



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

Newsletter - Winter 2009

Christmas Appeal 2009

The letter describing the appeal is enclosed but readers may be interested to know that Professor Richard Sharp will be speaking about Project Uganda on December 13th at the 10.00am service at St. Mark's Church, Alma Road, Reigate.

His talk will be illustrated and will cover not only the needs of this part of Uganda but the way his English village mounted what has grown into a major commitment to support the people of a distant land who are facing their difficulties with courage and determination. Everyone is, of course, welcome to that service.

Future Events

27 February 2010: Musical evening

The Carousel Clarinet Quartet return, and are joined in this concert in St. Mark's Hall by the Meadvale Singers. Please ring 01737 772811 for final details (or see www.smoat.org.uk).

25 to 27 June: St. Mark's Flower Festival

The flower festival is part of St. Mark's 150th birthday celebrations and SMOAT will provide a display featuring its activities.

June: Sunday Lunch Under the Downs

The Cottage, Coppice Lane, from 12.00 noon (*date tbc, 6th or 20th June*). This promises to be an event not to be missed. An excellent lunch will be accompanied by entertainment and music, with activities for children, all against the delightful backdrop of garden and Downs.

Nearer the time details of these events will be found at www.smoat.org.uk

Editorial

In July we said a temporary farewell to Judy Kirschen as we let her go on a very well earned sabbatical. So far as I know SMOAT has never previously granted a sabbatical and this time it was only to allow her to recharge the batteries which have powered her through two spells as a most successful chairman. We miss her.

I have found my first few months somewhat challenging as I try to keep an eye on the many sparkling balls which circle my head. But it feels very rewarding. I am just thankful I have such a collection of gifted, committed, resourceful individuals to devise and carry through the operations which is the work of the SMOAT committee. I hope you will enjoy reading this newsletter.

SMOAT has three main functions: to raise money, to give it away and to raise awareness of the problems of the Developing World. What could be simpler? But raising money is not always easy especially during an economic downturn or when many of our supporters are on pensions. Giving it away looks like the easy bit but we spend much time and effort selecting projects which are good ones and are also ones which we hope you would want to support. That is our trust.

Much has changed over the thirty years SMOAT has been pursuing its aims. We are still, of course, entirely dependant on our supporters who are far flung but come to our events, make contributions to our funds through the Christmas Appeal, and give regularly throughout the year. Many, as always, worship at Saint Mark's and over the years there have been changes towards an older congregation but, more recently, to one with more young families.

Now I will return to the third aim; raising awareness. I should like to take the risk of issuing a challenge to you all, whether you are amongst the long and faithful or have heard of SMOAT only recently.

To our mature supporters, I thank you for your most faithful support over the long years and I would ask you now to talk about SMOAT to whoever you meet over Christmas and throughout next year. Please spread the word about what we and you are trying to do in this very good cause. If you meet interested people let me know so I can send them a newsletter and ask for their support.

To those who have heard of SMOAT only recently I challenge you to read, digest and ponder on this newsletter. I have great confidence that you will want to support the nature of our mission to assist the poor of the developing countries to help themselves. We are all challenged to put our beliefs into practice. Then I would hope you will support our fund-raising events and hopefully make whatever regular gift aid commitment you consider appropriate.

Meanwhile I commend our Christmas Appeal to you and you will find the details in the special letter we are issuing. On behalf of the committee I wish you all a very happy Christmas.

HARRY INGRAM (*Chairman*)

Traidcraft in Cambodia

SMOAT spends a lot of time asking you for your money and raising funds for projects overseas but it also has another major role to play and that is in providing education and information about the projects we support.

Therefore on Saturday 10th October we were delighted to welcome Julia Cantrell, Programme Development Manager from Traidcraft Exchange in Gateshead.

Over 60 people heard her give an overview of the establishment of Traidcraft as well as giving information about the Social Enterprise project in Cambodia that SMOAT supported in 2007.

As a result of our support, craft producers in Cambodia have been able to increase their sales because they have developed their product designs, introduced systems to improve their performance and developed an understanding of customer needs.

This was not a dull meeting but a lively presentation followed by a birthday tea to celebrate the 30th Birthday of Traidcraft. There were brisk sales of Traidcraft fairtrade goods and delicious birthday cake (made with Fairtrade ingredients from around the world).

Although not primarily a fundraising event, the proceeds will go towards SMOAT supporting more Traidcraft producers, this time with another project in Bangladesh.

