

## $S \cdot M \cdot O \cdot A \cdot T$

40 YEARS OF OVERSEAS AID

# **Newsletter - Summer 2021**

# Our next Fundraising Event: Breakout Brunch!

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> July

Subject to restrictions in place at the time, we are planning to hold a Barbeque Brunch, serving a Full English Breakfast including Juice and a choice of Tea and Coffee, in a garden in Reigate.

Vegetarian option available.

There will be four overlapping sittings, with 25 tickets available for each 55-minute sitting, with tickets available for sittings starting at 10am, 10.30, 11, and 11.30.

Tickets, at £10 each, will be available soon, from Committee members, and on Ticketsource, with details also available on our web site and on Facebook.

www.SMOAT.org.uk

# **SMOAT's Annual Report**

The annual report normally presented at our Annual Public Meeting is instead available online via our website, and on <u>YouTube</u>. This newsletter also contains detailed reports on last year's activities.

SMOAT.org.uk/facebook

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### A GLANCE AT EXTREME POVERTY

The World Bank defines extreme poverty as living on less than \$1.90 per day. That's about £1.37 at the time of writing, which is £9.59 per week to buy everything - food, clothes, education, healthcare, etc, etc. They estimate that COVID-19 could add as many as 150 million people to those living in extreme poverty by the end of 2021. I thought I would take a look at three of the poorest countries in the world. These are countries which SMOAT has sent aid to in the past. Here is a brief overview of some of the information I found.

Mozambique, with a population of around 33.3 million people, has a poverty rate which increased by 55% to 60% during the period 2015 to 2019. This corresponds to an increase from 16.7 million to 18.2 million people. As you can see, well over half of the population is living in extreme poverty.

In 2019, Cyclone Idai hit Mozambique, Malawi, Botswana and Zimbabwe, affecting 3 million people. In 2020 the whole world was hit by COVID-19 - cases rose by 82% during the period 5-31 January. And, at the beginning of 2021, Mozambique was hit by Cyclone Eloise. Looking at just one area of Mozambique, the Buzi District, where the population in 2019 was 177,000, 130,000 of those people were estimated to be in need of food, shelter and WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) following Cyclone Idai. They then had to deal with the pandemic and, in the midst of that, they were hit by Cyclone Eloise. The houses of the poorest people are constructed from mud and poles and so they are always more vulnerable to extreme weather. Thousands

of people were d is placed following each of the cyclones and many thousands of hectares of crops were lost to floods, destroying smallholdings and people's livelihoods.



This is what is left of Rezinha's home



And this is the makeshift home she now lives in with her children

The Democratic Republic of Congo has a population of over 87 million people. In 2018, it was estimated that 73% of the population – over 60 million people – were living in extreme poverty. 23 of the 26 provinces have been affected by the pandemic and this is only likely to worsen. There has also been a resurgence of the Ebola virus.

Conflict and inter-ethnic violence in Eastern DRC forced over 1 million people to flee their homes in 2020, aggravating an already complex displacement and hunger crisis. It is estimated that around 40% of the people in the Eastern provinces are approaching starvation levels. 3.4 million children are acutely malnourished and 42.7% of children are

stunted.

With a population of over 19.5 million people (around 80% living in rural areas), Malawi remains one of the poorest countries in the world with over 50% of its people



living below the poverty line and over 25% living in extreme poverty. The economy is heavily dependent on agriculture, with 80% of the population relying on agriculture for a living, most of those being smallholder farmers. However, it is extremely vulnerable to climatic shocks, and flooding is a regular occurrence, frequently wiping out farmland and homes and displacing its people.

Malawi's economy has been heavily impacted by COVID-19 and the second wave of the pandemic has been more intense than the first. With the vaccine not expected to reach a significant proportion of the population until mid-2022, poverty is increasing.

Only 11.4% of the population has access to electricity.



