

SHARED INTEREST FOUNDATION SUMMER 2011

NEWSLETTER



SHAREDINTEREST
FOUNDATION
Building a fairer world



THE QUEEN'S AWARDS
FOR ENTERPRISE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
2008



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Main contact

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The first training sessions in our new producer support programme in Swaziland, funded by Comic Relief, have just started (see page 8). The front cover photograph shows Khetsiwe Vilakati making jewellery at Tintsaba, one of the craft businesses in the programme.

Khetsiwe started with Tintsaba 20 years ago as a basket weaver. She went on to train as a jeweller and is now a senior silversmith.

She has seven children and is the main income earner in her family. The income from Tintsaba has helped to pay for her children's education.

Khetsiwe says that Tintsaba's social and financial support programmes have improved her health, her housing and her ability to communicate.

WHAT A DIFFERENCE IN THREE YEARS



In May Shared Interest's Chair Kate Priestley, Managing Director Patricia Alexander and Foundation Manager Andrea Wilkinson visited Rwanda to celebrate the conclusion of the highly successful producer support programme. They took with them an independent evaluator and a film maker.

Over the last three years 50 fair trade handicraft businesses that provide a livelihood for about 9,000 people have received training and mentoring in business skills and fair trade practices. The income of all except one of the businesses has increased and for many of them it has more than doubled. The project was funded by a grant of £245,000 from the Big Lottery.

“Although the Lottery-funded project has finished we are determined that our work in Rwanda will continue,” said Andrea Wilkinson. “We are asking for donations so that we can build on the achievements of the last three years.”

Julianna Hyjek, the evaluator appointed to produce an independent report

for the Big Lottery, visited 25 of the businesses involved in the programme. She found that all of them had increased their income as a result of the training. The impact on individuals and communities has been very significant. The number of children attending school has increased because their parents/guardians can now afford to buy them uniform, shoes and books. At the start of the project there were 199 school age children not attending school; by the end there were only 18. The evaluator also found that more people have access to health care (which is subsidised but not free).

“When we visited Buranga, who I had visited before, they were very proud to offer us lunch,” said Andrea. “Last year they only ate one meal a day; now they were able to afford two. Since almost all the workers have HIV/AIDS a good diet is very important for their health.”

Again and again people told Julianna and Andrea how their lives were better because they were earning more money

The first film to be made about the Shared Interest Foundation (see photo below) aims to show the impact of its work on two fair trade businesses in Rwanda: Buranga, a co-operative of 38 jewellery makers, all women, in the outskirts of Kigali and COPAF, a larger co-operative in the south of the country whose members make a wide range of craft goods including drums and baskets. The film will be made available via our website at the end of June.

as a direct result of the project. A little extra income can make a big difference. Several of the businesses had set up savings schemes for their workers. Three years ago saving money would have been impossible.

“This was the most inspiring overseas trip I’ve done because the impact of our work was so obvious,” said Andrea. “The Foundation provided the training but the producers did all the hard work of putting it into practice.”

The Lottery funding has ended but it has left an enduring legacy. The Rwandan Forum for Alternative Trade (RWAFAT) has been set up to help producers have greater influence, support one another, and leverage further support in future. The advisers who delivered the training have set up their own consultancy business. And, of course, the 50 enterprises that took part have become more sustainable.

“The Foundation has helped many fair trade businesses in Rwanda to get off to a good start but we don’t want to stop now,” said Andrea. “RWAFAT is going to need help for another two years and many of the individual businesses would benefit from further support. There is a particular need for help with market access and product development.

“We urge individuals and businesses in the UK to make donations so we can continue this work. Large grants are great for getting big projects going but in the end we really rely on our supporters to keep it going.”



A message from the participants in the final training session of our Rwandan Producer Support Project

“Thanks for the support and the effort that you provided for us along this last two years. You have been a blessing for us as producers in Rwanda and we learnt a lot.

“We are grateful to the Big Lottery Fund and Shared Interest Foundation to support not only the producers but also the surrounding community where we are operating our activities.

