



S · M · O · A · T

40 YEARS OF OVERSEAS AID

Newsletter - Summer 2020

SMOAT - 40 Years of Overseas Aid

2020 was to be a celebratory year for SMOAT, holding fundraising events and raising money to celebrate our 40th Anniversary. However, along with many other things, it has been thwarted by COVID-19. Of course, no-one could have predicted a global pandemic and, until it was well and truly upon us, I don't think any of us realised its severity and seriousness.

Whilst for me, it means staying at home in a comfortable house with a garden and keeping myself and my family safe, enjoying having the time to read and do some baking, whilst my children are continuing to be educated online, we know that for millions of other people, the pandemic will mean something so very different.

We heard a report the other day from Susannah Dyde, the UK Chairman of Maisha Trust. Her daughter, Sarah, founded Oasis Kindergarten in Kibera Slum, the largest slum in Africa, housing over 1 million people. The average size of a shack is 12ft x 12ft and each dwelling houses up to eight or more people. If/when the pandemic reaches them, it will be devastating. One million people squashed together in squalid conditions can hardly socially distance.

The date for our Quiz is currently Saturday 10 October.
Please check for updates of this and other SMOAT events
on our web site: **www.SMOAT.org.uk**
on Facebook via **[SMOAT.org.uk/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/SMOAT.org.uk/facebook)**

REGISTERED CHARITY No.280091



However, their main concern is not the pandemic, it is extreme poverty and starvation. As Kenya is in lockdown, no-one is allowed out of the slum to work and so families have absolutely no source of income – no furloughing system or unemployment benefit for them to keep their families fed.

Kibera Slum will not be the only place in the world to be experiencing this life-threatening crisis. As we know, this could go on for months and, during that time, millions of people throughout the developing world could die from starvation. I find that information hard to hear, hard to write down and hard to live with. It is impossible to know how to help so many people, spread so far around our world. It's like stopping an avalanche with a garden trowel. But it does make me realise the importance of organisations such as SMOAT, which offer relief to millions of people worldwide each year.

I am immensely proud to be a part of SMOAT, a small, local charity which has stood the test of time and, after 40 years, continues to raise money to help people out of poverty and give them a chance to live a good, sustainable life. During that 40 years, we have gifted over £600,000 to charities throughout the developing world. £600,000 might not seem like a vast amount but over 40 years it equates to an average of £15,000 per annum, which is actually a huge amount in poor countries - it goes a long way! You can be sure that between us, we have saved thousands and thousands of lives and given people hope for the future.

Over the next few years, SMOAT will be picking up some of the pieces caused by this pandemic. We cannot stop it but we will be there in the aftermath to help give people their lives back, to provide safe water, education, healthcare and opportunities for small businesses.

So, whilst at the moment the news is hideous and offers little or no hope for people already living in poverty, please remember that this is our world. We should take responsibility not just for ourselves but for others who cannot possibly do it without help.

We cannot celebrate our 40th Anniversary in the way that we would have liked but we can celebrate by looking back at our achievements and looking forward to being able to continue our

work. In the meantime, I cannot thank you enough for your unerring support over the years and thank you to our regular givers for giving money on a regular basis so that at times such as these, when we cannot hold events to raise money, we still have money coming to us so that we can continue to help people.

As Nelson Mandela once said: *“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.”*

BARBARA PERKINS, *Chairman*

A REPORT ON THE FIRST FORTY YEARS OF SMOAT

*By Harry Ingram, former long-standing Chairman,
Treasurer and committee member*

SMOAT began modestly in 1980, moved by the desire of a small group to do just something in response to the massive needs of what was then called the Third World. This came about as the result of a parish weekend at Cambridge sponsored by the Rev Ian Kitteringham. This was followed by the showing of the film “Five Minutes to Midnight” which set out comprehensively the prospect of starvation in the Third World, if nothing were done.

I can still see in my mind’s eye St Mark’s hall packed beyond capacity, hundreds seated and others standing at the back and to the sides. It has never been so full since that night. I doubt whether anyone left that room without some feeling of despair at what was foretold.

So a committee was formed under the leadership of Sylvia Weatherald. David and Viv Biggs suggested a water project for Lesotho, overseen by Mrs Coker a resident there; a friend they had made when VSO volunteers. The spur may have come from the heart but from the outset SMOAT undertook its objectives in the most practicable ways.