Of course, we can't forget that there are people in the UK living in poverty. Here, according to the Government, poverty is defined as living with an income of 60% of the UK average salary. That means that families

earning £17,760 per annum or less are identified as living in relative poverty. In 2019/20, 18% of the population were living with an income of £17,760 pa or less. This is a shocking figure in a developed country, but I maintain that living in poverty in the UK is quite unlike living in poverty in places like Mozambique, The Democratic Republic of Congo or Malawi. We live in a democratic and peaceful society; we have plentiful clean water; we have a free healthcare system; we have a free education system, available to every single child; and we live in relatively stable environmental conditions. I know that the demands on foodbanks have, sadly, been very high, particularly during COVID, and that housing is an issue, but the conditions in the UK are not as harsh or hopeless as in some parts of the world. We are also very lucky to be living in a country which is ahead of the game with the vaccination roll-out.

So, what point am I making? Well, firstly, we should never take anything for granted. And, of course, we do every day when we turn on our taps, send our children out to school or put a meal on our table, but we should try to remember how very lucky we are. Secondly – and I know I'm preaching to the converted as this newsletter only goes out to our supporters – we must always try to remember our friends in other parts of the world who are struggling every day to keep their families alive. When you are considering your charitable giving, make a place in your calculations for overseas aid. A little money goes a long way to help people out of poverty and, if every person from wealthier countries who was able to give, gave just a little money, everyone in the world would receive the same basic rights in life - water, sanitation, food, education and healthcare.

BARBARA PERKINS, Chairman

## **SMOAT - A Financial Review of 2020**

At the moment it looks unlikely that we will be able to hold an AGM and present the accounts this year, so here is a written summary.

Our total income for 2020 was £16,514. Our expenditure during the year was £236, covering our liability insurance and newsletter printing costs, giving a net income of £16,278.

The results compared to 2019 are shown in the table below:

	2020	2019
Total Income	£16,514	£20,834
Total Expenditure	£236	£129
Net Receipts	£16,278	£20,705
Gifts Made	£17,360	£19,848
Excess of Income over Gifts	-£1,082	£857

Our income fell by approximately 20% compared to 2020. The breakdown by category is shown below:



In 2020 the impact of Covid on our events was significant. We held our Family Bingo afternoon in January before the lockdown and raised £638 for Doctors for Nepal. Unfortunately after that all our face to face events were cancelled. Undeterred we organised our SMOAT@Home where we produced homemade cream teas and delivered them to your door. We sold over 100 teas and raised £938

for Faith in Action. In 2019 we raised £5184 through 4 events and in 2020 we raised £1576 so the impact of Covid on our event income has been significant.

Our Christmas Appeal raised £6212 in donations - this includes donations received prior to 2019 year end. With gift aid we raised £7266.

This year the income from our Regular Givers has been critical to enabling us to continue to provide support. Thank you so much to all our regular givers. If you aren't a regular giver but feel you could make a regular donation please contact me by email on treasurer@smoat.org.uk and I'll send you a standing order form.

In total we made gifts of £17360. We paid out slightly more than we received as we had a small reserve in the bank that facilitated this. The donations made during the year are summarised below:

It has been a challenging year for both us and the people we support and we are proud that even with the reduction in our income we have, with your support, been able to



make some significant donations to projects that are making a real difference to people's lives. Thank you so much.

2021 looks like it will be equally challenging in terms of face-to-face events although we hope to start holding events again later in the year. Our supporters have really stepped up in their support for us and our Christmas Appeal has raised more than ever before – there is a separate article on this. As we couldn't hold our usual family friendly bingo event we set up our Sunflower Growing competition – thank you to everyone who is supporting this. Again it was well supported and we raised over £700 - I hope all your sunflowers are growing well.

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.

## **UPDATE FROM BETH PROSSER**

Beth is an MSc Water: Science and Government graduate who has known from the outset how she wanted her career to progress. Three years ago, she was a member of the SMOAT Committee, keen to learn more about the projects we supported and how they ran. We were delighted when Beth secured a job in the industry in which her passion lay and here is an update from her on how things are going.

