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ST MARK'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST

# Newsletter - Summer 2018

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Beth Prosser's photo conveys the enthusiasm that the Mozambican community showed for the clean and safe water supply she was involved in delivering, whilst she volunteered with Village Water last year.

You can read more of Beth's experiences on page 8.

*Date for your diary:*

**Quiz with Helier Dreux**

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October**

St Mark's Church Hall, Alma Road, Reigate

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

on Facebook via **SMOAT.org.uk/facebook**  
or from any of the committee.

REGISTERED CHARITY No.280091



## *Chair's thoughts*

I don't know whether it's maturity, having children or working more closely with the developing world, but in recent years I don't think there has been a day gone by when I haven't felt very thankful for the life I have. There are so many reasons I have to feel thankful: the love of family and friends; the community I am a part of; financial stability; the beauty of the place I live in, to name but a few. Some of the things that I am lucky to have though are very easy to take for granted: food on my table; a bed to sleep in; clean water; a feeling of safety, both personal and financial; a good education for my children.

One of the organisations we support regularly is Village Water. They reach villages which are remote and overlooked by the bigger charities such as WaterAid. These are villages where the people survive on a hand-to-mouth basis and live in extreme poverty.

Village Water constructs wells, training local people to form manual drilling teams and establish independent local businesses. The drilling teams then teach local people how to maintain the pumps and the villagers are provided with clean water. Now, you could be tempted to tick that box and think that you have helped them. However, wonderful as it is to have clean water on tap, as it were, in some cases the locals don't do enough to maintain the pumps and the wells become unfit for use. They don't realise the consequences of not looking after things. You could say that we are wasting our time supporting such ventures, but sometimes things just take a little longer to work out.

The people we support are used to living life on a day-to-day basis without anybody else's input. They don't know whether they will be here this time next year or even in a few months' time. They could starve if crops fail, they could get one of the many diseases, such as cholera or malaria which, although entirely preventable, still kill so many people in the developing world. They are uneducated and ignorant of the wider world.

It is very easy to judge and use our own standards as the measure but can we ever really understand what it is like to live their lives. Can you imagine not knowing from day-to-day whether you will still be here in a few weeks' time, or whether your children will still be alive, children being the most vulnerable to malnutrition and disease? Priorities change, mentalities are different and we can't possibly understand.

SMOAT is extremely careful with the money our supporters give us. We always ensure it goes to where it should. We ask for and receive

reports on how projects are progressing. There will be times when things don't go quite according to plan but those times are few and far between. The organisations we support follow up on their projects so that, if things slip, they can see where the problems lie and help out again.

You have to remember that most of the people who SMOAT reach have never been helped out before and sometimes, first time around, they won't get it right. Sometimes, it actually takes a failure to make a success. Having had fresh water and losing it, makes them realise that clean water and sanitation will change their lives. Their children won't die from water-borne diseases, they won't have to spend hours a day fetching water from crocodile infested waters and so they will be able to attend school or work to look after their families. Their lives will be transformed.

So, next time you are tempted to feel sorry for yourself, think about how other people are having to live their lives, try to be understanding of their failures, celebrate their successes and take a moment to be very thankful for what you have.

BARBARA PERKINS, *Chair, SMOAT Committee*

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## *Christmas Appeal Update*

Our Christmas Appeal for 2017/18 has turned out to be one of most successful ever thanks to the generosity of our supporters. The appeal closed with an amazing £6,500 of donations, and we intend to claim an additional £1,200 in Gift Aid.

In April I was absolutely thrilled to write cheques for £5,800 to Africa Water Enterprises and for £2,840 to Kaloko which were the full value of the projects assigned to us.

For those of you who attended the launch of the Appeal last November, you will remember the really outstanding



presentation from Rob Hygate from AWE outlining the extremely innovative and sustainable eWater Project which will enable cost effective and sustainable water supply in our designated location,



Nema Kuta, a poor rural farming community in The Gambia in West Africa.

