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ST MARK'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST

# Newsletter - Summer 2014

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## *Dates for your diary:*

### **Beetle Drive**

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September**

2.30 to 4.30pm, St. Mark's Church Hall

Tickets £5 (includes tea & cakes)

Ring 01737 772811 or email [barbara@smoat.org.uk](mailto:barbara@smoat.org.uk)

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### **Jessica Townsend**

Our SMOAT-sponsored VSO has recently returned from Malawi, and will tell us all about her experiences.

**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> October** - after morning service at St. Mark's.

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### **Quiz Evening**

A repeat of this ever-popular annual event,  
with quiz-master Helier Dreux:

**Friday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

7pm for 7.30 - St. Mark's Church Hall

Ring 01737 772811 for tickets or see one of the committee.

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Further details (and tickets) of all SMOAT events will be  
available nearer the time on our web site:

**SMOAT.org.uk** or from any of the committee.

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# *Editorial*

I'm sitting at my desk typing this and as usual with my SMOAT head on I think how very lucky I am. My husband and daughter are out in the garden doing a bit of weeding in the sunshine, my son is playing with his Lego in the lounge; I have a cup of coffee by my side. This morning I took my son out to buy him a suit and new shoes for a family wedding we are attending at the end of the month, when we shall all get together and eat, drink and be merry. And all this without a thought really as to how very privileged we are.

When I was younger, I was a member of Rotaract, a younger version of Rotary. As someone in my late teens to early twenties, it provided a great social life, with fund raising thrown in. Dressed as Muppets, we shook tins at people, held car rallies, quizzes, discos – all the usual types of things – and we supported local charities. It was all very worthwhile and we did raise money but as a young and selfish person (because I think most people are when they are at that age) I was really only there because I was having a good time.

I was asked to join the SMOAT Committee around seven years ago. I consider myself quite a charitable person but I had never thought about fund raising for Overseas Aid; it hadn't even entered my mind. It is very easy to forget people who are so far away, in countries which suffer hardships and atrocities that we can't even begin to imagine and, in actual fact, don't really want to think too hard about because it's just too horrible for us to contemplate. I attended my first few meetings with the certain feeling that it wouldn't be something that I was particularly interested in. And here I am seven years later writing this Editorial.

What was it that made me stay? Well, certainly the people on the Committee made a difference. I very soon realised how truly committed they were to helping other people and they must have seen something in me that made them realise that I could be like that too. I was also struck by the hard work they put in, making sure that all the projects supported were legitimate and worthy, organising events to raise the money and the thought and hard work that went into each event.

Harry mentioned in the last editorial what a disparate bunch we are and he is right but we all come together, with our own strengths and morals, we work as a team and it's a wonderful feeling!

The amounts we raise aren't enormous and we feel we have done well when we raise £1,200 at an event. It doesn't sound like a lot but my goodness, you only realise when you get involved in Overseas Aid just how far £1,200 can go in those countries so far away from our privileged lives. At the last Beetle Drive, we raised only £325, but we went away safe in the knowledge that we had almost certainly saved the lives of 65 families. After seven years, I still find that an amazing and heart-warming feeling.

I suppose what I'm trying to say in all of this is that it is so very easy to forget those people in countries far away from us. We are all so wrapped up in our own lives but if you feel that you could join us in our efforts don't be afraid to approach us. If you are the kind of person who cares about other people or who enjoys being part of a team that can make a difference to hundreds of lives just by getting together and making an effort, then let us know – we would love to hear from you!

From being that person seven years ago who didn't give Overseas Aid much thought at all, I now have a vein running through me which will always be there, wanting to do something to help those people who could never even think about being as lucky as we are.

BARBARA PERKINS (*Acting Chairman*)

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## *Christmas Appeal 2013*

Our Christmas Appeal last December supported two projects, a wind pump irrigation scheme for the village of Lundu in the Lower Shire area of Malawi, promoted by Faith in Action, and a food security and income generation project based at a rural primary school in Katangini in the Kibwesi area of Kenya whose main feature was the construction of a very large greenhouse. This project was promoted by Impact.