“We will put into actions what we have been trained on, using the business plans that the trainers have designed for us.

“We hope that you will visit us and see each other.

“Again, many thanks and may God bless you!”

The trainees!

RWANDAN HANDICRAFT CO-OPERATIVE BEGINS TREE PLANTING PROGRAMME

In our last newsletter we told the story of Rwandan producer co-operative COPABU. The environmental training we gave them inspired them to plant new trees to ensure a future supply of raw materials for their crafts. Thanks to the support of charitable trusts, which have donated a total of £6,625, we have been able to begin a training and forestation project with another co-operative, COPORWA.

Rwanda Environment and Development Organisation (REDO) has begun implementing the work, providing practical training that will promote soil conservation, enabling producers to provide a sustainable source of raw materials and protecting the environment, including Busaga forest.

REDO is one of the charities involved in the work of the Rwandan government's National Forest Authority (NAFA), which is contributing to the UN's International Year of Forest. Shared Interest Foundation continually aims to build the capacity of its partner organisations overseas, and it is hoped that the development of the relationship between REDO and NAFA will be beneficial for REDO, helping to build its capacity and standing. NAFA appreciates our work and thanked Shared Interest Foundation supporters for funding the activities.

With the government and district approval achieved, REDO was invited to the national launch of the International Year of the Forest. The Guest of



Honour was the Minister for Forests, Mr Bazivamo, who said that Rwanda aims for 30% of ground to be covered by forest, which is equivalent to 874,100 hectares.

Damascene, the Project Manager at REDO met a representative of COPORWA to begin the project activities. It was agreed that a group of 50 women who are members of COPORWA will be trained in nursery development, nursery management and caring for trees. Many materials have already been purchased, including plastic tubes, watering cans, hoes, wheel barrows, water drums, rakes and spades.

Overall, the project is going well and it is appreciated by local leaders, government leaders and the women of COPORWA. The new trees will help to control erosion, conserve the soil, and provide trees for climbing crops and fire wood. The members of COPORWA are delighted to have begun the project and to be helping to protect the land where they harvest their raw materials.

LIGHTNING THREATENS LIVELIHOODS



A Kenyan handicraft business is struggling to get back on its feet after lightning struck its premises, causing terrible fire damage that left only the shell of the structure that housed the office, workshop and showroom.

Perfection Plus employs 12 people making wooden gifts and ornaments. The manager, George Kinuthia, places a strong emphasis on recycling and was proud to be reusing the bodies of scrapped buses as a business premises. It was all destroyed in a flash.

Fortunately the storm happened at night when the premises were empty and so nobody was hurt in the fire. However, livelihoods are now at threat due to the extent of the damage caused. Half the employees are women, most of whom are single mothers or the main bread winners in their households, so not only the employees, but all their dependants rely on the income that Perfection Plus's trading provides.

The fire destroyed the new laser

machine, printers, computers and other equipment, some of which the company had only recently invested in. Many of the carefully crafted wooden products and a substantial amount of records were also lost. As a result the producers are working entirely manually instead of using a combination of handcraft techniques and modern methods, which means they are now working at 50% below the normal capacity.

Without the laser machine they have even been forced to cancel some orders. This has badly affected business projections for the year and put the future of the business at risk. Inevitably this puts the handcraft producers' livelihoods at risk too.

Three casual workers have lost their jobs and at the time of writing it has been decided that all other employees should go on leave for one week until the business has reorganised.

Shared Interest Foundation is helping Perfection Plus to recover by providing

a grant from its Livelihood Security Fund. The purpose of the Livelihood Security Fund is to support fair trade producer groups which have suffered a political, economic or physical shock to their business, with the aim of allowing them to continue trading and providing livelihoods.

In the case of Perfection Plus, the grant provided will be used alongside the insurance money claimed to replace the computers and laser machine. This grant is vital to the survival of the business. It will enable the company to step up production rates again and also fulfil new orders requiring the laser machine which they otherwise would not be able to accept.



