fact that our members, families and friends were not affected and stay healthy in their home-isolated world.

Now, when it's April and sun is trying to cheer us up every day (which has never happened before the lockdown), we're continuing our work on this newsletter.

On the next pages you will find out about everything that has happened in TFS since December, 2019 and until now, which we didn't cover on our social media.

Hope you will enjoy this journey as much as we did!

Daria



**SAY HELLO TO
THE NEW ESD
OFFICER!**

WELCOMING ROISIN TO OUR ORGANIZATION

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is a big part of TFS's daily work. Delivering educational sessions to pupils of primary schools is a success for our organization that takes place since 2004.

In November, 2019 we welcomed our new ESD Officer - Roisin. Here's a wee interview to get to know her a bit more.

Hello Roisin! It's a pleasure to have you on board! Tell us please about your professional background and why you decided to take this position?

Thank you! It's lovely to be part of TFS! Well, just before starting as Education Officer I was working temporarily as manager in one of Oxfam's bookshops (as a matter of fact I still volunteer there). I love books, but one of the joys of working there was the fantastic and diverse team of volunteers. This leads me to one of the things that made working at TFS very attractive. I really like that it is a volunteer-led organisation. When people volunteer, they do a project because they really want to.

Before being employed by Oxfam I worked in France as an English language assistant. I was really lucky to have this experience. I worked with secondary school students, helping them improve their spoken English. I loved watching students develop their confidence in speaking English, regardless of their ability. I think I probably learned as much as the students - maybe more!

The ESD programme is based on a similar premise to my work in France. It's all about empowering people and giving them the tools to change and develop. People can achieve so much, but sometimes they just need some encouragement.

Lastly, Tools For Solidarity tackles so many problems with practical, effective action. There are so many issues that we all need to respond to urgently. Education for Sustainable Development is crucial in a world where we can now see the effects of how we live and have lived for some time on a frightening scale. This job attracted me because it's something really worth doing. I just hope I can do it well.

Which aspects of the job were you excited about? Which were you worried about? And did it change after a couple of months at schools?

I was excited about hearing participants' ideas in relation to living more sustainably and how our actions can impact the lives of others. So far nearly all the sessions I have done have been with P5, 6 and 7 pupils. I have been impressed by the pupils' critical thinking. Many of the children have given very astute reasons about why it is better for Tools For Solidarity to send tools and sewing machines to Africa instead of money. It has also been enlightening to learn which aspects of the programme pupils aren't so familiar with. Some have been surprised at the extent and scale of poverty and inequality in the world...and notably, that these are problems that exist in Belfast as well. Discovering pupils' existing knowledge and attitudes was something I was really looking forward to.

What are some highlights of the job so far?

Highlights of the job include seeing how the pupils enjoy and engage in the activities. The character game in which participants look at the problem of poverty and inequality and the fairtrade tea game have proved particularly popular so far. It's also been encouraging to see how the pupils challenge themselves and their peers in the discussions we've had about equality, fairness, fairtrade and distribution of resources. Another highlight has been working with the ESD team of volunteers (Antoine, Daria and Jennifer) who bring their own insights, talents and experience to the programme.



On the photo you may see one of the sessions activity when students guess where do our materials come from

Do you get any support from TFS volunteers and the organization itself?

Yes! The whole TFS team is supportive and helpful. My thanks to Manon in particular for showing me all the sessions and delivering the programme before I started work. The above mentioned ESD team have helped me deliver all the sessions and have been a pleasure to work with. Thank you to Stephen and John especially for a warm welcome to the organisation. Thank you to everyone in the office (Stephen, Manon, Ken and Geoff) for being such an approachable bunch who are easy to work with and fun to be around! Not least, Laura (previous TFS Education Officer), has been very supportive and answered all my questions about the job. It was great to have the materials and resources ready to work with when I started the job, which is all thanks to Laura as well.

With everything that's going on with COVID-19 did it change the scope of your work somehow?

The corona virus has of course meant that we can't deliver the programme to all the schools we had planned to visit by the end of the academic year. I will be in touch with these schools next academic year and we would of course be delighted to work with them when that becomes possible. At the moment I'm focusing on preparing resources for the adult education programme. While TFS has done some sessions with adults in the past, I now have the opportunity to create new sessions for the adult ESD programme which I hope will encourage adults to question how they live as well as empowering them to make change for the better. I am really looking forward to delivering these sessions, along with the ESD volunteers, whenever we can.



On the photo you may see one of the sessions competition "Make a paper bag". Pupils are asked to make as many paper bags in 20 minutes as they can, and afterwards Roisin is checking quality of their work.

What advice would you like to give to our readers?

My advice for the moment would be to stay at home and take care of yourselves! This is a very strange time for everyone, but we could all use the quiet and the time we have gained to reflect on what we might want to change when we come through this crisis. Clear skies, a drastic decrease in pollution and peace to reflect certainly provide food for thought!

Thank you so much for this interview! Hope you're staying at home and keep yourself safe.

