



S · M · O · A · T

ST MARK'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST

Newsletter - Summer 2015

Dates for your diary:

Beetle Drive

Sunday 20th September
St. Mark's Church Hall

Quiz

with Helier Dreux
Friday 16th October
St. Mark's Church Hall

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

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



*Harp duet - Susannah
Dyde and Emma Packer;
one of the many musical
groups in our recent
SMOATathon*

Editorial

It seems that life just gets busier and busier for us all. Everyone I know seems to be constantly on the run to catch a deadline and we are always chasing our tails in an effort just to remain on an even keel. It's easy in all that to forget what is important; to sit for a minute and think about how fortunate we are.

We live in a democratic society, where we are not persecuted for having religious beliefs; where to a greater or lesser extent we can play a part in decision-making. We have food on our tables and clean water to drink. We have clothes on our backs. All children are given an education and the chance to make a future for themselves. If we are ill, our National Health Service looks after us. We live in a peaceful country, with natural beauty surrounding us. Now, sit back, reread this paragraph and then consider the following:

The war-torn lives of the people of countries such as Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan seem a far cry from our quiet lives, where their natural beauty and wonderful, historical monuments are destroyed by acts of terrorism and violence; remote villages in countries such as Nepal, Tasmania and Malawi, where people struggle to produce enough sustainable food sources and people are still dying from malnutrition – they could be on the moon really, they seem so far away; the villages all over the world where people still die because they don't have clean water to drink and where stagnant water encourages mosquitoes and people die needlessly from malaria; the households that struggle to afford to send their children to school or to see a doctor when they are ill because family members have died from easily curable diseases and so there is no income for such 'luxuries'.

Recently, SMOAT has supported a number of quite diverse projects, ranging from helping with healthcare to helping to combat malnutrition; providing clean water; giving farmers in remote areas the chance to set up successful, sustainable businesses. Our future aims are similar, to help people who are struggling to take that first step towards security, better health, food in their bellies, clean water – all the things that most of us in the Western world take for granted.

If everything in life were fair, there wouldn't be people starving, whilst others over-stuffed themselves. Everybody would have access to ordinary but life-saving medicines. Everyone would be allowed to

pray to God if they wished. There would be clean water accessible to all. There are so many inequalities and injustices in the world and we can't change it all overnight, if at all. But to quote a famous actor turned US President, "We can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone." It isn't the most profound of statements but actually if it were put into practice, can you imagine what a different place the world would be?

BARBARA PERKINS, *Chairman*

SMOATathon 2 success!

On Sunday 22 March 2015, generous performers provided five and a half hours of musical entertainment as part of the SMOATathon 2, a musical marathon organised by SMOAT. This event was organised to raise much-needed funds for an IMPACT led project in a village in Bangladesh called Policelinepera.

array of instruments including clarinets, harps, trombones, guitars, flutes, pianos and melodic voices. With the performers ranging in age from 7 to, well..., octogenarians, the talent was both abundant and prolific!

With refreshments and home made cakes on offer throughout

The proceedings kicked off with a fabulous vocal and musical montage brought to us by Bruce Cousins, (*seen in the photo on the right*) accompanied on the piano by our very own Father Martin. This opening performance was followed by a programme offering a veritable feast of musical interludes, featuring a huge



the duration of the event, the supporters came and went in gentle waves throughout the day, but every act enjoyed performing to an appreciative audience which never fell below a minimum of 20 people. By the time the hotdogs were served late afternoon we had enjoyed the likes of Bach to the music from Jungle Book, and from Handel to George Ezra.

in the talent of so many local musicians, and all in the aid of an amazing cause.

Over £2,000 was raised by this event through donations and sponsorship.

CLAIRE BOWERS

The project we are supporting through this event is run by IMPACT, an organisation SMOAT

has worked with on numerous occasions. It is one of a number of projects, each of which seeks to make comprehensive improvements in the health of a village of about 1,500 people in rural Bangladesh.

Here are some examples of the expected benefits.

Clean water and sanitation: the presence of arsenic in local drinking water supplies is a serious health problem which will be addressed by introducing tests of local tube wells for the presence of arsenic to ensure that the

community know not to drink from it if it is contaminated. Where households have no clean source to draw on, simple filters to remove the arsenic will be provided, and houses without a toilet will be provided with latrines.

We'd like to thank all those who participated in making the event such a huge success, either by performing themselves or offering such wonderful warm support to the performers. What a fabulous opportunity it was for our community to enjoy and share



Access to medical care: monthly health clinics will be set up which will ensure referrals to IMPACT's community hospitals where more specialist care and surgery can be provided. School health monitors will be trained and equipped with First Aid boxes.

The monitors will be able to report any concerns to an IMPACT health worker for thorough examination and referral to IMPACT's health centre as necessary.



This simple primary health care does not exist in rural areas but is vital to ensure the wellbeing and safety of women and babies.

Ending malnutrition: vitamin A will be distributed to classes of malnourished children to protect their eyesight, and families will be helped to create home gardens to improve nutrition.

