

Tools for Solidarity

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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toolsforsolidarity.com



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Background Information

PRINCIPLES

Underlying all the activities of Tools for Solidarity are the principles and values of self-help and empowerment, individual and global equality, environmental awareness, inclusiveness, voluntarism, and the right to challenge/oppose activities/actions that contradict these values.

MISSION STATEMENT

TFS supports self-reliance by providing high quality refurbished tools to working people overseas, promoting international solidarity, and challenging global inequalities through a critical examination of development issues, environmental sustainability and ethical working practices.

OUR AIMS



ENCOURAGE

Promote self-reliance by furnishing overseas projects with high quality recycled hand tools and sewing machines



ENGAGE

Involve individuals, organisations and the public in the development and environmental issues. Utilise working methods that develop and support a sense of international solidarity and promote volunteering and ethical working practices



ENSURE

TFS will have appropriate premises, personnel and funding to meet the agreed outputs and objectives of the organisation

How can you help?

Solidarity in practice is the heart of TFS's work. You can contribute in a very practical way by **donating hand tools** or **sewing machines**, by **making a donation** towards essential shipping and running costs, by **providing materials** or by **volunteering**.

You can follow and support our activities and work from our networks:



@tfs_belfast



@toolsforsolidarity



ko-fi.com/toolsforsolidarity

We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to contribute to the TFS

CONTACT

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Chairperson's Address

Each year brings new challenges to the organisation and the last year has been no exception. The **level of donations** into Tools has **increased**. At the same time, we have also been supporting **three projects within Tanzania**. This has raised many issues that the organisation has had to look to tackle not least our ability to store, manage and supply the resources coming into the organisation. This has meant that we have had to look for a new approach to our overseas work, further details of which are presented within the partnership section of this report.



Figure 1: Last Shipment boxes

Thanks to Stephen, the organisation has had a smooth transition in recruiting new **international volunteers**, which has brought stability to our work. We have also been able to attract more **local volunteers** and this will have to be attend in the future if we are going to cope with the greater inflow of donations into TFS. The programme to offer placements to **people with extra support needs**, two days a week, has been very successful and there is a waiting list of people applying. They have been very productive refurbishing many of the horticultural and other tools that we will ship later in the year.

The **educational** element of the project suffered a set back with the departure of Catherine and we have been able to recruit a new enthusiastic person in Sue to take over the role. Sue Bamford brings a new energy and direction to the project and is involved in looking at sustainable clothing and the impact it has. With this change, **Education for Sustainable Development Programme** has been very badly affected by timing of the transition and the schools element. There are plans in the coming year to continue with the **schools educational element** as well as develop the ideas around **sustainable fashion** and **reuses clothing in creative ways**.

Financially, the organization is still **reasonably healthy**, but we will need to address some key areas within TFS. The first of which is the **loss of our partnership worker**, Sofia, who did a great job and we were unable to offer a further year due to the regulations regarding visa rules. This has meant that the roles have been divided within the organization but we have to address how this can be managed more effectively next year. The other big decision that the organization has undertaken is to **seek funding too replace the existing diesel van with an electric one**. The decision was made on both environmental and economic running costs.

This will be **TFS 40th year** of operating and preparations have begun to celebrate the event with former/present volunteers, supporters and friends who have helped us keep going over that long period. We will also be planning a new shipment to Tanzania to all 3 projects , which should take place around the same time.

As always we would like to thanks those who have helped over the last year in giving there time, commitment and money to enable TFS to continue its important work. This also includes all the staff in the projects in Tanzania.

Partnership Development and Support

Small Industries Development Organisation (SIDO)

SIDO, our main partner in Tanzania, was established in 1973 by the Tanzanian government to support the cooperative and artisan small and medium enterprise sector throughout the country by providing **technical and financial advice and assistance**. We have been working directly with them since 1994.

In 2023 SIDO Hq introduced a new accounting system which has created major issues with the operations of our centres and has adversely affected their performance. We have been in ongoing discussions to find ways to ameliorate the negative impact, but sadly all the centres have seen a fall out of supply.

MALAWI

This year's shipment is likely to be the last for the hugely impactful **Tools and Training for Livelihoods in Malawi** programme, coordinated by the **Global Concerns Trust (GCT)** and delivered by local partners **MACOHA** and **KODO**. At the end of the year GCT informed us that the Scottish government had changed the criteria for applications which means that the Malawi programme is no longer eligible.

This programme transforms the lives of the people who are trained and supported by it. The people are all with disabilities or with mental health issues.