You may recall, last year we provided funding for a water bore hole in this village. This larger project has fully funded the installation of a solar powered water system.

Rob provided us with an update in June which I'm delighted to share with you now: The system installation was completed with pay-as-you-go water on 18th May,

providing the villagers with 3,000l a day. The system is currently collecting £1.20 per day (£438 per year) which will cover running and maintenance costs. With 2 taps within 50m of the village, the high usage already proves that a minimal payment for a convenient and clean water supply is acceptable for this location. The locals were keen to report the following outcomes from the new taps:

- Trekking from village to village in search of water is over
- Withdrawing children from school to collect water is over
- Drinking from open well water is over
- No more quarrelling, queuing, gossiping and fighting at the old remote village tap
- We are happy to pay for our water because this will ensure sustainability and we can collect water from the tap anytime

Nema Kuta is already looking to add another 2,000l water tank to the water tower (which was built with this expansion in mind). With monies collected, the village can negotiate with local contractors to enlarge the system and pay for it themselves.



It is certainly with thanks to the generous donations from our appeal that the village now has sustainable clean water and the village can manage their own maintenance and expansion of the system.

This is small-scale development at its finest - bringing together expert technology and long term sustainability based on real demand.

What is so incredible is the speed at which the system has been put in place. It's a truly astonishing result. The project in The Gambia is unusual in its speed of completion.

A little longer in the making, is the fabulous dining hall built with the help of Impact Foundation in Mwingi Primary School in Kenya and funded in full from our **2016/17 Christmas Appeal**.

In April we received a special report from Pascale at Impact which detailed how our money has been spent at this school which includes a special unit for deaf children.

The school is severely under-resourced and money for school improvements is rarely available. We were delighted to fund the construction of a brand new dining room block which is also used as a communal space for leisure time for the boarders.



*The foundations going in*



*The completed Dining Hall*

The school's headteacher, Rosina Kitulya, sent us a heart-felt account with photos and videos of the children singing and signing thank you to SMOAT supporters. She said "We are very happy to have our facilities improved. The face of the school has changed a lot and the dining room is really beautiful. The kids are so happy".



If any of our supporters would like to read the reports from Impact and AWE in full, we would be absolutely delighted to share them with you.

NAOMI FLOOD

## *Introducing...*

Hi, I'm Jean and I am joining the SMOAT committee as the new treasurer replacing Naomi. In case you are wondering, Naomi is staying on the committee but wants to spend more time working on researching and developing projects for SMOAT to support.

I have been aware of SMOAT for many years through friends of mine who have been involved with SMOAT and from attending several SMOAT quiz nights. It is a charity I admire immensely for the funds it raises to help people in developing countries on very targeted and worthwhile projects.

I have long been interested in overseas development work and from 2003 to 2005 spent just over 2 years in Bangladesh working as a VSO volunteer for a local NGO involved in rural development projects.

The NGO I worked with, VERC, runs many projects in health,

education and water and sanitation in villages across Bangladesh. This amazing experience gave me an appreciation for how NGOs work in the development sector and also how lucky I am in my own life.

Since I returned from Bangladesh I've worked in fundraising in the charity sector in the UK, at Kew Gardens and at The Children's Trust at Tadworth.

I recently retired and friends of mine mentioned that SMOAT were looking for new committee members. I contacted Barbara and the rest, as they say, is history.

We are still in the handover period from Naomi to me as treasurer but I have already attended several committee meetings and came to the fantastic brunch hosted by Louise. It is great to be joining such a committed and passionate team and I hope I can make a worthwhile contribution.

JEAN WALLER

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## ***BINGO!***

Back in early Feb, we were delighted to welcome our SMOAT supporters for a fun afternoon at St Mark's Hall for our famous family Bingo. Much loved by both the old and the young, this is a game which truly unites all generations, with the competition running strong.