Safer motherhood: monthly clinics will be established to provide ante- and post-natal care. This monitoring will highlight potentially complicated deliveries which may require specialist intervention, thorough checking while recovering from childbirth and provision of any necessary micronutrient supplements such as iron, folic acid and Vitamin A.

Funds will also be provided to train traditional Birth Attendants, immunise all the girls in a village against Rubella and establish Mothers' Clubs to include health education sessions.

The estimated cost of the programme is £5,566. It will ensure the health and well-being of an entire village for one year. Thereafter it is expected, as has happened with similar programmes in other villages in Bangladesh, that it will be nearly self-sustaining with minimal financial input from IMPACT.

ALAN PRESTON

SMOAT Christmas Appeal

Through your generosity we have been able to give £6,100 to the two projects in this year's Christmas Appeal: £3,700 for a new washroom and water supply at Bugangari Secondary School in Uganda; and £2,400 for a scheme promoting income generation by women in the poorest parts of Malawi and Zambia.

Bungagari Senior Secondary School

Funded through the charity Project Uganda which aims to develop self-sufficiency in young Ugandans, this project will support boarders at Bungagari Senior Secondary School. The school, on the border of the East African rift valley, is in an extremely poor area of Uganda where life expectancy is 50, 85% living in temporary buildings and just 5% in permanent housing.

The Bungagari school is government aided with 559 students, of which 135 are boarders. It is the only secondary school offering boarding facilities in the area, but the boarders cope with facilities that we would find unimaginable. Thanks to previous work by Project Uganda, boarders now have beds but the washroom remains a small enclosure with a timber structure, iron sheets for walls, no roof and a floor of mud and bricks. Water, for washing themselves and clothes, needs to be collected in jerry cans and bowls from a tap more than 500 yards away. The consequences are poor sanitation and hygiene, illness and missed lessons.



Left: The current washing facilities.

The project will provide a permanent, brick built washroom with at least 20 individual cubicles, along with appropriate drainage and soakaways for easy and proper maintenance.

Integral, to the build will be a rainwater harvesting system enabling rain water to be channelled from the roof, filtered and stored in water tanks ready for drinking, bathing and washing. The children will gain privacy and better hygiene and the build will involve graduating vocational students and local labour, helping generate new skills.

Right: Project Uganda washroom at Buyanja Grammar School.

We were fortunate enough to be visited by Matt, Rod and Ann Gothard at St Marks' to hear first-hand about the work of Project Uganda, the appeal and the children at



the school. The family oversee the projects and get to know the children, funding the trips to Uganda themselves. This means that we can be confident that the money provided will be spent appropriately toward this washroom project, that it will get built during the next year and that we'll hear all about it. The total cost is estimated to be

£6,000 and thanks to your generosity we have been able to give **£3,700**.

'Thank you very much for the donation of £3,700; a fantastic amount from your 2014 Christmas appeal.'

*Ann Gothard,
Project Uganda.*



MircoLoan Foundation

Through your kind donations, as part of the Christmas Appeal, we have also been able to send **£2,400** to the MicroLoan Foundation.

MicroLoan works with the poorest women with little or no education, business experience, or access to financial services. Through small loans and specialised business training the aim is to help these women generate a better income and support their families. The women are encouraged to form small groups and receive training. Group members receive a small loan (typically £38) to set up a business. They then work repay the loan as well as using income to fund healthcare, food and education. To date repayment rates have ranged between 98% and 100% and, once a small loan has been repaid, the women are able to expand and take up larger loans (on average £68). The ultimate aim is that they achieve self-sufficiency.

Repaid loans allow for lending to other groups of women and the goal for 2014/15 is to ensure 46,500 families (some 190,000 individuals) benefit from the scheme.

Thank you for your support through our Christmas Appeal!

LOUISE BARR

SMOAT VSO sponsorship

Over the years SMOAT has supported several Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) projects. This independent international development organisation seeks to offer volunteers the opportunity to work abroad to fight poverty in developing countries and has achieved some extremely worthwhile results.

By contrast to our previous VSO donations, where we have sponsored a volunteer for a placement in a specific location

for 2-3 years, in December last year SMOAT donated £1500 to support a project in Tanzania, where paediatric consultant Charlie Moss, from the Royal Surrey County hospital in Guildford, has been volunteering his time periodically (approximately three weeks every three months).

This new approach allows seasoned professionals the capacity to retain their full time jobs in the UK but offer their wealth of experience to oversee

complex projects and monitor the success of such undertakings on a ongoing basis. Dr Moss has been volunteering his time to work in a remote hospital in a town called Ifakara.

This hospital has extremely limited resources, poor road access, and services a vast area of rural Tanzania. The challenges are immense.

We met with Charlie back in October 2014 to learn more about the work he had undertaken to date in the hospital, the immediate challenges his team faced and his hopes and aspirations for the future. One area of particular focus for Charlie and his team is ante- and post-natal care for newborn babies and infants at the hospital.

We learnt that some children arrive at hospital already in very poor health. But deaths of young babies are also associated with poor hygiene and sanitation issues during delivery. This equates to around 350 deaths a year, which is about half the total for the hospital.