A trust deed was drawn up, trustees nominated and slowly they set about raising £1,000 for their project. SMOAT was to be an enterprise separate from the church and also involve people in the parish who

were not attenders. I very much doubt whether those founding members dreamed of what was to come. This was the first faltering step in an area where no one had experience.

During the process of carrying out the project so far away as Lesotho, spirits were supported by homely hand-written letters from Mrs Stoker, setting out the detail of the project and how it progressed. The plan was to draw water from a river and pipe it to irrigate a new school garden in which to grow vegetables to improve the diet of the children. Mrs Coker recruited local voluntary help on technical issues and the local parents helped with the labour. It was an outstanding success in widening the diet and raising the standard of living of the children.

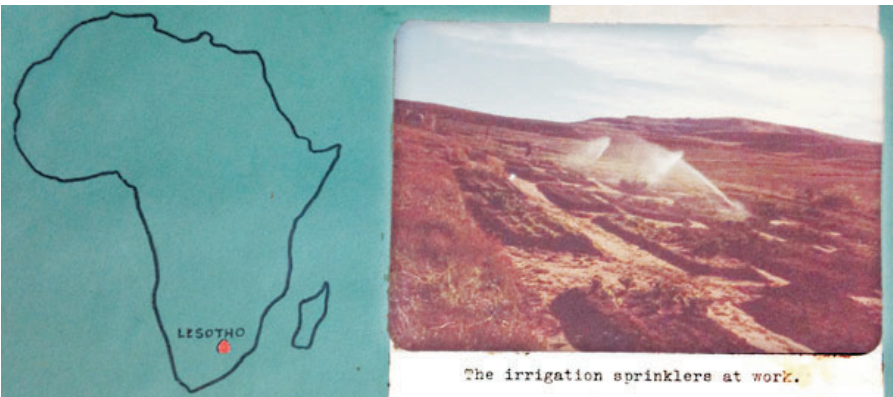


Photo as part of a poster reporting on that first project in Lesotho

Today this may seem routine, but then it was innovation. I am tempted to say the rest is history but then this is what I am writing about. The history of SMOAT is a story of a committee of like-minded persons with a simple commitment, widely supported by a growing number of like-minded people both within and outside of the parish.

But it is much more than that. The commitment is illustrated by the fact that in forty years there have been only seven chairmen and six treasurers. Mostly people join and stay, unusual for a fund raising activity.

The commitment by individuals has lasted. The members became a group of friends rather than a formal committee. Newcomers are soon drawn within the circle. Debate can be vigorous but always the committee has remained united both in spirit and in cooperative action. Members do not seek their own way but consensus.

That early Lesotho project was highly successful. It did exactly what it set out to do. What next? I am not sure that question was ever asked. SMOAT simply went on to choose another and then another project. Good intentions can be habit forming!

The theme running from the beginning of SMOAT, and still present today, is towards self help projects which are good value for money and usually likely to last and serve a long term need. However, over the years there have been changes in how this mission has been delivered and that is what this article tries to show.

Notably, whilst the Committee is still populated by enthusiasts, its numbers have shrunk to a smaller committee of about seven or eight. This makes meetings and decisions easier but the work has to be carried through by fewer. Secondly, working members' time is limited and it is remarkable how they manage fund raising activities so effectively.

ACCOUNTS

What can one find from the accounts for the 40 years. SMOAT has generated no profits, paid no salaries, accumulated no assets, paid no dividends or achieved any other of the objects of much of our society. Instead it has raised over £600,000 from gifts and fund raising events and given it away to the poor and less fortunate in some of the poorest countries of the World. There is nothing to show for it apart from distant lives saved and changed for the better.

For brevity I am showing the figures for every five years.