Shared Interest's Rachel Ngondo (left) and Elisabeth Wilson meet George Kinuthia, Manager of Perfection Plus, only weeks before the fire.

Coffee co-operative restocks

In the last newsletter we announced that we had made a grant of £5,000 from our Livelihood Security Fund to coffee co-operative CESMACH in Mexico which had been struck by a hurricane.

The grant allowed 15,385 coffee plants to be bought from small-scale organic coffee producers who are members of the co-operative, to help replant the land of their fellow members.

Octavio Carbajal of CESMACH explains the process of reinstating the coffee plantations, "Buying plants that have been grown by members of the co-operative ensures not only the physical quality of the plant but also its integrity as an organic product because the nurseries where the plants were purchased use seeds gathered from organic land."

Coffee growing is the company's main activity, and for the small-scale producers in Sierra Madre de Chiapas this type of farming is a way of life as well as the economy's main income-generating activity. The co-operative was grateful to Shared Interest Foundation and the donors who support the Livelihood Security Fund for helping them to continue to make a living from coffee farming. Without the grant the farmers would have struggled to pay for their children's education, medical bills, food and other essentials

TRAINING BEGINS IN SWAZILAND



As this newsletter goes to print, preparations for the launch of our new producer support programme in Swaziland are almost complete.

All the members of the project team - comprising a manager, three administration and marketing staff and five business development officers who will deliver the training and mentoring - have been appointed.

A total of 135 handicraft businesses have been recruited to take part in the first intake of the training programme.

The three-year programme, funded by £502,000 by Comic Relief, is the largest we have ever undertaken. We will be working closely with Swaziland International Fair Trade Association (SWIFT) and we expect to support 135 enterprises ranging from established business to new sole traders.

Case study - Quazi Design

One of the leading lights in the craft world in Swaziland is Quazi Design, a relatively new business that produces stunning eco-conscious jewellery and home accessories. The company is an active member of SWIFT and a strong advocate of fair trade principles.

Doron Shaltiel, Managing Director of Quazi Design, describes her hopes for the new project and the impact she envisages it will have:

"We are very excited to be part of the SWIFT/ Shared Interest project funded by Comic Relief. It comes at a great time for us, as we are a new business and will appreciate the potential training and networks that will arise from the project.

"We are one of the smaller businesses that

Quazi Design's display at Sardca Trade Exhibition in Midrand (below) and (opposite page) hanging beads out to dry.
 Photographs by Doron Shaltiel, Quazi Design



export high quality and design-led products from Swaziland and I can say with certainty that we have learned a lot from the other handcraft players in Swaziland. We are lucky to be part of a country network that shares best practices, shares customers and collaborates on products, retail and lots more.

"We are therefore also happy to support smaller less formal businesses in how to grow sustainably and what we have learnt along the way. It is an exciting time to be part of handcrafts in Swaziland.

"We are busy putting on an African Fusion showcase and fashion show at the Bushfire festival, which will highlight to local and international audience the high level of craft and design in Swaziland.

"We currently employ 10 women producers

full time from the local area and further afield. They all come to workshop every day and are trained in our paper techniques. All the women producers have contracts and are offered permanent work and have bank accounts to assist in saving.

"The women have become like a family to each other and are happy to come to work as it's a supportive and safe environment. We are getting positive feedback on our products and are hoping that we can grow and employ more women."

Shared Interest Foundation is proud to be working with inspiring businesses such as Quazi Design, Tintsaba (featured on the front cover), and all the other ethically motivated businesses in SWIFT. We look forward to working together to build the future of fair trade handicrafts in Swaziland.

BEHIND THE SCENES OF OUR MAJOR PROJECTS

Shared Interest Foundation carries out life-changing work in developing countries, and the work described in our newsletters truly would not be possible without your help.

This is partly thanks to the donations given to the projects and producer groups that you particularly feel a connection to, however we also receive donations from supporters who believe in our work and know that we will use their donation where the need is greatest.

