

## NEWS

**Welcome to our Winter Newsletter.** Back at the beginning of March this year Workaid was a hive of activity bustling with volunteers on site. Every day was filled with the refurbishing of tools and electrical equipment, repairs of sewing and knitting machines, sorting of wool and haberdashery items and, ultimately, packing all these goods into containers destined for Africa.

We were all blissfully unaware of how the world was about to change over the span of just a few weeks and, as we all know, on March 23rd the country went into a national lockdown. Workaid was forced consequently to close its doors to all volunteers and staff members barring just Adrian and Jason, who were not furloughed during this time in the efforts to ensure that the facility was safe and secure.

During the lockdown we decided to use this time effectively by focusing on maintenance tasks around the site such as painting common areas and safety markings on the floors. These were all tasks in need of doing and were almost impossible to complete while the site was open and so the workshop began its initial transformation from its pre-pandemic days.

As April came and went, we began working on a reopening plan for Workaid knowing that the site would not be the same for many months to come and even perhaps for years to follow. With this daunting realisation in mind, we understood that we would have to drastically change the way we operated to keep everyone safe from the virus. The diversity of functions within the charity made a re-opening plan complex and intricate. It proved a lengthy process to consider the potential consequences of each change. Some of the concerns we had to address included how to go about receiving and quarantining donations, the handling of shared tools and equipment and how to operate the Workaid Shop while still keeping our volunteers, staff and valued customers safe. Above all, the safety of everyone on site has been the most important factor and, although our plan may be overly cautious, the price of failure has never been an option.

As such, the workshop began its second phase of transformation with the implementation of various safety protocols in response to the virus. Some of these changes to the workshop included installing temporary screens between all workspaces, sanitising stations throughout the building and implementing a one-way system around the workshop. The most challenging task, however, was not the installation of these screens or dispensers, but rather the struggle of ordering and procuring these items during a time of crisis. Just as the supermarkets ran out of toilet paper, we discovered that suppliers for sanitisers, PVC sheeting and perspex too had run out of their stock. It seemed like every business in the country had the same ideas and motivations as

**Shopping for Christmas?** How about the virtual gift of a sewing machine or carpentry kit this year? Find out more at [workaid.org/gift-shop](https://workaid.org/gift-shop)

we did. Ultimately following a few false starts, due to rapidly changing governmental guidelines, we reopened the Workaid Shop on June 18th with a small number of staff and volunteers that returned two weeks prior to get things ready.

Over the following few months we were able to re-open almost all sections, albeit in a reduced capacity and with fewer volunteers on site at any one time. Managing this process has not been without its challenges but we have learnt so much and our new protocols and systems are working well. However, with the latest lockdown having come into effect in early November we have been forced to close the site to volunteers again! However, we will be in a position to get back up and running again very quickly when allowed. These past few months have really required a lot of patience on all sides, and we are truly grateful for all your support over this frustrating period.



# The Work We Support

Here in the UK, Workaid has strong links with Harpenden Spotlight on Africa (HSoA). HSoA supports projects relating to education, health, clean water and economic development through its sister organisation the Spotlight on Africa Uganda Foundation.

In November 2017, Workaid supplied 10 manual sewing machines, with accessories, 2 manual knitting machines, a full carpentry kit and mortise machine, as well as a generator. We recently heard from HSoA with news of how the tools are benefitting slum communities in the Mbale region of eastern Uganda.

Since receiving the tools, the HSoA Uganda Foundation has run three carpentry classes with 20 people graduating from each. There has been a similar update for the tailoring classes, held in the new Design and Tailoring Centre.

During the coronavirus pandemic classes have been suspended, but tailors have used the sewing machines to make hundreds of masks for the Department of Health staff, as well as for community members visiting the clinic. The carpentry graduates were employed to make the roof for a new boys' dormitory, as well as bunkbeds for both boys and girls. All continue to make clothes, bags, table cloths and furnishings to be sold.

We were delighted to hear from one of the trustees of Harpenden Spotlight on Africa that communities are really benefitting from the Workaid donations. "We have both men and women carpenters learning new skills and then being equipped to go out and earn income for themselves. The tailors have formed several Savings Scheme groups and are truly a most wonderful success story of sustainable livelihoods. These are life-changing programmes for the community and we are most grateful to Workaid."

Our partners in Africa have also been affected by Coronavirus, but thankfully the infection and mortality rates in these countries are much lower than in the UK. Adrian had planned to travel to Zambia in April to work with Emmanuel Zulu of the Vwila Foundation on their strategic plan. That trip will be rescheduled in the first quarter of 2021.

Finally, we are currently reviewing the organisation's strategic plan. While our vision, mission and values will remain the same, we will clearly articulate how we are dealing with Coronavirus. We will also explain how we will move forward to develop the work we support in Africa.



Tailoring graduates from the urban slum of Musoto, Mbale Uganda



Recent graduate Ruth Masibi



Recent graduate Carol Nabugwere

## People's Mercy Foundation Feedback

Students confirm the impact that your tools make upon lives of disadvantaged children and youths. For People's Mercy Foundation, we immediately think of our friends and in particular Workaid who have been with us for some time. As in our personal lives, it is friends that make our efforts full, lively and enjoyable. You have made this possible for us over the years. There have been years of considerable growth which means children's lives are being directly touched and enriched because of tools and the gift of training in their lives.  
25 Students in tailoring, 18 in sweater

knitting, and 14 in carpentry, have had all their lives made certain for the future! Although COVID-19 has largely devastated community efforts here, and most schools and institutions remain under strict closure in fear of the spread of the virus, we believe and are certain that God is in our way for more accomplishment. Thank you so much Workaid for the spirit.