The wind pump scheme enables 50 acres of land to be irrigated and two crops grown each year with

farmers keeping 50% of their crops and selling the other 50% to provide income for community projects for the area. The capital to fund the manufacture and



installation of the wind pump and associated tanks and pipes is lent to the participating farmers so that, when repaid, the money can be lent again to another group to enable them to have a wind pump.

As you may remember, SMOAT supported a similar project for Nayamula village through our 2010 Christmas Appeal. The outcomes of that scheme reported by Faith in Action earlier this year make pleasing reading: September 2011- wind pump built; October 2011 - first crops planted; February 2013 – village centre completed; March 2013 – orphan centre opened; wind pump and orphan centre still running well; all loans repaid; nearly £1,500 income spent on other community projects. I am sure you will agree these are excellent outcomes.

These three photos from that project we supported in 2010 in Nyamula Village show the completed wind-pump, irrigated crops and the Orphan day care centre which has been funded from the income from the wind-pump irrigation project.

By providing a controlled environment the greenhouse project would allow multiple crops of

nutritious vegetables to be grown each year, thereby improving the children's diet and thus their health and educational performance, creating income from the sale of surplus crops to make improvements at the school and assist with the payment of school fees, and providing vocational training in small-scale horticultural business.

The target amount for the greenhouse project was £1,540. We hoped to raise a substantially larger sum for the much more expensive wind pump scheme. Thanks to your generosity the Appeal raised £4,710 (including gift aid) so that we could donate £1,540 to Impact and £3,170 to Faith in Action. Faith in Action will forward our donation to Malawi later this year as the project begins to move forward.

Regarding the greenhouse project Impact informed us earlier this year that they had decided to switch the focus of their work in Kenya from Kibwesi to the Kitui district and wished to be able to



use our donation to support a school greenhouse in that area. They have been working in Kibwesi for 6 years and are confident that their programmes there (which, incidentally, include the school health project supported by SMOAT last year) are now well enough established for the communities and schools with which they work to be able to continue to progress with them themselves. As they put it “they are now run by our beneficiaries for our beneficiaries”.

use of their resources. They have identified 8 new schools in Kitui where they plan to implement their school health programme, and part of this project will be tackling malnutrition through the building of greenhouses. They are currently undertaking surveys and hydrological tests in this area to see which elements of the projects are best suited for each school – for example enabling rainwater harvesting or installing a borehole.

They will be able to provide more detailed information about the school they would like us to support and the number of beneficiaries when the results of their surveys are available. As this part of the Christmas Appeal funds



A further factor is that numerous other aid organisations have recently moved into the area. In contrast, Impact feel their help is desperately needed in Kitui district where over 630,000 people live in poverty. In some areas, there is only one doctor for every 50,000 people and the health of the local people suffers as a result.

They feel that taking their well-established health projects to this area will make the most effective

would still be used to support a school greenhouse project in Kenya providing the same benefits albeit to a different, and more needy, community, we have accepted Impact’s request. Our donation remains ring-fenced for this purpose and our agreement will be sought to its final use when Impact have identified a suitable school. We hope to be able to provide a further report in our next newsletter.

ALAN PRESTON

## *A special evening of music*

John, Paul ... no, not George and Ringo (despite the Liverpudlian roots of SMOAT's Acting Chair) but Richard, Roger and Gideon were the focus of attention at SMOAT's Musical Evening on Friday 9 May at St Mark's Hall, when an audience of 40 enjoyed some wonderful singing and flute-playing, all further enhanced by expert keyboard accompaniment.

John Orton, a much loved member of St Mark's Church who had died in February, had been a SMOAT Committee member for many years. One of John's chief interests had been Workaid, a charity devoted to repairing and refurbishing used tools prior to sending them out to developing countries to begin a new lease of life. Until shortly before he died, John had been Workaid's representative for East Surrey and the surrounding area, his garage a repository for all kinds of tools awaiting attention and, eventually, new owners.