ANN DALE



Emma and Amy Packer, Anna Weatherald, Julia Cantrell and Pauline Young with the 30th Birthday cake, made with Fairtrade ingredients.

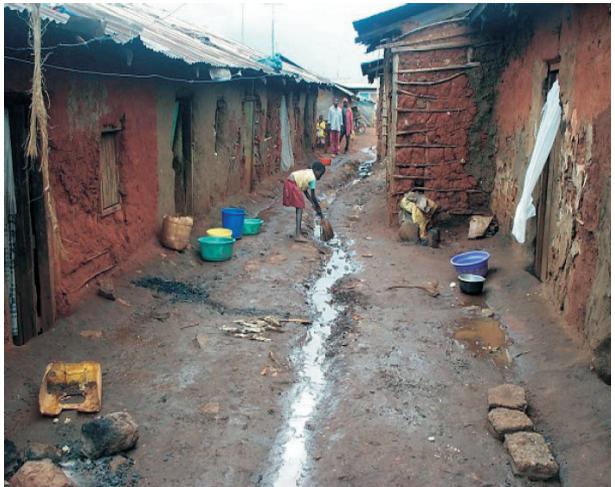
Water Project

in Slum Areas in the Mukuru District of Nairobi

These are just some of the harsh facts:

- In Sub-Saharan Africa, many poor people survive on less than 5 litres of water per day – which often comes from a contaminated source.
- In the UK, each of us use an average of 150 litres of water each day – over 50 litres of which is used simply flushing the toilet.
- Whilst homes in the UK have one or more toilets, just 8 per cent of homes in sub-Saharan Africa are connected to sanitation services.
- Two-thirds of all people in sub-Saharan Africa live in informal settlements (slums), which are characterised by overcrowding, poor access to basic amenities and families overlooked by local authorities. With the population of the region expected to rise from 750 million to one billion by 2015, the number of families living in such conditions is set to increase.
- Women and children are worst affected by the difficulties of day-to-day life in these settlements. Lack of access to clean, safe water means that women and children spend hours walking to, and queuing at, the nearest water source. This has a significant impact on livelihood opportunities and family income.
- Women also suffer most through poor access to sanitation. The reality of life without a toilet removes women's basic rights to dignity and privacy.

Holmesdale School asked SMOAT to recommend a water project for the children to support during Water Week in June 2009.



A typical street scene in an informal settlement, showing free-flowing sewage

Practical Action recommended this project to us. Having looked at some of the indicative costs of the project, we decided that money raised should be given to the construction of ten water points across the project area, allowing families to benefit from clean, safe water. This was predicted to cost around £3,300.

Once again, Holmesdale made magnificent efforts and raised over £400. We added to that amount two further sums, one being a collection in memory of Jeanette Kitteringham, and another a donation given to SMOAT specifically for a water related project. We were therefore able to send off to Practical Action the whole amount of £3,300. We hope that this donation will have a massive impact on the livelihoods of the people of the Mukuru districts, giving them such a basic but vital provision – clean water.

BARBARA PERKINS

Thank You to Holmesdale Community Infant School

At the beginning of the 2008 school year I approached Sarah Beasley, the Head Teacher at Holmesdale School, about the possibility of a link being forged with SMOAT. She agreed that for that school year, the School would be happy to support SMOAT in its endeavours.

To that end we asked if they would help us with our project in Bangladesh, helping poor farmers affected by the terrible floods each year. She agreed and it became the school's Harvest Festival project.

One Friday in October we asked for cakes to be brought into school in the morning, for resale in the afternoon. The response was phenomenal and we raised £394.00. It was then the school's Harvest Festival, at which we asked the children to donate 50p, in return for which they were each given a daffodil bulb to plant in the school grounds. Again this raised £180. We were all very proud of our joint venture and hopefully the school will

have a permanent reminder of the project each spring when the daffodils bloom!

Then, in the summer of 2009, Claire Hill, a teacher with over 30 years' service at Holmesdale, approached me and asked if SMOAT would be able to recommend a project for Water Week. I looked into it and we decided to recommend a project in the Nairobi slums, installing water points for the many, many people who live on a day-to-day basis with no clean water.

She suggested that the children should do some water-related jobs at home to earn some money to throw in the "wishing well" at school. Once again, the children didn't let us down and the response was wonderful.