## SMOAT Update - April 2021

It's hard to believe that it's been more than three years since I left for Mozambique with Village Water to support their team with providing access to clean water across remote rural villages in Manica province.

After three months of long hot journeys, broken laptops, car axels snapped in two from the cragged 'roads' and consistently failing power supplies, the vibrancy and energy of the communities and the very real effect that access to water provided meant that I was more determined than ever that a career in the water and sanitation side of international development was the right one for me.

I knew that I wanted to join a network of good-natured people, driven by the impact their work was making on communities, determined to see a job through, fuelled by bananas and coconut biscuits and a good old sing-along along the way.

Fast-forward three years and I am now working a dream job as Project Controller at Water & Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP), an NGO that focuses on market-based solutions to bring vital water and sanitation services to the world's rapidly growing urban informal settlements.

I've discovered a love not just for the provision of clean water but everything that access brings with it: negotiating the complex dynamics of financing sanitation and developing profitable, sustainable businesses.

My job is never boring and my tasks vary from the sublime to the downright ridiculous - recent highlights have included: representing faecal sludge vacuum tankers at glitzy Unilever events in Bangladesh (İ'm now a proud owner of a tote bag graphically depicting a septic tank being cleaned out); drafting gender policies for the primary water utility of Ghana and running workshops on gender empowerment in community toilet block design; wading kneedeep, barefoot in mud to inspect borehole pumping stations in Madagascar; and supporting our Kenya team with the installation of a simplified sewer system in the Mukuru S p e c i a l P l a n n i n g Area, one of the largest ever informal settlement upgrading projects in the world. I told you it was varied!



Here is Beth on her way to inspect a borehole pumping station in Madagascar

The experience I gained with Village Water opened my eyes to an entire network and community that I did not know existed and unlocked a real passion inside me.

'In the field' experience is so vital not only for networking and usable experience on a CV – although undoubtably it helps in such a competitive industry – but more than that, it reminds me again and again why what I'm part of as a water and sanitation worker is so important: the real, tangible and life-changing effect that reliable access to clean water and proper waste management can have on communities and prospects for the people who live there.

It can be hard to comprehend for a comfy office in London – or, more recently, from my desk in the spare room – the very real obstacles our Country Teams face, and the favourite part of my job remains travelling out to the countries to help support our teams to establish and manage the projects.

It's great to still be in touch with the team at SMOAT and even crossing paths professionally with Village Water who also have a programme in Zambia.

Community is everything when it comes to water and sanitation, but particularly in the last year I have realised how important community is in all other aspects of my job and life, and I will forever be hugely indebted and grateful for the community at SMOAT and in Reigate who have helped to set me upon this deeply rewarding path.

BETH PROSSER

### More than mere survival in the year of the pandemic

2020 promised to be an exciting year for SMOAT. Most importantly, it would herald our  $40^{\text{th}}$  anniversary; SMOAT was created in the months spanning the end of 1979 and the beginning of 1980, and plans had been laid to ensure that in 2020 this most significant of birthdays was properly celebrated.

Then, at the start of the year, Covid-19 intervened. While hindsight shows us that it had almost certainly reached our shores before the end of 2019, for a while SMOAT, like many other organisations, tried to carry on as normal. Donations were still being received in response to the 2019 Christmas Appeal, and at the end of January we held a fund-raising event, the ever-popular Bingo Afternoon.

Gradually, however, it became apparent that our other plans for 2020 would have to be postponed, put on hold or cancelled. Committee meetings became Zoom events, our Annual Public Meeting an online affair. Lockdowns were lifted, and re-imposed. At one point in the autumn, spying an inter-lockdown window of opportunity, we managed to hold another fundraiser, supplying home-delivery cream teas and quizzes to ponder while enjoying them. And that, it seemed, would be it.