Because the Musical Evening was a fund-raiser for Workaid, the event was dedicated to John's memory, and the current SMOAT Committee was delighted that the audience included John's daughter, Jenny, and Martin, one of his sons.

The music was provided by Paul Weakley, tenor extraordinaire and husband of Rev Sue (who has been holding the fort during the interregnum at St Mark's Church), with St Mark's own flautist Richard Marshall contributing some delightful pieces during each half of the evening's performance. Accompanying both was Roger Hind, his keyboard playing a joy to listen to; Roger also provided us with some solo performances by way of a bonus.

The range and power of Paul's voice are remarkable, and he persuaded the audience to join him in a final stirring rendition of *Nessun Dorma*. Earlier Roger had surprised us all by revealing that the bewitching jazz number that he had just played had been composed by Dudley Moore; it was *Duddley Dell*.

And Gideon? Gideon is the name given to the SMOAT-sponsored Workaid container that, later this year, will transport refurbished tools to be re-used in Tanzania. The Musical Evening generated proceeds of £514, to which funds previously donated were added to allow a sum of £1,500 to be sent to Workaid in John's memory.

SMOAT is delighted to support Workaid again. This support has only been possible through the generosity of all who attended the Musical Evening and those who have made donations to SMOAT over the past year. The SMOAT Committee is extremely grateful to you all.

DAVID LEAR

## *VSO Jessica Townsend in Malawi*

SMOAT continues to support VSO. This year we have given further funding to sponsor Jessica Townsend in her VSO placement in Malawi. Jessica is a trained nurse and is working in Malawi as a nurse tutor, teaching both theory and practice. Malawi currently has a shortfall of nurses and midwives and a shortfall of nurse tutors, impacting on the quality of training available. Jessica's work also takes her into hospitals to support the student nurses, which provides her with a real insight into the local healthcare available.

This photo was taken when Jessica took some student nurses to a community centre in Mzuzu that looks after vulnerable children. The students were carrying out assessments associated with complications from potential HIV infection.



Here are a few extracts from her blog to illustrate some of her experiences:

*'The paediatric ward... is overcrowded, loud and chaotic...'*

*'One cannot spend a year living in Malawi and not talk about death, dying and funerals! The reason for this is that death is very much part of life here in Mzuz... Unfortunately people [are] dying of causes that can and would be treated and avoided in other parts of the world.'*

*'I have noticed recently that the things I see here in Malawi no longer seem abnormal but just part of everyday life... Babies appear to be made of rubber... Babies never cry (well not really)... Anything is possible if you are patient and willing to be uncomfortable... People look at me and laugh regularly. This used to be disconcerting but I am now used to it... And people are extremely grateful for the smallest things!'*

You can find Jessica's blog at  
<http://malawinearlythereyet.wordpress.com/>

LOUISE BARR

# *Where Has Your Money Gone?*

You gave generously to SMOAT in 2013. Below is a summary of the charitable gifts we made last year. The total amount given was £18,015, which supported 11 projects through 7 separate organisations in 7 countries all of which rank among the World's poorest.

## **Village Water: £2,525 Zambia**

Nakasheke village is situated in Kalabo District in Western Province Zambia. Only 2% of people have access to improved sanitation and 18.7% to clean water compared to 49% and 60% for whole of Zambia. It is one of the poorest districts of Zambia with 96% living below the poverty line. Villagers collected their water from a scoop hole in the floodplain. The water is contaminated and the hole is



prone to dry up in the dry season and collapse in the rainy season. The project provides a new clean-water well and pump, plus hygiene training and sanitation facilities for each household.