They receive **vocational training** for 6 – 12 months, **accommodation and food** during the training, sessions on HIV awareness, sexual and reproductive health rights and gender awareness. They also learn how to make green manure and are taught business skills.

At the end of the training they receive the tools or sewing machine they need to start a business, a solar panel and working materials. **Over 96%** of those that have passed through this programme have established **successful businesses, improving greatly the lives of the graduates and their families and transforming how local people view people with disabilities.**

This year we shipped a consignment of 6 treadle bases, 2 sewing machines, 2 cane furniture making tool kits and 12 Haberdashery Kits. These joined tools kits and sewing machines from 3 Scottish tools groups and were sent to Malawi for newly qualified graduates from the Ntcheu and Nkhotakota districts.

We will work to support GCT in seeking alternative funding sources so that this transformative and inspire programme can continue.

MWANZA SEWING AND TRAINING CENTER (MSTC)

The period from April 2023 to March 2024 was challenging for MSTC. They sold 147 sewing machines, a small number of knitting machines and delivered training to 137 tailors. The difficult MSTC faced was the balance of stock – too many electrical and Zig Zag machines and not enough straight stitch (SS) machines which are the most popular among tailors.

The period from April 2023 to March 2024 was challenging for MSTC. They sold 147 sewing machines, a small number of knitting machines and delivered training to 137 tailors.

The difficult MSTC faced was the balance of stock – too many electrical and Zig Zag machines and not enough straight stitch (SS) machines which are the most popular among tailors. This situation will only change with more stock.

TFS has struggled to meet the demand for SS machines as our own stock has been depleted.

Workaid did supply machines to MSTC last year but again not enough SS machines to meet demand.

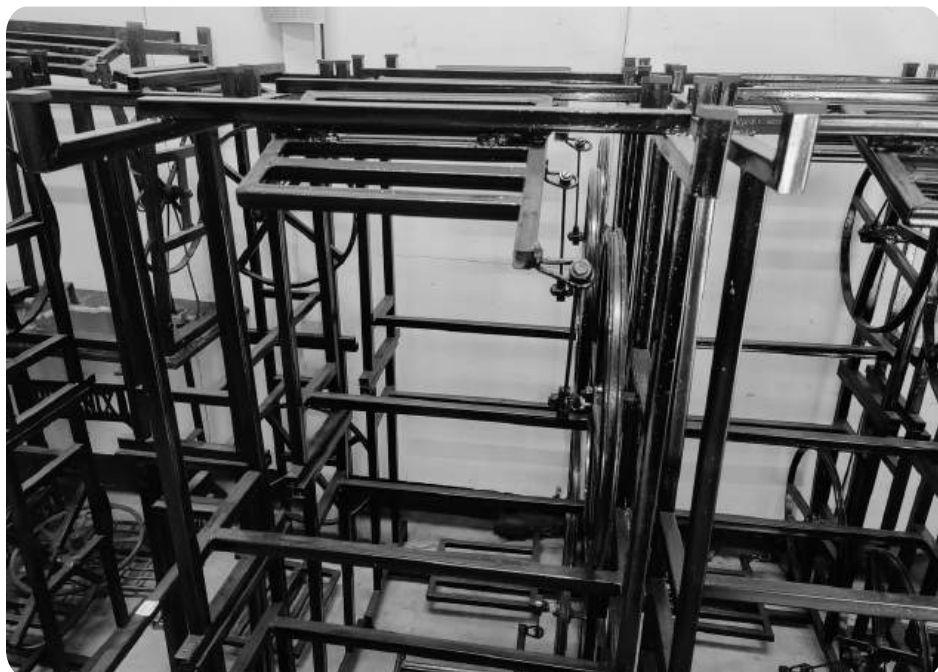


Figure 2: Local treadles produced in Mwanza for the project

TFS did not send a container to MSTC this year and are looking for support for MSTC from other tools organisations in the UK and the Netherlands. Despite the difficulties faced MSTC was still **able to continue to support its People With Disabilities (PWD) programme.**



Figure 3:
Rebecca
Reuben. She
now has her
own shop
where she
employs a
trainer and
two students



Figure 4: Athuman,
(mechanic) and
Angelina Mattias. She's
now making women's
clothing

NJOMBE ARTISAN SUPPORT TRAINING CENTRE (NASTC)

The period from April 2023 to March 2024 was challenging for NASTC.