Graham Humphries took the helm again as caller, with our chair Barbara working as his glamorous assistant. Fuelled by copious amounts of cake, the atmosphere was superb, and certainly a great way to spend an otherwise dreary winter's afternoon.

We were delighted to raise just over £500 at this fun event. Topped up with additional donations from our generous regular givers, I was

delighted to write a cheque for £1,000 to Doctors for Nepal. This is a local Brighton-based charity set up by a British consultant which aims to improve healthcare in rural Nepal by empowering impoverished students to train as doctors, and serve in their isolated communities.

In rural areas, there is typically one doctor for approximately 120,000 people. DFN works to identify talented individuals from these rural areas to train under medical scholarships on the condition that on graduation, they return to these rural areas to work. To date, DFN now has 3 graduated doctors and six DFN scholarship medical and three nursing students.

All students sign an agreement to work for a minimum of four years in rural areas of Nepal once they have graduated; in doing so, they provide desperately needed medical care to areas that are bereft of doctors. DFN enables local communities to have doctors and health workers from their own areas, to provide sustainable healthcare.



Our donation will be used specifically for the funding of Kamal Hamal, a promising medical student currently in his third year of training. *He's on the left in this photo.*

After excellent exam results, he now starts his clinical training with the help of our donation. We look forward very much to tracking his progress going forward.

NAOMI FLOOD

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## *Three months with Village Water in Mozambique*

In September 2017 I set off for 3 months in Mozambique, an MSc 'Water: Science and Governance' graduate looking to forge a career in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Sector. It was through SMOAT I had been introduced to Village Water – an English charity providing water-points, hygiene education and sanitation training in rural Mozambique and Zambia.



I left for Mozambique with few expectations. I knew it would be a long journey, that I'd be south of the equator and basking in sunshine whilst England plunged into winter, and that I'd be spending the next few months helping to develop WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) education resources for Phase 2 of Village Water's project – or so I thought. One thing that is certain in Mozambique is that nothing will ever go to plan. It also rains. A LOT. In fact, if I were to sum up Mozambique in one word it would be 'unpredictable'.

I spent the next 3 months wishing I'd packed wellies and living in a particularly lively episode of 'EastEnders: Mozambique Edition' – those I worked with certainly had a passion for high drama. I was quick to learn that the only way to survive in a Mozambican work place is to relax, let go of all expectations and open yourself to all manners of unfathomable scenarios.

For all its frustrations and obstacles, this was a project I couldn't help but fall in love with. There is little more rewarding than finally succeeding at putting a water point in and really seeing the difference you are making to other people's lives. I will forever remember the joyous laughs of the village children as they competed to pump the water and fill up their jerry can the fastest.

I will remember how humbling it is to be invited to sit in their homes and share cashew fruit and fresh papaya. I will remember sweaty car journeys full of bananas and coconut biscuits and the jubilation when we made it back without the axel snapping and losing a tyre (this time!). I also return to England a more well-rounded woman, able to assemble an Afridev pump and measure the depth of a well using a spanner and rope, two skills I'm not sure will be so transferable here!

There are undoubtedly a number of things I won't miss about Mozambique. I can firmly say that I've had enough ncima (ground-up maize with the consistency of porridge) to last a lifetime and I really appreciate English Wi-fi. Toilets sheltered from the elements and showers with hot running water are luxuries you take for granted until you're 3 months with an open-air pit latrine and daily buckets of cold dirty water.

Yet I remain overwhelmed by the kindness and generous spirit of many of the friendships I made there and the feeling of satisfaction that comes from making a difference to someone's life. I will remember a country full of butterflies and mango trees where access to water away from a river teeming with crocodiles is a real gift. Mozambique is a country



of opportunity – it has extremely little but there’s so much room for more and I can sense a faint buzzing in the atmosphere that suggests things are on their way up.

Thank you to SMOAT for opening the door to such an opportunity.

BETH PROSSER

*A beautiful scene, but  
the water is not safe,  
and there could be  
crocodiles!*

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## ***A shared sense of direction: SAFAD and SMOAT***

I like to tell myself that, in most parts of England at least, I have a fair idea of where places are and how to get to them.