**Kalungi Michael**  
Chairperson

**People's Mercy Foundation**  
Masaka-Uganda

"I am happy to inform you that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic I have won a tender for making school uniforms and sweaters in three schools in Kampala. I also work part-time as a fashion designs trainer in schools in Kampala. All this has come as a result of your trainer's guidance."

**Namatovu Lilian**  
Kampala-Uganda



# Fundraising Efforts Continue To Reap Rewards

**Fundraising from trusts and foundations has held up better than expected in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic although, unsurprisingly, we will raise less than we had hoped for.** This is primarily because many are focusing on charities on the front-line of the pandemic - medical research, hospices, and so on. That said, there are definitely more reasons for optimism than we thought when lockdown started.

We have been awarded a £5,000 grant by The Waterloo Foundation (TWF) to cover the cost of Adrian going to Zambia to work with Emmanuel and the Youth Resource Centres on agreeing more robust measures of success for what we do. If this phase is completed to TWF's satisfaction then we hope that the positive relationship we have built with them will lead to funding for a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer in Zambia to work with Emmanuel. This work fits really well with our strategic drive to improve the quality of what we do in Africa.

We also received support from the National Lottery Community Fund for the first time. This has funded many of the changes

needed at The Old Boot Factory to ensure that we are COVID-19 compliant. The Sisters of the Holy Cross in Gerrards Cross has again provided a grant towards salary costs. These sorts of grants are really uplifting – demonstrating the organisation's belief that we are well run and will spend their money wisely and enabling us to apply to other trusts and foundations that are more specifically focused on Africa. Our track record provides reassurance that anything they are able to give will go directly towards things that improve the lives of beneficiaries, such as tool refurbishment, shipping, and the work of our partners on the ground.

One last thing – an appeal to you! The relationships with the Sisters of the Holy Cross and with TWF came out of conversations with volunteers and other contacts. It's always much more fruitful to apply on the back of recommendations rather than by researching the myriad of trusts on the Charity Commission and other sites. We will of course continue to do that too, but if you know anyone at an organisation which might be open to an appeal from us then do let Rob Levine know.

## Support, Continued

**We have exciting news that Emmanuel Zulu, our Zambia Coordinator, has been in discussion with the Lusaka Youth Resource Centre and the Zambian Ministry of Youth to establish a nationally accredited training programme in sewing machine repairs and maintenance.** This will initially start as a pilot programme with manual Singer sewing machines that are in reasonable condition and don't require major repairs we will be sending out a number of them in the next two containers.

The project is timely as we have reduced capacity to repair sewing machines in the UK due to our COVID protocols which restrict the numbers of people who are able to work in the section for the foreseeable future. However, much more importantly the project works towards building the skills and capacity of young people in Africa in sewing machine repairs, thus greatly reducing their dependence on Workaid. It has the added benefit that the people trained can also repair the sewing machines we send out to many projects in Zambia, thus keeping the project going and generating an income for the repairer.

We are in discussions with a similar charity to Workaid in Northern Ireland. They work with three partner organisations in Tanzania who service and repair sewing machines as well as teach tailoring skills. They also support a project that fabricates sewing machine treadles. Although more discussions need to take place we hope that we may be able to work in partnership with this organisation in 2021 and beyond.

It's great to keep focusing on Africa and help young people develop the skills they need to reach their potential.

## Christmas Shop



Since re-opening in June the Workaid shop has been successful in providing a wide range of gardening supplies, tools, crafts and haberdashery. Although we are currently in the 2nd national lockdown at the time of going to press, we hope to re-open with extended hours for the Christmas season.



**Give one of Workaid's Virtual Gifts and change a life**

A Workaid virtual gift funds the collection, refurbishment and shipment to Africa of the donated tools and equipment.

A gift card will be sent to you for giving to your family or friends.

[workaid.org/gift-shop/](https://workaid.org/gift-shop/)

# Easyfundraising



**Please remember to use easyfundraising when you do your Christmas shopping this year.**

Over 4,300 shops and sites will donate to Workaid when you use easyfundraising to shop with them. This means you can raise donations for us when you buy anything from decorations and festive food shopping to gifts like toys, jewellery, technology, experiences and more!

These donations really help and all you have to do is use easyfundraising when you're ordering the things you'll be buying anyway.

Visit <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk> to create an account and select Workaid as your chosen charity. It's totally free and so worthwhile. You can even download a donation reminder to help when you shop online so we don't miss a donation!

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## First Container Since Lockdown

**Our first container since lockdown is almost full.**

Although the second lockdown has delayed our plans, we are still hopeful that the container will be shipped before Christmas. The picture shows approximately 879 boxes of tools, equipment, sewing and knitting machines to support 19 projects. There's still room for few more boxes as we don't like sending Chesham air!



Container SIMON two-thirds full

## Wycombe Wanderers Sports & Education Trust

**We teamed up with Wycombe Wanderers Sports & Education Trust** to provide a 6-week Woodworking Skills Course for people with mental health problems, as part of their 'Keep Moving Forward' Project. The project helped 3 members to learn a new skill, meet new people and provide them with an activity to focus their minds as a form of mindfulness, as well as walking away with a sense of achievement, having made a new piece of furniture.

WWSET Head of Health Sam White said 'It was a lovely course and we had such positive feedback about it.

I think we would most certainly like to do more courses in the future. Thank you for putting the course together it was great!'

**A big thank you to Workaid for donating some of the course tools. Without your help, it may not have been possible to go ahead with this invaluable course.**

'These projects are so worthwhile. The more people we can help support through their mental health recovery journeys, the better. Thank you' - Amanda Finnegan, Regional Co-ordinator, Buckinghamshire Adult Learning.



Two proud students with their coffee/side table with Sam White, Head of Health WWSET.