The centre ran one training for tailors with 20 participants – 19 women and one man and allocated 63 sewing machines. 16% of these went to groups and Vocational Training Centres and the rest to individual tailors, 85% of them women.

Tools sales were down on the previous year. From April 2023 to March 2024 the centre sold 485 hand tools, 8 electrical tools 1 starter kit and one piece of workshop machinery.

The **finances** of NASTC **remain quite healthy**, despite its income fluctuating significantly from one month to another according to the activities planned: tools promotions, training for tailors, visits at VTCs.

In April 23 the SIDO regional manager and the centre staff conducted a two day evaluation of the project in Njombe and Makambako town centres visiting tailors and artisans that had received sewing machines and tools from NASTC.

The beneficiaries were surprised and delighted by the visit because after care service is of vital important to them. They felt the project is for artisan support, not profit oriented. The evaluation helped the project better understand the **challenges artisans face and to see the impact of training the centre provides in increased income generating capacity**.

The PWD programme in Njombe continues to have a real **transformative impact** on the lives of the beneficiaries.

In January 2023 two young people with disabilities, Anna and Edmund, started their year-long course at the VTC in Njombe. They graduated in December and received a free sewing machine, funding and support from the NASTC staff to enable them to set up their own businesses.

Andrea was on the programme the previous year also completed his tailoring scholarship in December. The centre also provided 3 free sewing machines to the Deaf school in Njombe town and one free machine to a woman tailor with disabilities – Ms Theonila Sanga from Makambako.

The feedback from the PWD and the trainees has been extremely positive because they appreciate that project is really helpful to local tailors, as they get high quality sewing machines at affordable prices and for the PWDs they gain new hope in the fight against poverty.



Figure 5: Peles Nyamla. She now makes sweaters, batik and flowers from fabric

Figure 6: Anna and Edmund on the PWD graduation day



IRINGA ARTISAN SUPPORT TRAINING CENTRE (IASTC)

In April 23 John and Sofia arrived in Iringa to set up our newest centre. They were for nearly three month training **Catherine** and **Mohamed** in **sewing machine and tool refurbishment** and in how to manage the project.

Their first two weeks were spent building and fitting out the workshop and in doing a stock take. Then on the 9th May the workshop was formally opened.

There is a **real benefit** in having two centres so close together – Iringa and Njombe are neighbouring regions– because the staff in the centers can **support** one another. So in May and June the NASTC visited the Iringa centre to conduct training and then, at the end of June, Catherine traveled with Sofia to Njombe to see how they managed their training programme.



Figure 7: Sofia and John in NASTC



Figure 8: IASTC Opening Day

In January 2023 SIDO recruited two people to run the centre. **Catherine Nyamba** was appointed to be the new workshop coordinator and **Mohamed Naly** the workshop mechanic. They started their sewing machine repair training in February mentored by Emmanuel Pama, the junior mechanic from the Mwanza centre.

In their first year IASTC sold **66 sewing machines, 635 hand tools, 53 electrical tools, 5 starter kits and 2 pieces of machinery** generating an income **21 million Tanzanian shillings**. They held two week long training programmes for tailors – 20 attending the first and 18 the second.

They also conducted two **promotional visits** – one to Ilula-Kilolo in July and another to Mafinga in October. Both proved very successful in boosting sales. The first two young people with disabilities were selected for one year vocational training in tailoring early in 2024 and started their course in March. The situation with SIDO's new accounting system hampered the development of the centre nevertheless it has got off to a promising start.



Figure 9: John teaching Mohammed saw sharpening



Figure 10: John training Catherine sewing machine mechanics

Volunteers Report

Volunteering is central to all that TFS is and does. For nearly 40 years people have come to Tools from around the world and across the street; all ages, backgrounds and abilities. They bring their **energy, passion, interest, curiosity, humanity** and **humour**. They come to learn, to share, to build a better world and it works because we share values: empathy, compassion and a desire to create sustainable development.

We have our regular team of local and supported volunteers attending each week. They are the backbone of our work force, some with many years experience of volunteering with Tools.

They bring a sense of continuity to the workshop and their skills and expertise are a real asset in supporting and training our international volunteers and in ensuring high quality outputs.

We now have a growing team of local volunteers with specific expertise in areas that really benefit our work – such as electrical testing or reshafting hammers and axes. This year was the first time in over 20 year that we had no volunteers through the EU youth volunteering programme.

Figure 11: Some volunteers



That programme had a massive impact on our work and the work of many hundreds of organisations throughout the UK working to improve people's lives. It also had a massive impact on the lives of the volunteers. TFS will continue to campaign for this programme to be reinstated.