	Income	Gifts made
1980 - 84	40,482	37,004
1985 - 89	119,622	115,725
1990 - 94	66,921	63,819
1995 - 99	61,248	65,040
2000 - 04	61,539	61,645
2005 - 09	88,516	95,911
2010 - 14	79,629	78,509
2015 - 19	<u>97,353</u>	<u>99,397</u>
	619,916	617,050

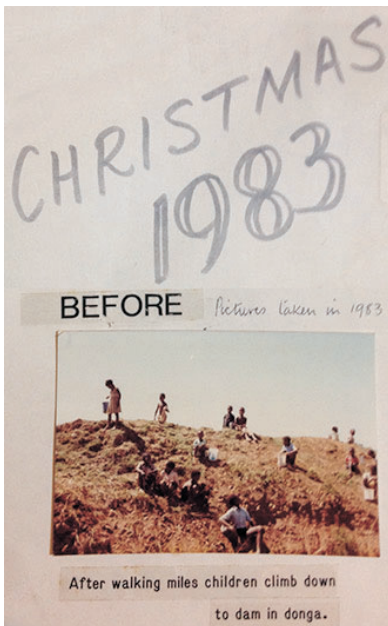
In the five years to 1989, there were exceptionally large bequests of £56,946. If these are excluded the result is 62,676, more in line with surrounding periods.

The expenses of fund raising events are deducted in arriving at income. Other expenses were just 0.5% of income and were mainly insurance. Many incidentals were and still are met by Committee members.

INCOME

Income has remained steady with an upward trend only in the last 15 inflationary years. The total income of £619,916 is a remarkable result and when it is grossed by the rate of inflation this gives in present day values a total of over £1m!

Furthermore, it needs to be borne in mind that the congregation of St Mark's, from which the bulk of support comes, has dropped and its profile changed considerably. In the early years there were more worshippers and a smoother age profile which made it easier to attract numbers to all events, whereas today the age profile varies and events often have to be pitched to certain age groups. However, today's support is still critical to success.



claim Gift Aid now, which makes a reasonable difference to the amounts we raise; last year, for instance, it accounted for 12% of our income.

In most years the largest single source of income is the Christmas Appeal, providing over 30% of income. Then there is regular giving and other donations, which amount to around 30%, and fund raising events at around 25% which, as well as raising income, also keeps the aims of SMOAT very much in the minds of our supporters. We also



GIFTS

So where and for what use has the money gone?

When I read the annual reports of the other Surrey "OATs", formed soon after SMOAT, I see their funds always go to needy projects but often they have been of the nature of emergency aid and have not supported the continuance of such work.

From the outset, SMOAT adopted the criteria of supporting self-help projects, of good value for money and likely to bring long lasting benefits. For the first 25 years or so, projects were each considered on their merits and against other possible choices by the whole Committee. The result was support for any project of merit across the spectrum of water, agriculture, health, education and domestic enterprise. That is still largely the case but there have been changes.

The advent of email has greatly helped the dissemination of information and a sub-committee has relieved the main Committee from the work of a paper sift and now the sub-committee selects a list of suitable projects from which the main committee makes the final decision.

Another change has been a movement away from the larger organisations, which have grown over the years and no longer need SMOAT's money, towards smaller organisations. Over the years, SMOAT has established good and trusting relationships with many organisations, which can be relied on to supply good projects for us to support.

Finally, SMOAT has learned more about need and how best to approach it.

Of course the need for clean water is still paramount in many places mainly in Africa. Teams set up and supported by small organisations. For instance, Village Water have been very successful in Malawi and Zambia and have now also moved on to helping local teams to carry out the drilling and supplementary work independently.

Organisations such as Project Uganda and Faith in Action (Malawi) specialise in supporting identified areas. Project Uganda concentrates mainly on constructional work such as workshops and rainwater harvesting but also on irrigation. Building is the specialism of the family which goes for a month or more annually to assist in planning and carrying out such work. Faith in Action operates in the Shire flood plane of Malawi, financing support over a wide range of operations, economic, health and social, but particularly irrigation (first by wind

pumps and now using solar energy) changing agriculture from uncertain subsistence to the market gardening of two to three crops a year. This raises incomes in a very difficult area.

Other area based organisations specialise in particular services. For example, BRINOS sends teams of hearing specialists annually from this country to Nepal to hold clinics and carry out surgery in difficult terrain not reached by medical services. They have now also built a specialist hospital for this purpose. Doctors for Nepal enables the training of local residents as doctors and nurses, again to service remote areas.