While the local professionals work tirelessly and compassionately, they do not benefit

from the resources, training and levels of sanitation available through our NHS. Charlie is working with the local professionals to develop workable protocols and procedures for the labour ward and neonatal unit of the hospital.

Charlie's enthusiasm and passion for the work was inspiring and we have been following his blog to keep up to date with the project as it progresses.

We would like to share with you some extracts from his recent posts in which Charlie provides some early statistical results which he hopes are indications of the longer-term impact his team will achieve.

"... I've blogged before about how hard it might be to collect and analyse data in a manner that gives us an accurate and unbiased account of progress to date and so it has proved... , all that follows comes with some qualification - the main thrust of this being 'give us more time, and let's hope that trends already suggested by the data will in time be demonstrated as statistically sound.

"On the neonatal side we've compared 2013 with 2014. We've looked at live births vs. stillborns, then at neonatal mortality rates (in total and then divided into weight brackets).

"On the Labour ward, 2014 was busier than 2013 with an 18.3% increase in activity (from 5016 to 5938 births). That's quite a big increase and would certainly have put more pressure on the unit.

"Roughly 3% of all births in hospital were sadly recorded as 'born dead'. Some of these babies may never have reached a realistically viable gestation. Although there was a slight increase in this rate from 2013 to 2014, the change doesn't reach statistical significance - indicating it may well have arisen purely through chance.

"Work to do on the Labour ward for sure, but there are some good staff there so I'm confident the improvements will come in time.

"There was a similar increase in the Neonatal Unit (NNU) workload (from 1117 babies in 2013, to 1336 in 2014). Interestingly, around 23% of all babies were admitted to the NNU in both 2013 and 2014. Whether that is a good thing or not is a moot point.

"Part of our strategy in Ifakara, given that we have an established neonatal unit, is to see whether we can safely reduce neonatal admissions rather than increase them (in contrast to VSO projects elsewhere that are setting up their NNUs). This is because our staff are overworked and the unit very hot and crowded.

"Additionally, the babies have less access to breast-feeding and are at risk of dehydration, plus there is greater risk of cross-infection. Some babies are probably admitted unnecessarily - for example babies born via Caesarian section with mum under general anaesthetic). One thing we are looking at is greater use of intravenous antibiotics on the post-natal wards, rather than automatically admitting well babies with sepsis risk factors to the NNU.

"Our overall neonatal mortality in those babies discharged alive from the labour ward has dropped from 4.3% in 2013 to 3.14% in 2014, which is great news. It appears to be a significant change (which means that the change is unlikely to be due to random occurrence).

"So well done to all the St Francis staff for making such great progress in looking after our newborn babies.

"Particular thanks should go to Dr Kasasa for leading on many of these changes, Rhoda Mwengi for taking on the NNU nursing lead role and working so hard to improve quality of care, and the neonatal nurses who have very quickly adapted to some new ways of working and remain always cheerful, kind, conscientious and caring despite an almost unbearable workload - both in character and quantity.

"A thank you also to the members of SMOAT (St Mark's Overseas Aid Trust) who have generously donated £1500 to VSO and remain very interested in this project and it's outcomes. Thank you for donating so thoughtfully and so carefully."

You can follow Charlie's blog at:

<https://drcharliemoss.wordpress.com/2014/12/26/charlies-tanzania-blog/>

CLAIRE BOWERS

Barn Dance 15 May 2015

This event was very much a family affair with all ages present. But the young teenagers and pre-teens were every bit as skilled in the dance as their more experienced elders. There were about 55 there but everyone seemed to step up to the line for every dance so that the floor was always full and vibrant.

Throughout the evening the bar was always busy to slake the growing thirst and at the break the cottage pie much appreciated as well as the chance to rest the feet. Altogether this annual event was a great social success.

The modest profit made on the evening, augmented by a bequest from John Orton, will support a project by Practical Action in West Nepal, which has not been affected by the earthquakes. The project aims to improve diet and incomes by increasing irrigation, introducing new crops such as spices and improving access to markets. Co-operative selling will improve the prices at which crops can be sold and so raise incomes of one of the poorest and climatically most adverse areas in the world.

HARRY INGRAM

Thank You, Alan!

Having served on the Committee for eight years, Alan Preston has decided to hang up his SMOAT boots. He has been our Treasurer for the past five years and has proved himself to be extremely efficient and easy to work with in that role.

He has also worked tirelessly as a member of the Projects Committee, which searches for and researches future projects for us to support. This may not sound like a big job but actually searching out new projects and making absolutely sure that they live up to our stringent criteria takes up vast amounts of time.

Alan has demonstrated himself to be a Jack Russell around the ankles of organisations, not letting go of their trouser legs until they have shown us that they can meet our very high standards!

Alan moved from Reigate to Westcott two years ago and he and his wife Sandie have taken on grandparenting duties to the full extent! This, together with their growing involvement in the local community, have prompted Alan's decision to step down.

We will miss his friendship on the Committee, his quiet sense of humour and his great contribution to the Committee but we wish him well for a long, happy and healthy 'retirement'.

BARBARA PERKINS

*For more information, or to join our mailing list,
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