THE IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS ON TFS WORK

BY JOHN WOOD

The Coronavirus has affected all aspects and programmes of TFS. Like most people we have been trying to keep the organisation ticking over while not able to work from the workshop.

In terms of the partnership work the next 3 months was scheduled to be the busiest in our history. There were 2 large shipments planned, a visit to Tanzania to help establish a new refurbishment centre doing only tools, our first one and a visit to Ghana to investigate the possibility of establishing a tool centre and a new partnership working in the vocational training sector. It is not just here where the impact of the virus has been life changing but in Tanzania and Ghana the situation is equally restrictive at the moment.

With the lockdown looking to be eased within the next few weeks and the possibility to return to the workshop we will be looking to ship to MSTC (Mwanza Sewing and Training Centre) as soon as possible. This is urgent as the project finances, at MSTC, are low and they have not had the sewing machines they need for several months. Given that it will still take 2 months for the container to reach Tanzania. The hope is by then some of the restrictions in Tanzania will have been eased and the centre there can start to operate in a more normal fashion.

The shipment will be difficult as we still have some materials to get ready and collect the rest of the sewing machines which are in Downpatrick, However this will not be possible to do as it will require us working in close vicinity to each other.

We will only be able to do this with people with whom we have been self-isolating - in different houses. People from one house will be in the container and people from the other house will bring the materials to the container. We also like to personalise the container by having some people come to paint it. Obviously this will not be possible and so we will look at trying to do something else. In total we will be looking to ship over 400 sewing machines, as well as rolls and boxes of material, threads, zips etc.

We will of course take lots of pictures and keep everyone informed of the shipment and will post pictures of its arrival in Mwanza.

Plus TFS will not be in a position to return to normalise other aspects of its work, the educational and supported volunteer programmes.

NEW PROJECT IN NJOMBE

BY MANON

In 2018 TFS started a pilot project in Songea, Ruvuma region, Tanzania. An artisan support training centre has been set up in the region and provide training on sewing machine maintenance, embroidery and dress design and business.

As for now, the project is successfully running, so TFS decided to expand it by creating **a new centre in Njombe** (approx. 4 hours by car from Songea). This project is going to be **focused on tools**.

In a nutshell, both centres will work jointly to provide high quality tools, sewing machines and trainings to Tanzanian artisans.

During the project period, an allowance will be provided to people with disabilities by giving them free sewing machines and tools kit.

AFFECT OF CORONAVIRUS ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES

BY JONATHAN CLARKE

During pandemic that we're living though at the moment, sometimes we forget how it's important for us to be aware of not only bad news. We live in society where TV and social media stream only numbers, predictions and almost nothing about work of local communities that help people with everything they can.

And we had an opportunity to have a talk with Jonathan Clarke, the minister and a pastor of the Welcome church in the Woodvale area. He shared his experience and what his community is going through day after day.

Johnathan, thank you so much for your kind respond to be a part of our newsletter. May you tell us and our readers a bit about community? And how did COVID-19 affect your work and people there in general?

Thank you for having me! If we go back to the before-the-crisis-happened time, we would have a lot of activities by local youth center that take place every week. However, when the virus happened, one of the personnel came to me and asked, "Who's going to support communities?" We decided to take initiative in our hands and set up a **Woodvale Community Response**.

Even before pandemic we had quite a good system, so it wasn't hard for us to raise awareness. Usually we'd give people leaflets with everything we're working on, so this time we decided to do the same.

Our work includes helping local families, vulnerable people and simply those who need us. We provide food and essential items from our food bank, and **for the past 6-7 weeks we've managed around 200 families**.

All the boxes we fill in directly in the community, so it's nice to have everyone working towards the same goal. The respond we get from those we help is phenomenal, so we're thinking to continue to do so even after lockdown.

We are all pointing out only to the bad side of the situation, which is understandable. However, even though it's hard to think of it, but have you found any advantages of the virus situation?

Yes, it's definitely hard to find something positive in this situation. However, it's noticeable how in some areas it brought communities together. People started to look after each other more. But it's also obvious, because life was busy before that and one day we wake up and have restrictions of movements. All of it is strange, so it has created a sense to look out for your neighbour.

Is there something that you're planning to keep doing after the lockdown?

I'm sure we'll be left with a need to help people and families with some mental health issues. Being a local pastor, I have been a part of funerals and it's difficult for families to lose their loved ones. Especially when the whole process is going not like we would usually do. So, it's been difficult for all of us.

What advice do you give to people in your community? And what would you like to tell our readers as well?

I always say to live day by day, keep safe, keep well, follow the guidelines. The pandemic will pass eventually, so we just need to do all the things that we're advised to do.

And to your readers I would like to say to stay positive. If there's a need, you can always get a help, so don't hesitate to ask for it.

Thank you so much Johnathan for your time! We hope that you and Woodvale Community Response continue to be strong!

INTERVIEW WITH NEW FORMER VOLUNTEER AND THOSE WHO LEFT THE PROJECT

Last half a year was quite productive for TFS not only with projects and shipments, but with volunteers as well! We're got new volunteers, those who came back for the second year, and people who left the project due to different reasons.

