



S · M · O · A · T
ST MARK'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST

Newsletter - Summer 2016

Dates for your diary:

Annual Public Meeting

Sunday 3rd July at St. Mark's

- come and hear about the highlights of the year, 11.20 am

Musical Evening - Jazz, Wine & Cheese

Saturday 24th September - St. Mark's Church Hall

Join us for what promises to be a delightful evening, starring the wonderful Reigate jazz singer Angie Barton and her terrific band.

Quiz

with Helier Dreux

Friday 14th October

St. Mark's Church Hall

Scrabble Evening

Friday 18th November

Further details of all SMOAT events will be available nearer the time on our web site: **SMOAT.org.uk** or from any of the committee.

REGISTERED CHARITY No.280091

Editorial

Do you remember when you were little, being told to finish your food because people in the world were starving? Of course, it didn't make any sense at all. What difference was it going to make to a starving child in Africa if you didn't finish your dinner? It was really just a parent's ploy to get their children to eat their food. I now know as a mum that it's a real irritation when your child doesn't eat their food, when you've made the effort to plan it, shop for it and then spent time cooking it, just to see your child ungratefully turn their nose up at it and shove it around their plate with disdain!

The world generally wastes so much food that it is truly obscene. We see shocking photographs of skips full of food being thrown out by supermarkets. But, actually, does that make a difference to the people in the developing world who are starving? I don't think it does but it does highlight the stark differences. Surely, every human being in the world should be entitled to food and clean water – the most basic of life's requirements. Just consider these statistics:

- One in every nine people in the world is undernourished.
- In Asia, two-thirds of the population is hungry.
- In Sub-Saharan Africa one person in four is undernourished.
- Poor nutrition causes nearly half of the deaths of children under five years old – 3.1 million children each year die because they don't have enough food.
- If women farmers had access to the same resources as men, the number of hungry in the world could be reduced by up to 150 million.
- Accordingly to World Food Programme calculations, US\$3.2 billion is needed per year to reach all 66 million hungry school-age children in the world.
- 650 million people do not have access to safe water.
- 2.3 billion people do not have access to adequate sanitation – that is one in three of the world's population.
- 900 children under five die **each day** from diseases caused by dirty water.

SMOAT is only a very small concern, we deal in relatively small amounts of money and we reach a relatively small number of people.

So, what can we do to help the situation? Well, we try to direct the money we raise to exactly where it is needed most. We support sustainable projects so that the money we send is invested in people's futures, either through setting them up in business with a microloan or supplying them with the resources that they require to sustain themselves and go on to help others too. Many hours of our time are spent researching projects to find the best ones to support, the ones that will have a lasting impact for as many people as possible.

Perhaps next time your children don't finish their food, give them a little food for thought by sharing some of the above information. If we can educate the next generation, they may go on to improve the statistics and maybe one day everyone in the world will have access to food and clean water.

In this newsletter you will find reports on fundraising events and on the money we have sent to various projects. In particular, I would draw your attention to the article on regular giving, which has been written by our Treasurer. If you can consider making a regular contribution to SMOAT it will make a big difference to the amount of money we can send to the projects we support.

BARBARA PERKINS, *Chairman*

Bingo!

Exciting, busy, multi-generational, quaint, a bit of a giggle... these are just some of the words I've heard used to describe the SMOAT bingo afternoon held in February. I can't think of another occasion when we've seen the hall at St Marks packed with people from across so many generations. Our youngest player was less than one but enjoyed the afternoon alongside pre-



schoolers, primary schoolers, teenagers, those of us nearing or edging past middle age... and those of us beyond. All in all, just under a hundred of us came

together to support a common purpose of purchasing bicycle ambulances in Southern Malawi. We did so whilst having some simple fun hinged around ping-pong balls, a tombola drum, and random numbers on bingo cards.

Our very able host for the afternoon was Graham, supported by his beautiful assistant, and our chair, Barbara. I suspect we all learnt some bingo lines together that afternoon, with an occasional explanation of the more obscure phrases provided by the very able Barbara!

We certainly sharpened up our bingo prowess as the speed of calling and responding progressively gathered pace. Lines were successfully won by those of all ages and a confident 'bingo' called by those lucky enough to secure a 'full house'.



Our goal had been to purchase two bicycle ambulances for the village of Mphiphira in Southern Malawi. The village is far from the nearest health clinic and has recently accommodated those displaced by flooding.

Traditionally, very sick people are tied to a chair and carried to hospital overnight by family members. The journey is arduous, so is often delayed, risking the lives of those who are



sick and of family members who are more likely to contract infectious illnesses.

Mphihiira village, in particular, has recently been subject to an outbreak of cholera so is in particular need. Each bicycle trailer costs £255 and the support for the bingo event was so high that we raised some £700. With a small top up we have provided £765 and funded three bicycle



ambulances, for which I extend a heartfelt “thank you” from the SMOAT committee.