Remarkably, it turned out not to be. Thanks to those who supported the Christmas Appeal and our faithful regular givers, SMOAT continued to raise funds - an amazing £17,000-worth during the year. How this money was distributed to many hugely worthwhile projects in a number of different countries is described elsewhere in this newsletter. However, the fact that, in the midst of a pandemic, SMOAT was able to continue doing what it was set up to do forty years ago is testament to the loyalty and generosity of our supporters, and the Trustees are immensely grateful to you all.

Which brings us to the 2020 Christmas Appeal. Despite it being impossible to launch the Appeal "live" at St Mark's Church as is normally the case, modern technology allowed us to present it online. Did we reach more people by publicising the Appeal in this fashion? Maybe, and when "normality" does return, our experiences during 2020 will help to inform our future communication strategies.

We do know for certain, however, that the response to the 2020 Christmas Appeal has been unprecedented. For the first time, the amount received, including the Gift Aid which can be claimed, has broken the £10,000 barrier. This is an astonishing outcome, and has enabled us to donate more than £5,000 to each of the two charities supported through the Appeal - Afrinspire and Chase Africa. Needless to say, these organisations are touchingly grateful, as they are both

fully aware that the many effects of Covid have included an overall reduction in the amounts being donated to charities.

At the end of a painfully difficult year for so many people, there can be no more appropriate way for SMOAT's supporters to celebrate its  $40^{th}$  anniversary than by producing this record-breaking result. Thank you all.

David Lear

## Sunflowers for Bees in Development

In a year when fund raising events have been curtailed due to social distancing restrictions, we have had to don our creative hats to find new ways to raise much needed funds for our charity partners. After the success of our first SMOAT@home cream tea, the challenge was on to invent another "event" that could engage our supporters of all ages, and preferably give everyone a break from Zoom!

With the first glimpses of Spring and the evenings getting lighter, it seemed evident that the changing season, new shoots and the promise of warmer weather seemed to lift our spirits. This gave rise to the idea of a sunflower growing competition, and what better charity to support with our floral endeavour than a Bees for Development project, working in Ethiopia to improve the lives of some of the poorest people by helping them develop beekeeping businesses.

Our wonderful supporters embraced our idea of growing sunflowers in aid of Bees in Development and we sold 104 grow packs, which were delivered



to people's doorsteps over the Easter weekend. We are now enjoying the regular feedback and pictures we are receiving from many participants and are excited to imagine the sea of beautiful yellow flowers that will hopefully bloom across Reigate and Redhill this summer, to the benefit of our local bee population! We also look forward to awarding some small prizes at the end of the summer to the most green-fingered entrants who manage to grow the tallest and largest sunflowers in the crop. We'll keep you posted!

Ticket sales together with additional donations have enabled us to send Bees for



Development a cheque for £750 this month - this has totally surpassed our expectations and they are delighted. This is an extremely welcome contribution towards their work in Ethiopia during a most difficult year.

Bees can make a real difference to people's lives. They are wild and even the poorest people can catch them for free, and can make beehives using local materials which can also be collected for free. A bee-keeper only needs the tiniest plot of land to set up a few bee hives. The bees themselves travel far and wide feeding on wild flowers and on crops belonging to other people to great environmental effect. Bees for Development provide advice, mentorship, skills training and business advice about how to sell honey for the best price. One kilo of honey can sell for £4. Through their work they have enabled hundreds of new bee-keepers to earn essential income.

They are now working with the bee-keepers to set up Village Savings and Loan Groups, teaching them to save a small portion of what they earn. Built on a tried and tested procedure these informal, small groups enable people to save and borrow without having to deal with institutions which reject them for being too poor and illiterate. Members save just a small portion of what they earn and this can serve as a building block of financial security. Savings accrue and are used for more significant investments later and the groups give loans. In an emergency, members can go to the group to get money, so providing a cushion against adversity and misfortune.

How wonderful to think what will be reaped from the seeds we have sown right here in Surrey.

CLAIRE BOWERS



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# CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2020 CHASE AFRICA PROJECT

You will remember that one of the projects supported by the 2020 Christmas Appeal was to fund mobile medical clinics in Kakamega County in the west of Kenya.