Our project in Rwanda last year reported a 35% increase in income for participants, however the project could not have started without the time the Foundation dedicated over a number of years on project development.

Projects cannot be separated from the organisations that carry them out.

There is a huge amount of work done behind the scenes at Shared Interest Foundation to prepare projects and ensure producers' needs are at the centre of our activities.

The Foundation has had success in recent years raising funds for large scale projects from the Big Lottery Fund and Comic Relief, however in order to arrive at the stage where major funders will support a three-year project, research trips and pilot projects need to be carried out and office costs must be paid.

Shared Interest Foundation has only two full-time members of staff. To

a great extent it is the generosity of individuals and businesses, who make donations that are not restricted to a particular area of work, that enables the charity to keep running.

One way you can help us to keep making an impact and delivering life changing projects is to make a standing order to support Shared Interest Foundation on a regular basis. Another way would be to make a one off donation to the Foundation to support our work wherever the need is greatest.

In good company

Shared Interest Foundation has received some significant corporate donations recently, which will help us continue our work.

Fair Ground, a fair trade shop in Wimbourne, Dorset made a donation of £5,000 in January. Fair Ground is a co-operative with six members, who heard about Shared Interest Foundation when a shopper mentioned the charity.

They had accumulated profit over a number of years and had been searching for a cause that was well aligned to the Fair Ground principles of trade justice and help for self-help.

Margaret Pearce, one of the members, explains their reasons for giving,

“We at Fair Ground were delighted to make a donation to Shared Interest Foundation. We support the intrinsic values of the work they do and realise

Paul Hargreaves, Managing Director of Cotswold Fayre and Julie Newton of Eagles, a fair trade food retailer in Deddington, Oxfordshire.



the importance of giving in order to bring dignity and empowerment to some of the world's poorest communities.”

Gourmet food supplier Cotswold Fayre of Henley-on-Thames has also recently supported Shared Interest Foundation with a donation of £473.

The company's Sales Manager, Robin Tyler, who is a long standing supporter of Shared Interest Foundation, explained that the company facilitated the gift by donating a percentage of the turnover on all the fair trade products sold from July to December 2010.

Cotswold Fayre supplies gourmet and ethical food to 1,200 customers throughout the UK, all of which are independent shops. We were delighted when Robin informed us that the company will be continuing its support by donating a percentage of fair trade turnover from January to July this year.

Could your company or co-operative help make a difference to producers who are struggling to make their businesses sustainable? Please contact Andrea on 0191 233 9129 or at foundation@shared-interest.com if you would like to find out more.

SPONSORED ZIP SLIDE OVER THE TYNE



Come along to Newcastle's famous and much loved Tyne Bridge on Saturday 29 October for a never-to-be-forgotten, thoroughly exhilarating zip slide across the River Tyne.

You will have fantastic views of the iconic bridges and the spectacular Newcastle-Gateshead quayside, including the Sage, Baltic Mill and Millennium Bridge.

What better way to raise funds for your favourite charity and show your support for craft makers and farmers in developing countries?

There are a limited number of places so book fast to make sure you have a slot.

We are only asking for £35 registration and £100 sponsorship to take part in this must-do experience.

We think you will have no trouble raising the sponsorship for this gravity-defying, feet-tingling, dare-devil feat. Feel the fear and do it anyway!

We have some daring volunteers from the staff team already signed up, so

please show your solidarity with us and take up the challenge!

Contact us on 0191 233 9114 or foundation@shared-interest.com to sign up or find out more.

Fair trade holiday for £1,000 donor

The winner of the prize draw in our £1,000 challenge was John Ling of Huddersfield. John will be travelling to Peru in September on a Meet the People tour arranged by Traidcraft and specialist tour operators Saddle Skedaddle.

"In the darkest days of January I was thinking 'I wish something good would happen' when up comes this news about the trip to Peru, which I had completely forgotten about," said John.

"I am not looking forward to all the hassle at the airports but I am looking forward to meeting the people, being off the tourist trail, and the beautiful scenery. I hope I can do some good in spreading the word afterwards."