LOUISE BARR

Funding for SMOAT – the gift of regular giving

The British people are clearly generous of spirit and compassionate of mind. According to recent research by YouGOV, over a quarter of people regularly donate to charity by direct debit.

But these decisions are typically not taken lightly. The majority of people give careful consideration to the decision to make a donation to charity or commit to regular giving. And regular, or indeed any giving, is increasingly being squeezed as people’s wallets are squeezed in the current financial climate.

Every day, social and mainstream media bombards us relentlessly with images of need and requests for “cash cash cash.” We are exposed to a range of different ways of being asked to donate money, ranging from TV advertising and appeals using shocking and heart-rendering images, strangers approaching us on the High Street to ask for direct debits, and even our own friends asking us to sponsor their latest marathon or swim challenge.

Certainly, the charity sector faces many difficult challenges, not least in securing sustainable and predictable funding streams. Notwithstanding the will ‘to give’, the pressure, and indeed the choice, is overwhelming. Conversely, information about exactly how our money is spent, and the true outcomes and impacts it achieves, is often

opaque. With so many demands on our money, it's sometimes difficult to feel confident in our choices, no matter how well intentioned.

In fact, the charity sector is in reality an 'industry', awash with well-paid executives, extensive marketing budgets, and ambitious projects breaking new ground in unstable and risky environments. Large charities do indeed have large running costs – and often it is justified, as without these their 'leverage' with overseas governments, and access to the poorest would be hugely compromised. They can and do achieve amazing results in the most dire of circumstances.

SMOAT definitely sits to the side of the charitable industry. Our 'operation' is tiny in comparison, with no running costs (we operate entirely on volunteers). We fund very carefully researched small-scale projects, which are selected on their basis of giving the poor the means to help themselves. It gives us the best reassurance that the money we receive is truly making the most impact pound for pound.

The 'visible' part of our operations are of course our fun calendar of fundraising events, and our Christmas Appeal. However, many of you may not be aware that SMOAT has always had a small but highly significant group of 'regular givers' who pay by direct debit or CAF payment either monthly or quarterly.

Over the last five years, our income from regular giving has ranged from 25%-44% of total receipts. This regular income plays a critical part of our operations, enabling us to top up our fundraising income when making project donations, or indeed to fund additional projects (see box for our 2015 donations funded by regular givers).

March 2015	£480 to Maisha Trust Kenya to fund the purchase of tables for the school
July 2015	£1,000 to Orskov Foundation for permaculture projects in Malawi
July 2015:	£1,500 to Village Water for the rehabilitation of water points in Zambia
July 2015:	£1,000 to Impact Women's Credit Union in Nepal
November 2015:	£1,000 to Microloan microfinance projects in Malawi and Zambia
November 2015:	£1,600 to Practical Action projects in Zimbabwe and Malawi

We are truly grateful, and indeed humbled that our regular givers see fit to support us in delivering our mandate. They provide us with a sustainable and predictable funding stream.

We always welcome regular donations – if you would like to give in this way, no matter how modest your donation, we would welcome your support.

Please contact myself or a member of the committee to set up a direct debit or regular CAF payment.

NAOMI FLOOD, *Treasurer*

Shop Local. Support Global

On Sunday 15th May Quattro Rish, an independent women’s clothing shop on Church Street, Reigate, joined forces with SMOAT for a hugely successful outlet sale. This event was in support of a Micro loan project for families to start small businesses in Malawi.

A huge discount sale of past seasons stock was sold with a percentage of the takings being donated to SMOAT. Through the marketing powers of social media the sale attracted huge waves of customers through the day, finally closing the doors at 4pm with largely empty clothes rails.

The shop's owner, Ivy Glazna, said the sale had been a huge success, adding how “it felt amazing to know that their efforts would help some of the poorest families in Malawi onto the first rung of the ladder with their own local business.”



Ivy Glazna presenting Claire Bowers with a cheque.

The sale raised £1816 for the Microloan project and raised a huge amount of local awareness for the work undertaken by SMOAT.

CLAIRE BOWERS

From bard to wurst ...

The weekend of 23 - 24 April 2016 seemed to have quite a lot going for it.

The Saturday would be the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death, as well as, most scholars agree, the 452nd of his birth. Queen Elizabeth II, much more long-lived, would two days earlier have celebrated her 90th birthday. The 23rd would also be commemorated, in many places around the world, as St George's Day, England being just one of the countries to have adopted St George as its patron saint. And last, but by no means least, Monday 25 April would be the feast day of St Mark, from whom SMOAT takes its name, the 25th being the date upon which he is believed to have died.

With so much significance already attached to these few spring days, it seemed a natural step for SMOAT to arrange an event to celebrate them, and so the concept of the St George's Day Brunch was born, to be held on the morning of Saturday



23 April at the home of Louise and Ken Packer in Reigate.

The one fear was that, with sausages on the menu, things might rapidly go from bard to wurst. Happily, the event was a resounding success, attended by between 70 and 80 SMOAT supporters and their friends (fortunately not all at exactly the same time) who all enjoyed a cooked brunch served in part from Ken and Louise's magnificent new kitchen, and in part from the BBQ outside. The weather was kind, allowing brunching al fresco if desired, copious amounts of coffee were consumed, and, when not eating or drinking, guests were able to take part in a raffle or compete to guess the number of Cheerios in a jar.