Despite this loss we were able to recruit 3 full time year long volunteers from France through the **French government programme Service Civique** with the support of VISAAD. We continued with our long standing relationship with **Eirene**. We now share one of their volunteers with the Centre for Global Education in Belfast – a mutual beneficial arrangement.

We are extremely grateful to **Sofia Tagliani** who after finishing her one year solidarity corp volunteering with us agreed to come back and take on the role of partnership worker for a year which she did brilliantly.



Figure 12: Some volunteers

Many thanks to all our volunteers – local, core, international and supported for their dedication and hard work.

Supported Volunteers Programme

Since April 2023 we have continued to have a very full programme with our **volunteers with support needs**.

We are grateful to the **Belfast Trust** who continue to fund 6 slots for **6 individuals** with a learning disability. This enables us to employ 2 of our volunteers on a part-time basis to coordinate this programme. At the end of March 2024 we were providing placements to 8 individuals from the Belfast Trust area.

We provide a total of **17 places** each week to people with support needs. We have 4 slots each on Monday and Thursday mornings and afternoons.

In addition, we also have one volunteer who comes every Tuesday and cooks lunch for us every two weeks.

Our volunteers have a mix of **support needs and abilities**. Some have had a brain injury, some have a learning disability, some are on the autism spectrum, some have chronic fatigue and some have mental health needs.

Some of the supported volunteers stay only for a few months but most of our current supported volunteers have been with us for at least 2 years, some of them many years.



Figures 13 and 14: Michael (above) and Larry

The volunteers learn skills of simple repairing and cleaning of hand tools and sewing machines or building wooden boxes. The tasks our volunteers undertake are **matched to their abilities**. The volunteers find it therapeutic to be doing something useful and to help people who are disadvantaged on the other side of the world.

They also have a **social experience** meeting the other local and international volunteers. Volunteers have said that the experience increases their personal confidence, social skills as well as their manual skills:

“My son benefits a lot from meeting all the new volunteers from different countries. He bounces out of here after a day’s work.”

Volunteer’s mom speech

“The best thing about ‘Tools’ is coming together with other volunteers. I enjoy it big time here. I’ve learn’t new skills like fixing and repairing things. There is nothing I don’t like at ‘Tools’, I love coming here”

Volunteer speech

In this last year the supported volunteers have made a very big contribution towards the shipments of refurbished hand tools and sewing machines to our overseas partners. In particular the supported volunteers have refurbished large quantities of horticultural tools for our centres in the Njombe and Iringa regions of Tanzania.

We have in the last year started to get more referrals from the **Belfast Trust**, particularly for people with a learning disability. We continue to support volunteers referred to us by Leonard Cheshire which supports people with an alcohol related brain injury. We also have volunteers who have been referred to us by **Cedar Foundation, L’Arche, Orchardville, Sense, Triangle** and **Bryson Care**.

Fundraising Report

This financial year we had a smaller number of funding applications approved, but they were very significant with substantial sums being committed by some of our regular partners.

The **Belfast Health and Social Care Trust** support for some aspects for our **Supported Volunteer** Programme has been made recurrent i.e. it will continue to run from year to year, subject to satisfactory monitoring of outputs.

The **ESD programme** benefitted greatly from continued support from **Irish Aid and from Roger Waters**. **Irish Aid** funding was increased this year to allow a greater number of working hours per week, to permit the continued growth of the programme.

We are very grateful for the on-going support from **NIPSA (Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance)** and Unicorn for the workshops in Njombe and Iringa, between them covering all the costs of these projects. The contribution of the **Halifax Building Society** (for our Training Coordinator) is also gratefully acknowledged.

In November, we obtained funding from **Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful** through their Tackling Textiles initiative. This short-term funding covered the cost of supplying 20 sewing machines and accessories to community groups across Northern Ireland, for them to use to extend the life of clothing and reduce the volume of textiles going to waste streams. This was a highly successful and well publicised campaign which we plan to repeat next year.

During 2023-24, we received funding from the following organisations:

FUNDER	PROJECT
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	Supported Volunteer Programme
Halifax Foundation	Training Coordinator
Irish Aid	ESD Coordinator
Keep NI Beautiful	Tackling Textiles
NIPSA	Tanzania Centres
Roger Waters	Education for Sustainable Development
Thomas Catto Charity	Supported Volunteer Programme
Unicorn Coop	Tanzania Centres

The Fundraising committee would like to take this opportunity to thank all the organisations listed above, and the many individuals and donors who have so generously supported the work of Tools for Solidarity during the year. We rely entirely on your support to be able to continue our life changing work.