SMOAT has learned that advancing the independence of regions involves finance to enable locals to start up small businesses. For some years they have supported Microloan Finance, which has a reputation for a high recovery of loans so they can revolve and operate many times. There are now other organisations providing the same service.

Familiarity with projects uncovers the very considerable difficulties in successfully setting up and supporting new enterprises. It requires compassion and commitment but also realism and controls. For example, in The Gambia many water points have failed through lack of maintenance and communities have reverted to old ways. Recently, SMOAT supported a new organisation to them, Africa Water Enterprises, which has a new realistic approach. Many water schemes provide for maintenance by the locals but this approach doesn't always work. Africa Water Enterprises renovates water points financed using a touch system and mobile phones to charge users so as to fund maintenance which is provided on a next day basis.

Another example of recent innovation by The Virtual Doctors is the connection between health workers in Africa and GPs in this country who give treatment advice using mobile phones.

These changes, which enhance the value of giving though SMOAT, cannot be attached to a date or circumstance. They have evolved slowly over the years.

Enabling growth in living standards in the Developing World can only be effected through their governments with help from the governments of wealthier countries and with assistance from the big actors, such as Oxfam and Practical Action. But, as with the UK, help is also required at the micro level by the people concerned and this is where smaller organisations such as SMOAT come in. They need to provide not only aid finance but assistance in developing more effective ways of addressing the future. And that is what SMOAT has tried to do over forty years.

HARRY INGRAM

Our vision for SMOAT during COVID19 and a potential era of social distancing

In these turbulent and unprecedented times, SMOAT has entered its 40th year. Certainly, this was not what we envisaged in the run up to our Ruby Anniversary - 2020 has turned out to be momentous for entirely different reasons for us all.

Our celebrations have been placed on hold, and more than that, so has our 'business-as-usual' as lock down prevents us from our usual programme of fund raising events.

The impact of COVID 19 on developing and poor nations is far more catastrophic. Coronavirus is possibly the biggest disaster for developing nations in our lifetime. Lack of medical equipment, poor sanitation, economies dependent on the informal sector and the escalation of hunger and poverty during lock down will cause unknown magnitudes of damage. As the Guardian wrote in April, "the devastating economic and health crises in poorer countries will affect the whole world."

As large players in the Aid relief world mobilise their appeals to fund PPE and emergency aid, where does SMOAT sit faced with this unfolding tragedy? What challenges does COVID-19 and a potential extended era of social distancing mean for SMOAT?

Unlike many overseas aid charities, our funding has never been used for emergency aid relief. As Harry writes in his article about the history of SMOAT, the primary ethos and mission of SMOAT in fact remains unchanged since it was formed 40 years ago.

Rather, SMOAT has funded carefully selected and small scale self-help and livelihood projects which offer longer term positive impacts for communities. In addition, one of the core objectives of SMOAT has been to raise awareness within our local community of the issues faced by those living in the poorest countries.

SMOAT funds carefully selected projects delivered by locally-led partner organisations in the poorest countries. Certainly, for many of these organisations, in the short and medium term at least, some of their projects may be placed on hold and delayed, or resources diverted to fighting poverty.

We have been in touch with our partner organisations to try and understand the issues on the ground and how their work is being affected by COVID-19. As we are unable to fund raise through events, we inevitably have less income to allocate. Consequently, this year we are realistically likely to fund fewer projects, but will maintain our work in line with the objectives and spirit of SMOAT.

Our treasurer Jean explains in her article how regular giving contributed nearly a quarter of our income last year, on top of which we can also usually claim gift aid. In the absence of our usual programme of events, those donations will be hugely valued and very carefully allocated. Using our remaining reserves and regular

giving money, we will continue to work closely with partner organisations to identify whether there are things we can fund that fit our criteria.

This week I was delighted to send off a cheque for £1,100 to our long standing partners, IMPACT Foundation, which will fund an Intensive Care Unit bed in a clinic in Cambodia. Desperately needed in the current crisis, this will also have a long term use going forward to assist in health outcomes.

As the weeks tick on, we wait to see what the 'new normal' might look like in the UK regarding social distancing and the gradual reopening of our society. It is difficult for us to predict anything too far in advance at the moment, but we are intending to creatively consider events in the new climate we are all working in and keen to stay in touch.