We had an amazing response to the Appeal and were able to send more money to the two projects supported than we ever expected. It was, therefore, wonderful and heart-warming to receive the following email from Robin Witt, the founder of Chase Africa:

'Dear Naomi,

We are all working from home and I have just opened an email Henry sent, with a photo of your letter which came with your incredibly generous cheque. I am lost for words at the amazing sum of £5020 you have sent us — so much more than you thought you might!

Can you please pass on an enormous Thank You to all your congregation for their extraordinary generosity. Their kindness will enable us to give so many families a much brighter future.

It is so heart-warming when people here, in the middle of a pandemic, go the extra mile to help people they will never meet - very touching and just so appreciated by us.

Kenya up until now, has not been too badly affected by COVID, but very sadly the South African variant has arrived and infections are rising fast\*. All our partners have supplies of PPE and will be doing their very best to help their communities.

Please will you also pass on our thanks to your Chair, Barbara Perkins, and a very big Thank You to you and Louise for all your hard work in organising your Christmas appeal.

With best wishes,

Robin'

<sup>\*</sup> Kenya has since been put on England's red list as cases were rising at an alarming rate.

## 2020 SMOAT review of the year

## Fundraising projects

Bingo, 26 January 2020. Amount raised: £637.91

Doctors for Nepal – Funding a stethoscope for a trainee doctor

Donation: £1,000

We were delighted to fund a stethoscope costing circa £100 for Santosh who is qualifying as a Doctor with the support of DFN. In previous years, SMOAT has provided funding for medical training for Santosh and others, and we are delighted to support their work further through equipment. Santosh writes: "Namaste dear donor, I am very thankful to you for buying me the stethoscope. It is helping me very much with my studies and will be with me for the rest of my days as a medical student but also when I go back to my village once qualified as a doctor. Thank you very much I am very happy and lucky".

Santosh has been helping with medical support in his village during COVID lockdown and helping his parents with their small holding.

addition the In to stethoscope, the SMOAT funding paid for more medical training for their cohort of trainee midwives. Parbati Bhandair and Arati Budthapa. We have now worked with DFN for several years and are massively impressed with their programme which funds medical training through scholarships for talented but impoverished students who then return to their isolated rural areas to work once qualified.

It is worth noting that much of rural Nepal has fewer than 1 doctor per 100,000 population.



#### Christmas Appeal 2019. Amount raised: £7105.50

EducAid, Sierra Leone - Refurbishment of classroom to accommodate boarders and reintroduce women into education.

Donation: £4,150

SMOAT has previously donated money to Foundation for Fistula which provides midwifery and hospital services for safe births as well as surgery and support for women who have suffered birthing injuries. Some of the youngest women who have had teenage pregnancies and often birth trauma are also able to attend a special unit at EducAid-funded Lumley School in Freetown where they can access education and support.

Our funding was used to refurbish the Women's Project classroom at the high school and this essential work was successfully completed in the midst of the COVID pandemic in May 2020.

When schools reopened on 5<sup>th</sup> October, the Women's Project was renamed the "Strong Girl Incubator" (SGI) and welcomed 56 young

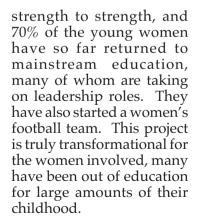


Classroom before repairs

women who would have otherwise had no access to education. Our funding provided proper tiling and repairs in the rooms.

The tiling extends onto the large veranda of the building which has improved airflow and dust reduction which is particularly valuable during the dry season.

Since October, the SGI programme has gone from





SGI classrooms after repairs



This photo shows the celebration of the first set of SGI students to be promoted to mainstream education this 2020-21 school year

# Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Services (SMMMS), Ethiopia – purchase of HemoCue patient monitoring equipment

Donation: £2,975

The SMMMS provides free essential medical care to remote villages in Ethiopia's Simeon Mountains, which is home to a quarter of a million people. Five mobile nurses travel between mountain villages providing general medical care, health education, immunisations and maternity care in areas inaccessible by other means. They also run clinics for inpatient and outpatient care.