Financial Report

The Financial Year 2023-24 saw a **small profit** after the large profit of the previous year. The most striking change was the significant **drop in both Income and Expenditure**.

Apart from that, on the Income side this was due to large drops in Grants (Both EVS and other Grants) and Donations (no Donation from Roger Waters) and regarding to Expenditure there was a significant drop in the Purchase of Parts & Materials.

No Overseas Payments made.

Both Vehicle and Salary expenditure reduced.

The Project Costs were offset by no Shipping Costs during the year.

Going forward the Loan Repayments will finish in 2024-25.

EVS Grants have ceased which will have an impact on total Income.

We should brake even in 24-25 due to a projected increase in Donations and the Income streams from Irish Government and BHSCT Grants.

On the Expenditure side issues with Shipping and Project costs in setting up Dodoma will stretch our financial stability without additional income.

After 24-25 a small, but steady loss is envisaged unless we find other income streams.

We are very reliant on the income from the Irish Government and BHSCT and by way of ensuring our financial security must ensure we comply with the Loan conditions of those two key funders.

The improved Donations figure is almost certainly a one off event which will not be repeated in 25-26.

Overall we made a small profit in the financial year. Both income and expenditure dropped significantly.

The expectation remains that we will have a small, but significant, shortfall year on year without identifying new income streams.

Current account	£7,312
Building Society	£99,891
Petty Cash	£165
Paypal	£855

Net Financial Assets £108,223

INCOME 2023-2024

Building Society/Bank Interest	£2,448
Donations	£10,414
Grants (EVS)	£14,959
Grants Other	£41,794
Rent Income	£8,260
Scrap Metal Sales	£1,072
VAT Refunds	£1,924
Sewing Machine/Tools sales	£2,068
Other	£1,125
Yarn	£1,224
Gift Aid	£545
Foreign Payments	£205
Fund Raising	£320
Energy Savings	£2,929
TOTAL INCOME	£89,286

EXPENDITURE 2023-2024

Direct Expenses

Purchase of Parts, Materials	£3,215
Fixed Assets	£3,550
Repairs	£30
Total Direct Expenses	£6,795

Overheads

Financial Fees	£120
Field Trip Costs	£2,863
Insurance	£4,115
Legal & Professional Costs	£1,676
Loan Repayment	£5,000
Light & Heat	£4,893
Project Costs	£3,124
Publicity	£200
Rent, Rates & Water Charges	£5,241
Salary	£27,530
Stationary & Postage	£73
Other Expenditure	£1,363
Telephone	£1,100
Travel & Subsistence	£4,047
Vehicle Fuel/Motor Expenses	£3,632
Volunteer Expenses	£10,571
Total Overhead Expenses	£75,548

TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£82,343
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Profit

£6,943

Refugees and Asylum Seekers Training Programme (RASP)

Tools for Solidarity started the first **Refugee and Asylum Seeker programme (RASP)** in 2018 but had to stop for two years because of the pandemic.

This year we ran two training programmes in November 23 and March 24th. The course was designed for five participants and consisted of three days of **basic learning on sewing machine refurbishing and sewing**. The aim is to support refugees and asylum seekers in feeling **welcomed** in the local society, encourage their participation, and provide them with new skills for their future. The training was completely **free of charge** for the participants, who have also been reimbursed for the transport costs to the Belfast workshop. At the end of the three days they also received a plastic sewing machine, some sewing material and a certificate of completion.

The **three-day training** was mentored by John, with the support of the sewing section volunteers: Melie, Zoe, Karina and Nora. The volunteers provided individual **support** to each participant during the training. A wonderful occasion for them to share the knowledge they acquired since the beginning of their volunteering. On the third day, thanks to Elisabeth, the participants received training how to use their new machine. The participants enjoyed both repairing the sewing machines and trying their hand at some simple sewing projects.

The first training in November was very well attended by the 4 women and one man recruited. They all finished the training successfully and each received their sewing machine and certificate.

We will have to give careful consideration about how to ensure that future programmes are fully attended despite a minimum language level being required, one of the goals of the training was to give the people an **opportunity to meet and talk together in English**. Overall, this aspect was achieved because, especially during the breaks and lunchtime, the participants chatted and shared.

We value also the fact of having encouraged some of the people to **try something new**, not only in terms of manual skills but also in increasing their confidence in moving through the city to find the workshop, interacting with some local and international volunteers, communicating in person, by phone and through the emails. The feedback we received from the participants has been very positive.