It goes without saying that we very much value your ongoing support and any donations you can provide will be carefully allocated to projects delivered by trusted partners.

NAOMI FLOOD

SMOAT Zooms into the future

Well, there were no apologies for absence, which confirmed that everyone was fulfilling the requirement to stay at home. Even better, no-one fell asleep, proof that we were all staying alert. Another box ticked.

Like all organisations that manage their affairs through committees, SMOAT was challenged to find new ways of working when the coronavirus lockdown was imposed, and staging a virtual meeting by joining the Zoom boom was found to be the obvious solution.

Although I confess to never having heard of the online meeting facility until about five months ago, already it is tempting to wonder whether this may become the norm for committee management in the not too distant future.

Some of the SMOAT committee, it turned out, were now Zooming during nearly all their waking hours, for work, social or - as in SMOAT's case - voluntary activity purposes. Their previous Zoom experience showed at our first meeting, when it took quite a while for some of us to adjust to the time lapse before anyone hears what has just been said and can respond. "Sorry ..." "No, after you ..." "Sorry, no please go on" No doubt it was all good practice for any occasion when the entire SMOAT committee is required to pass through a revolving door. If that were ever to happen, plenty of time should be allowed.

We have now held two Zoom meetings. As April and May are two of the months when daylight fades in the 90 minutes or so after 8 p.m., it was disconcerting to watch some of our number gradually fading into darkness, only to be dramatically illuminated as a light was turned on. However, the freedom to decide individually when it has become too dark must be a good thing, and I fear ongoing arguments about the suitability of light levels when we resume meeting in members' homes.

Minute-taking - my role - proved easier than anticipated. In fact the discussions were perhaps more ordered than usual, maybe because we were so aware of the likelihood of talking across each other. The minutes habitually record the address of the member's home where the meeting takes place; now, having conscientiously

listed six of the seven different addresses, I gave up, and “via Zoom” had to suffice.

Naturally, we provided our own refreshments. Gone were the cakes and biscuits, often home-made and gluten-free. Mugs of coffee and (probably herbal) tea were glimpsed, but little if any food appeared to be consumed. Really a bowl of fruit for each of us would have been most appropriate; after all, there we all were for 90 minutes or so, glued to our screens, a bunch of sat Zoomers. And, when we neared the end of the official business, there was little appetite for further online chatting. Too many people had other Zoom calls to make before the evening was out.

DAVID LEAR

Our last pre-lockdown fund-raiser

At times, it feels as if the progress of the coronavirus pandemic has wreaked havoc with the passage of time. Perhaps this is because, under lockdown, our physical horizons have become much narrower.

As so many activities, whether related to family, work or leisure, have ceased to be permissible, we have focused more of our time on a smaller number of the things that we do.

Days of the week have blurred into each other, and, for many of us, those stand-out events that highlight our calendar have - we trust temporarily - become a thing of the past.

Similarly, the pre-pandemic early weeks of 2020 seem to belong to a distant era. Was it really only four months ago when SMOAT held a Bingo afternoon in St Mark’s Church Hall?

Apparently it was - Sunday January 26th, four months ago to the day at the time of writing. A winter’s afternoon: how much,



as well as the weather, has subsequently changed.

The Bingo afternoon is always a happy and successful event. For SMOAT, it is a relatively rare fund-raiser in so far as it appeals to all the generations. This year, it was genuinely heart-warming to watch family groups, including babies, children, parents and grandparents, enjoying themselves together and occasionally winning prizes, all under the guidance of our caller *par excellence*, Graham Humphries.

It was a curious coincidence that the attendance, expressed in terms of the nicknames given to Bingo calling numbers, was staying alive - "staying alive" being the caller's nickname for 85. Now, as we look back over the past four months, the words seem to have a very special resonance.

As always at these events, the refreshment interval was extremely popular, with copious quantities of tea, coffee, juice and cake being consumed. Children persuaded their parents to bankroll their attempts to raid the tombola, and the event generated an excellent financial outcome, raising just under £640.