All of which, of course, helped to raise funds for the project that was the focus of this activity. In total, the St George's Day Brunch raised a remarkable £560 for BRINOS - the Britain Nepal Otology Service. Founded in 1988, BRINOS sends teams of ear surgeons and support staff to Nepal two or three times a year to treat people



afflicted with ear and hearing problems, which are very common in the country because of the altitude.

The teams that undertake this work are often active in areas that are barely accessible,

and their patients frequently have to travel for days, on foot or by bus, to reach the "camps" set up by BRINOS. Since 1988, 58 camps have been held, the most recent in March this year.

The money raised by the Brunch will be used to help buy an operating table. This piece of equipment, often taken completely for granted in this country, will enhance BRINOS's ability to provide vital surgery for those suffering with ear and hearing problems in the most remote areas of Nepal.

The SMOAT Committee is very grateful to all those who supported the St George's Day Brunch and, in doing so, helped to raise much-needed funds for this project.

DAVID LEAR



Myanmar and Education

Sometimes it is reassuring to hear of something good happening with no apparent political motivation. We are supporting Helen Rankin as a VSO in Myanmar which you may know better as Burma.

That country is hopefully emerging into the light thanks to the bravery of Daw Aung San Syu Kyi.

Britain is giving a helping hand through VSO. These days VSOs are often senior professionals who try to adapt the best of our systems to the conditions of the Developing Country. A recent letter from Helen gives an insight into her work.

HARRY INGRAM

"The work is going well in Myanmar apart from the extreme heat. Apparently el nino is causing temperatures to be around 5 degrees hotter than usual for this time of year. Unfortunately this means that some days it gets to about 44 degrees by 10am and stays there until 4pm. Since there is no air conditioning in the classrooms, it is pretty unbearable. We do have ceiling fans but this is also the time of year that sees regular power (and water) cuts. At present on campus there is a single class of 400 primary teacher distance learners on an intensive course, packed shoulder to shoulder in the hall, attending classes all day six days a week for six weeks. At least I am in my spacious classroom with only 25 people

There are only four months to go now, so we are heading into the end stage of the project. Looking back, I feel really pleased about what we have achieved in that time. Doing the latest round of classroom observations, I can see that the teacher trainers have taken on board our methodology classes and are experimenting with new approaches which are radically different to the old rote learning. The fact that the project has been able to reach nearly all of Myanmar's teacher educators (excluding a couple of colleges in conflict zones) and has the buy-in of college principals makes it more likely to feed into sustainable change. My colleagues here would dearly love to travel overseas and discover all this for themselves but even short-hop budget airlines seem prohibitively



Helen with a class Christmas outing to a lakeside pagoda

expensive in relation to their salaries, so bringing the outside world to their colleges I guess is the next best thing.

What I try not to think about too much, however, is the scale of the task needed to reach all parts of a neglected education system: exams need to test understanding rather than rote memorization; teacher training support needs to move into the schools where trainees are doing teaching practice; textbooks need updating. However there is a new minister of education - it was going to be Daw Aung San Syu Kyi but her portfolio was too

big - so it is hoped that there will be movement on all these fronts. I know the Ministry of Education is in discussions with DFID about a follow-on project and in general I would describe the mood as cautious optimism.

Anyway, I hope this gives you some indication of what I've been doing. All the best, Helen"

Sustainable Energy in Rural Malawi and Zimbabwe

The African day used to end soon after sunset. This has been extended by the use of oil lamps and candles but these are relatively expensive and give only poor quality light.

The good news is that governments in many African Countries are now installing electricity supply grids. However, these often do not reach the distant rural areas where the poorest are often

to be found. The objective of this Practical Action led project is to reach some of these outlying areas and install mini electricity power grids powered by solar energy.

The domestic electricity will be cheap and affordable, often cheaper than the alternatives. But there are also wider objectives. Irrigation projects which are part of this large and varied project involve more economical systems such as drip feed irrigation which conserves water and delivers only to where it is precisely needed.

The scheme envisages cash crop farming and accordingly provide for the supply of seeds for new crops as well as fertilisers and insecticides. One poor crop may be replaced by two or three good ones and the surplus will be sold in the market through co-operatives which defend the producer's prices. However, first must come the water and the grid scheme provides the power for the irrigation pumps.

This is just one of the income generating aspects of the scheme which also provides for the use of power to found many varied domestic industries.

Schools will also benefit through lighting and power and clinics and hospitals require such power to refrigerate and store medicines. Areas even further away can power lighting and other electrical uses with batteries recharged at "kiosks" served by the grid.

SMOAT provided £1,600 in support of this scheme.

HARRY INGRAM

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