The school raised just over £400, which would enable one water point to be installed, thereby making such a difference to so many people. SMOAT added to this amount to enable all ten water points to be installed.

I am a parent of children at Holmesdale School and I feel very lucky to be associated with a school which actively encourages its children to get involved raising money for charity.

The Head Teacher and her staff are all of the same mindset. They want the children to think of other people and

to show kindness and generosity of spirit.

I hope that we can get together in the future because it is so rewarding and such a privilege to work together with these people in such a great environment.

BARBARA PERKINS

Serendipity

This musical evening held at St. Mark's Hall on 9 May was well attended and a great success. It was an "Evening of Two Halves". It began with a laid back, nostalgic atmosphere, created by well known melodies by Cole Porter. These were offered by the excellent accomplished singers of Serendipity.

By contrast, the second half provided a cocktail of sadness, love and aggression embodied in the striking lyrics from Phantom of the Opera. Altogether it was a most enjoyable occasion, which raised £650 to be used to fund wood planes for MVRC, as described below.

HARRY INGRAM

Masaka Vocational and Rehabilitation Centre, Uganda

The MVRC project, funded from the proceeds of the Serendipity concert, focused on 18 carpentry students at the Centre, eight of whom are deaf, three have mobility problems, two have speech difficulties, one has a severe facial growth, then there is one who has a sight problem, one with epilepsy, one with learning difficulties and one with a deformed arm.

The aim of the project was to raise money to buy Stanley planes for the carpentry students. The leaders at the Centre were quite insistent that Stanley planes were purchased as

they would last many years longer than the planes that the Centre had purchased before from India. The planes would cost approximately £45 each (slightly less than one month's wages of a teacher at the centre!). The Centre already had five planes. Therefore, with the money raised together with the planes already at the Centre, hopefully every student will now have their own plane with which to work.

Once the students graduate at the end of their course at the Centre, they are given the plane, thereby not



only giving them the knowledge they need to make a living for themselves and their families, but they also have a tool to help them along the way.

Thank you to all who attended the Serendipity Concert. We hope it will make a big difference to these young people's lives.

BARBARA PERKINS



You can now support SMOAT online by making a PayPal donation (with Gift Aid) or by selling an item with some (or all) of the proceeds coming to us, through our eBay for Charity account. The relevant links are at www.smoat.org.uk

eBay sellers can donate 10%-100% to SMOAT whenever they sell an item (there is a £1 minimum donation per listing).

Our own page on eBay shows all eBay.co.uk listings that benefit SMOAT.

You receive fee credits whenever you sell an item for SMOAT (i.e. the normal eBay listing charges are effectively refunded to you).

Anything you sell on eBay to benefit us will include the SMOAT logo and mission statement, promoting SMOAT on eBay.

Your listing is marked with the charity ribbon, attracting extra customers!

Any queries, contact Richard Salmon, e-mail: richard@smoat.org.uk

Enable Ethiopia

Enable Ethiopia is a Reigate-based charity. It was founded following a trek in 2005 to the Simien Mountains National Park in northern Ethiopia in support of Great Ormond Street Hospital in London. Whilst there the trekkers assisted the people of a local village, Ambaras, in constructing a health post. But the need to contribute further to the region was very apparent to them.

After listening to the villagers' needs they decided to build a clean water point for Ambaras. Funds were raised by donations from the group and their friends and families and the water point was completed in March 2006. In September that year Enable Ethiopia became a UK registered charity.

The area of Ethiopia on which the charity focuses is at high altitude (3,500m/12,000ft.) and the climate and topography are very harsh. The communities there have many needs: clean water; improved health care; schools, and support in developing income-generating activities.

The charity aims to provide the necessary funding for development projects which are then implemented through local partners assisted by members of the local communities themselves.

The charity has already completed a range of health, water and educational projects in the region, but over the next 3 years it intends to focus its efforts on three sub-districts, which contain the hardest-hit communities. Next year the charity plans to implement a clean water program in these districts.

Those living there spend many hours each day simply collecting water, and

the sources available to them are unprotected springs, rivers or streams, and ditches, which are shared with wild animals and thus often disease-ridden.

Water consumption in these rural areas is 5 to 6 litres per capita per day - well below the recommended international standard of 15 litres. Despite the immense ground water potential in the area, the rugged terrain of the Simien Mountains creates a tremendous obstacle to providing adequate water supply to the largely rural inhabitants of the area.