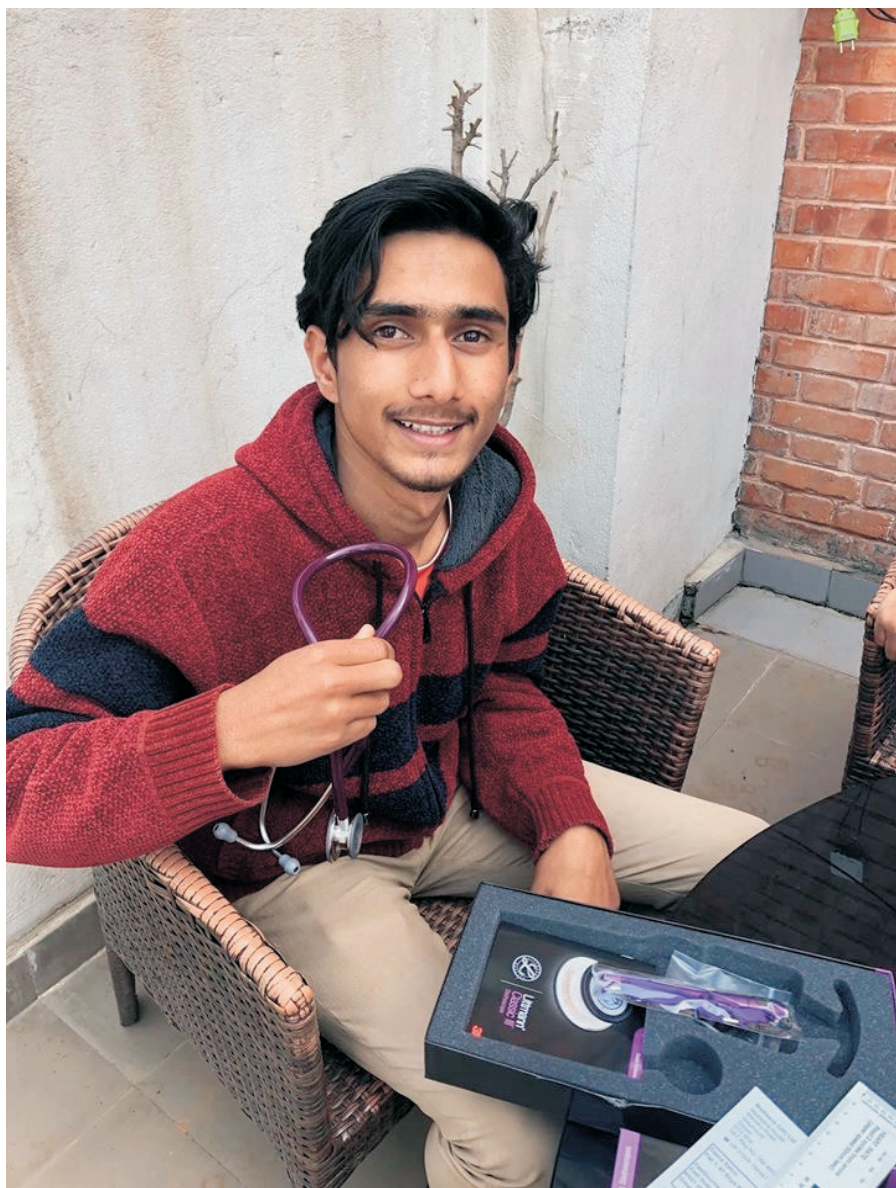
And what was it all in aid of? The Bingo afternoon enabled

SMOAT to send a cheque for £1,000 to Doctors for Nepal, a charity that funds the training of medical students from rural regions of that country. After qualification, they return to their local areas to practise as doctors. The financial assistance can take various forms, paying for training or equipment. In this instance, SMOAT's gift of £1,000 has funded the purchase of a stethoscope for Santosh. If any proof were needed, the delightful photograph of Santosh with his new instrument on the next page seems to confirm that the donation was very much appreciated.

One final and very important point: it will have been noted that the sum sent to Doctors for Nepal exceeded the actual proceeds of the Bingo afternoon. That SMOAT was able to increase the amount to £1,000 was due to the generosity of our regular givers, whose donations are especially valued in these exceptionally difficult times, with fund-raising events inevitably on hold.

The SMOAT committee would like to express its grateful thanks to all our regular givers and to all those who supported the Bingo afternoon in any way.

DAVID LEAR



Santosh, a sponsored trainee with Doctors for Nepal, with the stethoscope SMOAT has funded from the proceeds of the Bingo event.