Much of this unfounded confidence stems from an obsession with railways (a life-long affliction for which there is, sadly, no known cure), which, in my pre-teenage years, caused me to spend hours at a time poring over maps and train timetables. How to get to Great Musgrave? No problem. Yate? Easy. Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch? OK - Wales, obviously, rather than England, but could not be more straightforward, and here is the platform ticket to prove it.

But there are, of course, very many places that I have never come across. Until I joined the SMOAT Committee, I had never heard of Silsoe. It turned out to be a small village in Bedfordshire, home to one of the campuses of Cranfield University. Silsoe Aid for Appropriate Development, or SAFAD, revealed itself to be a charity set up by the

university to enable its students, as volunteers with scientific, technological or engineering expertise, to participate in aid projects in developing countries. An ideal organisation, therefore, for SMOAT to partner, and funds have often been raised to assist the charity's work in the past.

It was in support of a SAFAD project that SMOAT recently held a highly successful Saturday Brunch. Promoted as "A Right Royal Brunch" because it took place on the Queen's official birthday, 9 June, it raised around £650 to help fund a SAFAD volunteer's placement in Honduras.

The volunteer, 22-year-old Annette Butty, is a Cranfield University student from France, where she studied tropical agriculture and international development. Having already worked in Senegal, Mexico and Burkina Faso, she is now in Sri Lanka on a placement with the International Water Management Institute.

At Cranfield, Annette is studying for an MSc in Water and Sanitation for Development. After completing her degree course in September, she will travel to Honduras in January 2019, where she will be volunteering for a year with Pure Water for the World, a USA-based not-for-profit organisation. The exact scope of Annette's work has yet to be defined, but will almost certainly include involvement with rainwater-harvesting projects.

We shall look forward to receiving updates from Annette regarding her placement during the next 18 months.

The venue for the Brunch was Louise and Ken Packer's home in Reigate, where, on a lovely summer's morning in their delightful garden (and wonderful kitchen), 65 SMOAT supporters and their friends consumed pastries and freshly-cooked sausages, eggs etc, as well as downing limitless cups of coffee and tea. A good time was, it seemed, had by all, and the SMOAT Trustees are sincerely grateful to all those who supported the event.

Ensuring that everyone's food was served at (roughly) brunchtime required some impressive teamwork and particular thanks are owed to Graham and Chris, drafted in as reinforcements, for their sterling efforts over a hot barbecue.

And did Silsoe ever have a railway station? It seems unlikely, but clearly further research is required here .....

DAVID LEAR

# *Data Protection*

Many thanks to everyone who has completed one of our “yellow forms” to confirm you still wish to receive the Newsletter. We could have taken the view that everyone on our supporters list had, once upon a time, signed up to receive information from us, but, whilst it could be reasonable to assume that those who have donated to us over the last four years, say, might expect to hear from us as to how their donations have been used, we feel that it’s been a useful exercise to reduce the size of the mailing list (and hence the cost of mailings) to only send the mailing to those who actually appreciate it and want it.

Those who hadn’t responded to the form in our Christmas mailing will have received a subsequent form, in an envelope by itself. Some have questioned the cost of this exercise – well the cost would have been lower had more people responded first time round! The cost has not fallen on SMOAT funds, in any case, and a significant additional number of people responded to the mailing in May, sent just before the GDPR deadline, so it has been a worthwhile exercise.

If you are reading this but are not on our mailing list, please do contact any of the committee, or me via email - [richard@smoat.org.uk](mailto:richard@smoat.org.uk) - to be added to the mailing list, or similarly use the same address should you have any updates to your contact details, or wish to be removed from our database.

So far as the security of your personal data is concerned, be assured that the mailing list is kept on encrypted / password protected computer drives, and is not shared with any other organisation.

RICHARD SALMON

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*For more information please contact any of the committee, listed below.  
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