## **Project Uganda: £3,410 Uganda**

Project Uganda is a small charity set up in 2000 by the inhabitants of a Wiltshire village with the aim of improving the lot of the inhabitants of Rukungiri, a poor village in rural Uganda. The sanitation and hygiene facilities for girls who board at the village's secondary school were primitive in the extreme, lacking running water, drainage and privacy and constituted a health hazard. The project provided a new washroom for them with running water from harvested rainfall, proper drainage and wash bays providing privacy. It was built by past and present students of a local vocational training centre the construction of which was an early project of the charity.



## Impact (1): £2,700 Kenya

This project has improved the health and prospects of children living in extreme poverty in Kibwesi District, Kenya, through school-based health screening and timely medical treatment.

The health of children in the target schools is at threat from conditions which are easily preventable or which can be treated at low cost. These include waterborne diseases, such as Dysentery,

Typhoid and Diarrhoea, parasitic diseases such as tapeworm and a common ear infection, Otis Media, which is easily treatable but, if left unchecked, can lead to permanent hearing loss.

## Impact (2): £1,600 Zanzibar

Zanzibar's reputation as a luxury holiday destination belies its impoverishment: almost two-thirds of people live in abject poverty, lacking adequate shelter, healthcare, clean water and food. Wells exist in many schools and villages but there are no storage tanks. Pumps to draw water to the



surface burn out if used continuously, so their use has to be restricted to a few hours a day. Alternative sources of water are liable to contamination. The project provides a 5,000 litre water tank with tap stand for a school, giving a reliable and safe supply all day. This frees the children from spending

time queuing and collecting water. The supply is sufficient for the wider community to share it, thereby freeing up the time of women for more productive activities.

## **Faith in Action (1): £1,500 Malawi**

Setting up small family businesses can enable families to be less dependent on subsistence agriculture which is susceptible to the vicissitudes of weather, insect attack and disease. Many families in the Lower Shire area of Malawi possess skills which could be used to run a small business but lack the finance to purchase materials and simple tools or to get their products to market.

This project provides the capital to make loans in the range £36 to £73 for businesses which make mats, baskets, buckets, poultry feeders or canoes or which engage in poultry rearing. The loans are interest free and repayable within 4-7 months. As loans are repaid the capital can be re-lent to other families for similar purposes: an excellent example of providing a hand up.

## **Faith in Action (2): £1,000 Malawi**

Malaria continues to be the World's largest killer and Malawi suffers its share of casualties. Sadly many families lack the knowledge or the money to protect themselves. This scheme uses the income from a capital investment in Malawi to buy Mosquito nets. £937 buys 180 nets which will protect 60 families.

## **Practical Action (1): £1,000 Nepal**

The beneficiaries of this project are approximately 4,000 informal workers (of which there are an estimated 1,000 children aged 5 to14) working in waste management in five municipalities of Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. These urban waste pickers are the poorest of the poor, viewed as the lowest of the low, living in squatter settlements that line the riverbanks of Kathmandu valley.

They make a living by selling materials such as plastic, metal, cloth and paper that they have collected from dumpsites, bins and from along roadsides. They are self-employed with very low social status and earnings, are often illiterate, and lack market awareness and skills to add value to recycling goods they have collected. They face poor working conditions and suffer from occupation-related health problems.

The child workers receive no formal education. The project aims to improve the living conditions of these people through engaging government and other agencies, providing adult education and training in relevant skills for the workers, and by providing practical things like work boots, gloves, face masks, trailer bicycles for transporting materials more efficiently to reprocessing centres and even a plastics processing machine. £970 will buy 7 trailer bicycles.

## **Practical Action (2): £1,300 Zimbabwe**

This donation supported Practical Action's Now Wash Your Hands project which ends in 2015. It aims to benefit 200,000 people in rural communities in the southern provinces of Gwanda and Mwenezi by implementing a large-scale hygiene education programme, improving access to clean water and ensuring the people have adequate sanitation facilities. It is expected that by the end of the project the communities themselves will have built an additional 13,000 toilets, rehabilitated 1,000 water pumps which have fallen into disrepair, and will have constructed 20 new boreholes to ensure that women and children

across the districts have to walk no further than one kilometre to reach a supply of clean, fresh water. Rainwater harvesting tanks for clinics and schools will also be built to ensure that they have adequate water all year round.