SMMMS were desperate for funding to pay for portable medical equipment that allows common blood and urine tests at the point of care. We were able to provide funding for the purchase of 8 HemoCue devices for the 7 government health centres they support across the North Gonder zone and for their own clinic.

During the latter half of 2020, SMMMS was able to secure and purchase the required equipment from the Netherlands. However, the journey to get them into Ethiopia has been long and bureaucratic with considerable delays in customs. The equipment has now been received by the Ministry of Health and SMMMS are working tirelessly to get the equipment to the clinics.

The tale of bureaucratic red tape is not an unfamiliar one at all in poor countries, and the efforts and determination of our partners pays testament to their strength and hard work. We hope to hear in the next months that are HemoCues are up and running!



SMOAT@home – Afternoon teas delivered to doors, 11 October 2020. Amount raised: £938

Faith in Action, Malawi – setting up a small re-use business to provide livelihoods for people living on a rubbish dump.

Donation: £1,000

The reuse shop on the outskirts of Blantyre in Malawi was up and running by February 2021! SMOAT funded £1,000 for set up capital costs for this eco-friendly micro business, for a community living on the edge of a huge rubbish dump. This follows our funding for a restaurant, second-hand electronics shop and a grocery shop back in 2019.

This community is extremely resourceful and hugely inspiring. We have loved supporting this project because it is totally locally-led, is providing livelihoods for the poorest communities and very ecominded and sustainable. The start-up costs have enabled the businesses to hit the ground running and generate their own revenues. This is micro development at its very best!





<u>Donations from general funds</u> - April 2020: IMPACT Cambodia – intensive care bed

Donation: £1,100

SMOAT has funded an Intensive Care Unit bed for Svay Chek Referral Hospital in Banteay Meanchey Province in Cambodia. This was part of a larger package of medical equipment funded by UK supporters, which included more hospital beds, oxygen concentrator and suction machines. The immediate need to treat coronavirus patients has obviously been the main driver in this project, however, the equipment will have long term benefits for this hospital benefitting the communities for many years ahead.



#### April 2020:

# Inter Care – part funding of shipping a container of donated medical supplies to Malawi

Donation: £1,000

SMOAT's donation contributed to the logistical costs of sending a 20ft container of donated medical aid to Malawi. On 16<sup>th</sup> July, Inter Care packed up the container, following delays due to Covid.

The consignment was made of 100% donated surplus medical supplies worth a massic £127,000 including a significant volume of PPE equipment, in addition to a wheelchair, many pairs of crutches, and 20+ bags of hand knitted blankets. The shipping container travelled by lorry, ship, rail and then lorry again before reaching St Joseph's Hospital, Limbe on 17<sup>th</sup> December. From there, the equipment was distributed via cars and vans to eight surrounding local rural health centres.



#### September 2020:

Mike Campbell Foundation, Zimbabwe – funding for agricultural training for farmers.

Donation: £1,500

In Zimbabwe, the former farm worker community has been affected by the violent commercial farm invasions that began in 2000. Farm workers have suffered beatings, torture, abduction and arrest as the ruling political party took over commercial farms. The Mike Campbell Foundation is working with destitute former farm workers by providing practical farming skills for smallholdings. The training enables them to feed their families on small manageable plots of land and provides enough harvested seed to grow again the following year and to generate a surplus for sale.

The monthly live-in courses are facilitated by local organisations Foundations for Farming. Each trainee is encouraged to then teach the skills learnt to 10 other people in his/her community creating a positive multiplier effect. Our funding will provide just over half of the cost of a course of agricultural training for 12 people (full cost £2500).

It was hoped that courses would restart in January this year, however, there have been delays due to COVID. We hope that the course will resume later this year.