In this article we covered stories of Finn, who returned to Germany because of the COVID-19, and Andrey, former volunteer that started his second year with us.

Hello Finn, it's a pleasure to talk with you! We hope you and your family are safe during this crazy time! Tell us please a bit about yourself, when did you come to the project? And why did you choose it in the first place?

Hey, I joined the project as Eirene volunteer in August 2019. I always loved to work with my hands but I had no proper experience and I just did some smaller tasks. When I saw the project I was sure that I can learn a lot. It was different from other projects and that's what I really liked.

What's the most memorable/significant thing that happened to you on a project?

For me working with all the different volunteers was a great experience. I am glad that I met so many nice people who I could listen to. That I could talk and share stories with them really means a lot to me. Especially working with the supported volunteers brought me so much joy.



Did you learn something new on a project that you use daily from now on?

The most important thing that I have learned is that everything that I do no matter how small it is has impact and can change something.

What piece of advice would you give to new volunteers and the project in general?

For new volunteers my advice would be to enjoy every minute you have because time flies, especially during this project.

For TFS team it is just to continue this great job and to stay the way you are.





Other than Finn, we had an opportunity to chat with Andrey who recently became a former TFS volunteer.

Hey Andrey! Lots of people already know you, however, for those who don't, please tell us a bit about yourself. When did you first come to the project? Why did you decide to take part in it back then?

Hi everyone, I'm Andrey Rybakov, TFS volunteer and former EVS volunteer. I came to the project for the first time in the end of November, 2018. I had been working for 6 years for the same organization (boring yes) when I found out the opportunity to work abroad as a volunteer. I already had a positive experience with CIEE - "W&T USA" programme, so I decided to apply.

Did you expect to stay with TFS longer? How did you feel when they proposed to work for them in 2020?

Deep down I was always thinking and hoping to stay for a bit more. Because I really liked my responsibilities in sewing section, and I also enjoyed being a part of TFS in general. When I received the news that I can stay for 1 more year I was on cloud nine! So yes, I just couldn't believe that I have got an opportunity to live in the same rhythm with my friends and to work on something I really like.

What did you learn on the project that you use in a daily life?

As you all know I'm kinda obsessed with repairing, so it was nice for me to know something new about sewing and kneading machines. Oh yeah, and now I can cook a good lunch for 15 people in no time!

Did the project change you somehow? If yes, may you share how/what exactly?

Sure, I'm less lazy now, can you believe it!? I also started to think more about countries of the third world, and now I know that I can help to make life of those people a little bit better.

What advice would you like to give to our reader for this year?

Never be afraid of trying something new, even if you make some mistakes along the way. And stay safe!

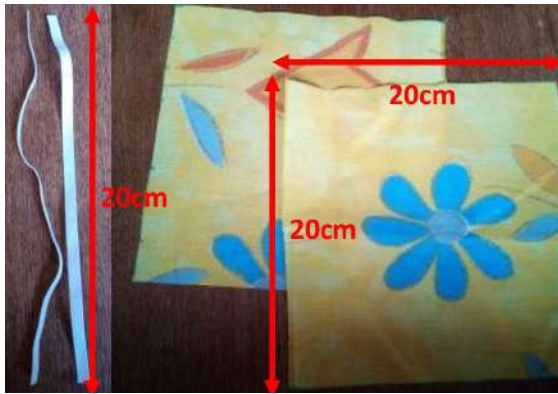


DIY: FACE MASK

BY ANTOINE

With COVID-19 everyone's shouting how important it is to cover your face and wash your hands. However, it's impossible to find face masks in pharmacies. Thus, we prepared a step-by-step tutorial on how to do a face mask yourself. Enjoy!

STEP 1



Cut two 20cm elastics and two pieces of material 20x20cm

STEP 2



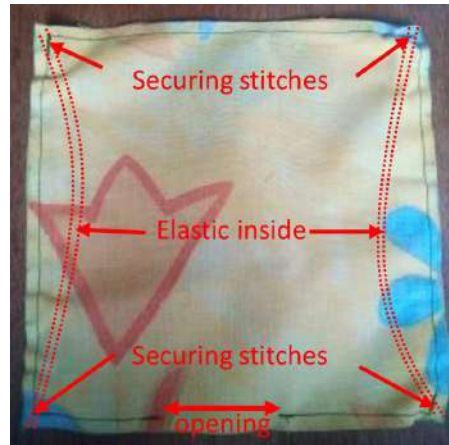
On the front side of one piece draw 3 lines on each side spaced 2.5cm apart

STEP 3



On the same piece of material on the front side as well, pin elastics perpendicular to the lines on each side

STEP 4



Put the 2nd piece of material front sides facing, sew all around by leaving an opening and sew a few securing stitches on the sides of the elastics

STEP 5



Fit the fabric and fold the 3rd line to the 1st on each side and then iron

STEP 6



Sew all around and your mask is ready!
Wash it after each use at 60°C.