### **Practical Action (3): £1,500 Malawi**

85% of the population of Malawi live in rural communities and only 1% of these have access to electricity. 92% of families surveyed by PA living in the Upper Bondo region use paraffin as their main source of lighting and the remainder use candles. This is both very unsafe and unhealthy.

The disadvantages of living without electricity are clear: health centres cannot store medicines because there are no refrigerators; schools have no computers so pupils are at a disadvantage when they go on to higher education; mobile phone batteries cannot be recharged; power tools are unusable; providing food is laborious and time-consuming.

This project will create a micro hydro- electricity scheme for Upper Bondo using the resources of Mount Mulanje, Southern Africa's highest and wettest mountain. The construction model is suitable for semi-skilled builders and the scheme will be run by the local community. It will bring electricity to 2 health centres serving 5,000 people, 3 schools with 400 students, 280 households, a business centre and a maize mill with 1,000 customers. And life in Upper Bondo will be able to continue even after dark!

### **Bridge2Aid: £780 Tanzania**

This charity sends around 100 volunteer dentists in small groups to Tanzania every year to treat patients and train local clinical officers of the Tanzanian health service in dentistry. Clinical officers are medically trained but receive no dental training. 6 clinical officers are trained on each programme and around 450 patients receive dental treatment. When the dentist team leaves for home they leave behind sets of dental equipment, including sterilisation kits, so that the officers they have trained can continue to provide treatment. £780 pays for the instruments and sterilisation kits for all 6 Clinical Officers being trained on one volunteer programme.

### **Brinos: £700 Nepal**

The British Nepal Otology Service, formed by Mr. Neil Weir of the Royal Surrey County Hospital in Guildford, sends medical teams to Nepal each year to treat patients who are deaf or suffer other ear problems. The high altitude of Nepal combined with the use of fires in huts gives rise to these conditions which are very common. One of the theatre assistants in the team sent last year (and indeed in 2009 and 2012) is Corporal Tikajit Gurung of the Royal Army Medical Corps. SMOAT supported his participation again last year with a donation of £700 towards his travel costs. The team of which he was a member received two awards last year for their outstanding work in Nepal.

I do hope you will feel your money was well spent last year and will agree that even relatively small donations really can make a difference!

ALAN PRESTON

# *Regular Giving*

The Committee wishes to extend a huge expression of thanks to all who are regular givers: we now have 30 regular givers, who provide us with £5,838 (including gift aid) over the course of the year.

I don't think I can overstate the extent to which your generosity underpins SMOAT and really does make a difference to our capacity to help the very poorest in the world. Due to this support we can top up the funds we generate at fund raising events for selected projects and support one or two additional projects each year.

Every contribution accumulates to make a big difference. For example, £350 was raised from the Beetle Drive last year but was topped up to £1,000, with each additional £6 funding a new mosquito net to protect the health of a family in Malawi. We were also able to donate £1,000 to support schemes to help improve the lot of very poor communities in Nepal who scrape a living from waste materials.

Through SMOAT we aim to enable our local community to reach out and directly help small communities of the poorest to help themselves. We remain committed to careful selection of projects to ensure value for money and to openly sharing with you where your money has gone and the impact it has had.

Ongoing support remains essential, so if you feel able continue contributing or to become a regular donor we would be delighted. The necessary forms are enclosed with further copies available from the committee or on our website: **SMOAT.org.uk**

LOUISE BARR

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*For further details of SMOAT and  
our planned fund-raising events,  
please visit our web site **SMOAT.org.uk***

*To join our mailing list, e-mail [Richard@SMOAT.org.uk](mailto:Richard@SMOAT.org.uk)*

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