*Figures 15, 16 and 17:
Volunteers with
asylum seekers*



Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

This report provides information regarding **Tools For Solidarity Education for Sustainable Development** (ESD) programme for 2023/24. The work of the ESD group during this period was funded by **Irish Aid and Roger Waters**. We are very grateful for their support.

The **objectives** of the ESD programme include:

- Raising **awareness** of the issues of inequality, poverty, climate change, exploitation of natural resources and overconsumption.
- Promoting **sustainability**.
- Encouraging everyone to reflect on how our lives and **actions impact** the world and others.
- Engendering the ability to **think critically** and enact solutions to these issues and changes to our lifestyles.

This has been a year of mixed fortunes for the ESD programme. A large amount of excellent work was completed with schools and community groups, as detailed below, but there were also some staffing difficulties.

After 4 wonderful years, our Education Officer Roisin Sloan decided to seek new challenges at the end of the 2023 academic year. A new Officer was appointed ready for September 2023, but had to resign at the end of September due to health issues.

Finding the right person to replace her took some time, but we were very pleased to welcome Ms **Sue Bamford** in January 2024. Sue comes with a wealth of experience in development education and has made a strong impression since then.

We would also like to thank **Nora Treichel**, a European volunteer who made a huge contribution to the work through the year. Nora worked two days a week for TFS and three days for the Centre for Global Education, an arrangement which will continue into 2024-25.



Figure 18: Sue Bamford (left) and Nora Treichel (right)

PRIMARY SCHOOLS, AFTER SCHOOLS CLUBS and COMMUNITY GROUPS

In the academic year 2023-24, Tools for Solidarity delivered the ESD programme to 7 primary schools, reaching a total of 650 pupils. All of these included multiple sessions, with a minimum of 4 sessions per school. These numbers are well down on the previous year, due to the time when no Education Officer was in post.

Given these challenges, the Education Officer focused on what could be achieved in the timeframe available, focusing on the Adult and Community group sector, and Youth Groups. This led to delivering multiple sessions to 13 new community groups, and the development of a large project in collaboration with Belfast City Council. These groups were adult leisure groups, community activism groups, council-run community programmes, youth and womens groups.



Figure 19: Sue Bamford at Hazelwood College



Figure 20: Sue Bamford at Holy Rosary Primary School

ESD FUTURE PROJECTIONS

TFS is looking forward to the new academic year 2024-25, with a stable ESD team in place and able to build on the foundations laid this year.

The **primary school programme** will be fully back on track, but the new emphasis on adult community work will also continue.

A major **Fashion Show** is planned for September 2024, and garments from the Fashion Show will go on exhibition in October / November meaning their production is not limited to the one showing on 27th September but provide an ongoing archive of the project.

Belfast City Council sees this as a pilot project and due to the extremely favourable feedback already received from both participants and council community workers, BCC has committed to run the program **again in 2025**. This fills a space in the ESD timetable when schools are on holiday (June - September).



Figure 21: Sue Bamford working on the fashion show along community groups

Figure 22: Mikaela Ellwood on a bowtie dress from the fashion show



SPECIAL THANKS

We appreciate all the help our supporters provided to us during the last year, especially next organisations and individuals

Halifax Foundation for
NI

Belfast City Council

Unicorn Food Co-Op

Belfast HSCT

Pam and Tara
Patchwork Goose

Tim McGarry

South Belfast Quakers

SIDO

Mr R. Waters

Belfast Tool Library

Northern Ireland
Resource
Network

Céline Persico

Mr and Mrs Finney

Belfast Repair Cafe

Roy Blair

All Schools and
Colleges from ESD

Irish Aid

Emma Duncan and
the Global Concerns
Trust

NIPSA

Belfast City Council
Recycling Centres

Thomas Catto
Charitable Settlement

Friends of Mourne
Grange

Tony and Brid Weeks

British Council

Volunteer Now

International Synergies

Jaap Prins

G Sloan

Colm Gallagher

TFS volunteers

Phillip Allen

Keep NI Beautiful

North Down Recycling
Centres

North Belfast Quakers

Ralf Zeigler and Eirene

St. Malachy's Old Boys
Association

Causeway Council

Geoff and Tina Claxton

Julian Sanders

Ecorys

Jenny Groves

Tools for Self Reliance
Garvald

Attracta Walsh

Inner Wheel
Ballymena

Ms S Saraswati