Financial Review of 2019 and 2020

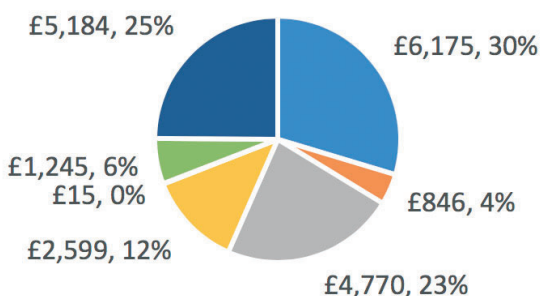
Sadly we are unable to hold our AGM as usual this year, so I thought I'd write something for the Newsletter to review our accounts for 2019.

Firstly I'd like to thank Thalia Hessey for reviewing the accounts again and ensuring we are keeping accurate records.

Our total income for 2019 was £20834. Our only expenditure during the year was £129 for our liability insurance, giving a net income of £20705. The results compared to 2018 are shown in the table below:

	2019	2018
Total Income	£20,834	£20,385
Total Expenditure	£129	£129
Net Receipts	£20,705	£20,256
Gifts Made	£19,848	£19,790
Excess of Income over Gifts	£857	£466

The income by amount and percentage of total breaks down into the following categories:



- Christmas Appeal 2018/19
- Christmas Appeal 2019/20 *
- Regular Giving Donations
- Tax refund (Gift Aid)
- Interest
- Other Donations
- Fund Raising Events (net proceeds)

In 2019 we held 4 events. The Beetle Drive in February was great fun, chasing away the winter blues, and raised £410 in aid of Bees for Development. The Jazz Night in March was a huge success and raised £1961 for Freedom From Fistula. Our biennial Smootathon in September gave our talented supporters a chance to show their skills and raised an amazing £1797, plus gift aid, for Afrinspire. And finally our quiz in October drew a lot of interest and raised £993 for Faith in Action.

In total we made gifts of £19848 to some very worthwhile projects. The donations made during the year are summarised below:



Once again it was a very successful year and with your help and support we have been able to make some significant donations to projects that are making a real difference to people's lives. Thank you so much.

So what will 2020 bring?

2020 got off to a good start with our Christmas Appeal which raised £5930 before gift aid, followed by our Bingo event which raised £638 for Doctors for Nepal. Unfortunately due to the Covid 19 situation we have had to cancel our barbecue brunch event and will be monitoring the situation regarding other events later in the year – who knows, perhaps we will go online for our quiz!

Whilst our events are important, they only account for 25% of our income.

We must recognise the importance of our regular givers who contribute 23% of our income, before gift aid. This regular income is so important

as it enables us to make donations to such worthwhile projects as Village Water and Chase Africa. If you feel you are able to make a regular gift to SMOAT, please contact me and I'll send a standing order form to you. My email is treasurer@smoat.org

All our donors and supporters are so important to our continued success and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them wholeheartedly for their generosity. I hope this report gives you an overview of the SMOAT income and donations for 2019, and also how 2020 is shaping up.

JEAN WALLER, *Treasurer*

Update from Village Water

Receiving reports back from our charity partners regarding projects we have supported is one of the highlights for the SMOAT committee. We recently received a wonderful positive update from Village Water.

Back in January 2019 we made a £1,000 donation, from our generous regular giving contributions, to help purchase drilling equipment for their well construction team based in Western Province, Zambia. You can see below a picture of the team receiving the tool kit we helped fund.



They now have four teams trained in low cost well construction technologies. These teams carry out public demonstrations to show-case services they can offer clients to start them on the ladder to improve their water supply. The report explained how these four teams

have now reached 232 clients, helping 2,966 people. In addition, a further 15,080 people were able to benefit from the newly installed pumps in seven market-places as part of the project.

Interestingly they explained that whilst their work, like so many other charities, has been hard hit by the effect of the pandemic, the actual number of corona virus cases reported is fairly low in their project areas. The figures, at the time of writing, standing at 920 cases in Zambia with 7 deaths. However, they noted the likelihood is that the

impact is actually much graver, but they simply don't have the testing capacity. Whilst the government have taken massive precautionary measures, rates are rising. Schools and universities have been closed since mid March and social meetings of more than five people are banned.