#### November 2020:

# Kaloko Trust, Zambia - installation of a roof at a school in Minkwempe Donation: £1,635

SMOAT has worked with Kaloko for many years and were delighted to provide funding for a school roof in the Copperbelt Province that they were really struggling to secure a donor for. The community of Minkwempe is a remote rural community consisting of about 30 households.

This community exists through subsistence farming and there are number of families caring for children orphansed by HIV/AIDS. Community members banded together to organise a community school. Initially the community built a shelter with branches to house the school, followed by a small brick-built room. Parents pay teachers' salaries.



The current classroom 'shelter'

Over the past few years, the number of students has gradually risen and children travel from up to 4km away outside the community to attend the school. There are now 150 girls and 100 boys attending with grades mixed together. The school has outgrown its original structures which are inadequate during the rainy season from November to March.

The local community has organised a building project to construct new classrooms and our funding will pay for a permanent watertight roof for the school. Now the rainy season is ended, work is beginning under the supervision of the local Kaloko Trust Zambia office.

We look forward to seeing photos of the finished roof!



The children have no shelter from the elements

#### November 2020:

Virtual Doctors, Malawi – establishment of a health facility which will reach 15,000 rural people.

Donation: £1,500

SMOAT has supported Virtual Doctors for several years – this amazing organisation uses telecommunications technology via a specialist app

for mobile phones to provide expert medical advice for complex or unusual cases in Zambia. In rural areas, remote health care workers are able to upload and communicate with specialist volunteer doctors in the UK for urgent advice on how to respond. As a result, patients are diagnosed more quickly and can often be effectively treated in their communities.

The organisation has recently expanded into Malawi and our funding is to be used to set up a new hub. At the moment, Virtual Doctors is finalising the details with the Ministry of Health, however, things have been delayed after a change of government. Huw Jones tells us that the new Government are fully committed to the project and will be supporting Virtual Doctors to secure resource mobilisation. They have also agreed to second a wing of the Ministry of Health for the Virtual

Doctors team to use and administer their service. An impact assessment of pilot sites is underway, and once decided, our funding will be used for the set up. We look forward very much to hearing about progress in the coming months.



#### December 2020:

Advantage Africa - Roll-out of a youth-led project providing education on mobile phones in Kenya and support for people with disabilities and their carers in Uganda

Donation: £1,500

SMOAT donated to Advantage Africa through the Big Give Christmas Challenge in December which meant that our donation was match funded providing an amazing total of £3,000. This money has supported two innovative projects in East Africa.

In Kibwezi, Kenya, the project builds on the increasing ownership of mobile phones and social media in young people aged 18-25 to provide reliable information on health and life skills. This has proved to be incredibly useful during COVID as they have reduced the need for face to face interactions. Youth representatives have been trained in critical development topics including gender-based violence, addiction, and sexual and reproductive health. These Youth Champions have led groups developing digital information platforms, which are incentive-based and have reached over 1,000 young people. The project is also providing essential data on the current knowledge in these communities which will enable it to tailor their support further.

In Uganda, our funding is being used for training for people affected by disability, most commonly epilepsy and cerebral palsy. In February, Advantage Africa teams worked with local partners and experienced trainers from Butabika Hospital in Kampala to provide training and

support to over 100 children and adults with these conditions and their caregivers. These numbers far exceeded expectations and have also raised awareness amongst local community leaders. These individuals are often overlooked, isolated and often not included in local activities. The training has focused on experiences of living with or caring for disabled individuals and have worked to reduce fear, superstition and discrimination as well as provide medical and practice advice. Epilepsy medication was also made available and a schedule of care of support by the local health teams is being developed. NAOMI FLOOD



#### **ANGELA ALABASTER**

A lot of our supporters will remember Angela who sadly died last year. She was always a staunch SMOAT supporter, attending events and making donations. She followed our work closely and with interest. Therefore, we were very touched to receive a very generous bequest in Angela's Will.

We are going to try to find some really lovely projects to support with the money to honour her memory in the best way we can. Thank you Angela for your loyal support which will, undoubtedly, have made a wonderful difference to many people's lives.

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

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