This has meant that some of the charity's planned activities such as school and community based training have had to be put on hold. However, improvements to water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure are as important as ever. Village Water have therefore been asked by the government offices to do what they can to support them in terms of education and public messaging about the symptoms of the virus, and preventative measures. The charity are therefore pivoting their planned activity for 2020 around a focus on repairing broken down rural water points to bring safe water back to communities with key training on coronavirus prevention. Their knowledge and expertise could prove more vital to rural communities now more than ever.

CLAIRE BOWERS

Christmas Appeal 2019

Our Christmas Appeal last year supported two organisations new to us. Whilst you might think it a little risky to support new organisations with such large potential donations, I can assure you that we made absolutely sure that they stood up to our rigorous checks. Not only that, but we spoke to them on numerous occasions and got a feel for the people working in those organisations. It was no surprise to find that they were as committed and dedicated as all the organisations we support and so we felt secure in the knowledge that they would have some great projects for us to support. They didn't disappoint us and I hope you agree with me that the two projects we supported are exciting and sustainable, providing better futures for all involved.

EducAid – The Women's Project

The status of women and girls in Sierra Leone is among the worst in the world. Gender inequality is deeply engrained in tradition and cultural practices with women and girls experiencing discrimination and disadvantage across every sphere of life. Sierra Leone has one of the highest prevalence rates for female genital mutilation in West Africa 18% of girls are married by the age of 15, and 44% by the age of 18. These statistics translate into daily suffering for girls and women in Sierra Leone. Education is one of the areas where gender inequalities are most obvious and also where there is incredible opportunity.

The Women's Project encourages and supports young women and girls returning to education.



We supported a refurbishment project at Lumley School in Freetown. The space involved doubles as a boarding facility and a classroom, with tables being turned over and made into beds. Amongst other young women, this school will be

taking women from the Freedom from Fistula programme (which we supported in 2019), helping them back into mainstream education. The plan is to take twenty young women into the school (ten from the Freedom from Fistula programme), with the long-term plan being to support some 150 women back into mainstream education over the next three years, and many more into the future.

We were able to send £4,150 to EducAid, which will cover the classroom refurbishment, enabling these young women to return to education and kick-start their lives, giving them a strong chance of a good future.

Simien Mountains Project – Blood testing for antenatal care and patient diagnosis

The aim of the Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Services (SMMMS) is to deliver essential medical care at no cost to remote villages in the Simien Mountains in Bangladesh. Although there are two roads to the west and south of this area, the interior is still only accessible by foot or trusty mule. This means that it can be a two day round trip to a clinic, a journey which many people cannot undertake. Consequently, many treatable conditions can become life-threatening.

Currently, there is virtually no laboratory capability at local health facilities to test blood for haemoglobin, do a white blood cell count or record blood sugar levels for antenatal patients and the diagnosis of infections and disease. We were asked to support the purchase of at least one HemoCue 201+. This is a hand-held device for testing blood

samples. The goal of SMMMS is to provide one device for their clinic, seven devices for each of the seven government health centres they support with midwives, as well as their five mobile nurses. The midwives and nurses will sign for their devices and be accountable for them. The people served by these devices will total nearly 350,000 in an area larger than Yorkshire, which gives you an indication of the area covered by just five nurses and seven midwives. By operating a mobile medical service directly into the remote villages, it is hoped to significantly improve the health and wellbeing of the people of the Simien Mountains.

We were able to send £2,975 to SMMMS. As each unit costs in the region of £595, this means that they will be able to buy five units, potentially giving



many thousands of people a chance to treat conditions before they become life-threatening.

BARBARA PERKINS

We are now making tickets for some SMOAT events available online through TicketSource. For event details, see www.SMOAT.org.uk

For more information please contact any of the committee, listed below. To join our mailing list, or to switch to receiving an electronic (rather than a paper) copy of the Newsletter, e-mail richard@smoat.org.uk

Barbara Perkins (Chairman) e-mail: chairman@smoat.org.uk
Jean Waller (Treasurer) e-mail: treasurer@smoat.org.uk

Richard Salmon
David Lear
Louise Barr

Claire Bowers
Naomi Flood