The project is to construct three new hand-dug wells and to cap and protect seven springs. These new and improved water schemes are expected to raise the water coverage of the target districts to 51%, and will decrease the average walking time to wells to less than 30 minutes per round trip.

The project incorporates community participation – from site identification and planning, to participation in the well building process, and the long-term care and management of the water points.

Water and Sanitation Committees will be established for each water point, and the committee members will receive training in hygiene and sanitation, hygienic behaviour, use of water, and water project management. They will also be trained in basic water point maintenance, and provided with a toolkit so that they can carry out simple repairs.

SMOAT has donated £1000 in support of this project.

ALAN PRESTON

SMOAT's Sightsavers Quiz

On Friday 20 November one hundred and thirty eight people filled St. Mark's Hall to wrestle with the devious clues bowled to them by the incomparable Helier Dreux. They all enjoyed this mind-bending exercise and even the quality of the fish and chips drew commendation. Central to the success of the evening was the fellowship generated by the common cause of supporting SMOAT and Sightsavers in the project to relieve childhood blindness in Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh Childhood Cataract Campaign is the only programme anywhere in the world aiming to systematically tackle childhood cataract blindness across an entire country.

Over four years, more than 7,000 children have been saved from blindness, and the aim is to identify and then restore the sight of 90% of the estimated 12,000 children with bilateral (both eye) cataracts, and to thus change their lives forever. Once this backlog of untreated cases is cleared, which has nearly been achieved, treating new cases as they occur in the future will be much easier.

The country-wide training of community healthcare workers, the establishment of referral systems to detect and ensure the treatment of childhood cataracts, and the provision of follow-on care, are all part of the programme. This vital infrastructure will remain in place at the end of the programme, a lasting benefit for generations to come.

This highly successful quiz evening raised over £1100; enough to fund a significant number of treatments. This will save each child treated from a lifetime of blindness, a really significant and lasting legacy from the evening.



*Smriti Hossain aged 8 with her family
Tim McDonnell/Sightsavers*

HARRY INGRAM & RICHARD SALMON

Economy Slowly Improving – Unemployment Still at Peak

What do you know about Workaid?

Since the world-wide finance and banking crisis unemployment in the UK has doubled. 1 million young people aged 18 to 25 cannot find jobs. In the developing world the crisis has been more severe and unemployment is causing even greater hardship. Measures to help reduce UK unemployment are being taken. What can we do to reduce unemployment in the developing world?

This same question was ardently discussed at a small ecumenical home group a couple of decades ago, as the members learnt about unemployment in central Africa and the impoverishment it brought. Together they worked out a scheme to send old sewing machines and typewriters to selected training centres there, where they could be used, both for teaching skills and equipping those who learnt to use them, with the means to earn a living.

Their scheme was so successful that some 20 years on it has grown into a dedicated organisation, Workaid, which has expanded enormously the collection and dispatch overseas of old machines and tools. In this year alone it will have sent to Kenya, Uganda and Zambia six 20-foot long containers of 60 tons of machines and equipment. This comprises 779 sewing machines, 199 knitting machines, 321 typewriters, and 679 kits for carpentry, masonry, metalwork, mechanics, plumbing, electrical, leatherwork and horticulture. It is estimated that this will help over 6,000 disadvantaged people to be given the opportunity to escape the cycle of poverty and to build better lives for themselves and their families.

Workaid has a central workshop at Chesham, where 170 volunteers refurbish tools and equipment, sort and pack parcels and load the containers. Parcels are sent in response to specific requests from African countries, (news of Workaid soon travels when parcels are delivered) and representatives from Workaid visit the places receiving their goods.

Do you have any machines or tools of these sorts that are no longer used or wanted? Would you like to donate them to Workaid? SMOAT member John Orton, 01737 245917 would be pleased to receive or collect them.

To find out more visit: www.workaid.org

JOHN ORTON

ZWART (Freeth Fund)

We have all heard many accounts of the terrible conditions in rural Zimbabwe. A linen-producing enterprise, employing one-hundred people from farm-working families who have lost their jobs through the harassment of farmers, was recently destroyed by a bush fire. The SMOAT gift of £500 will pay for some of the machinery necessary to re-establishing the business in a nearby town.

HARRY INGRAM

InterCare - Friends of Mulanje Orphans

As our long-standing supporters will know, SMOAT has supported the work of InterCare on a number of occasions over the last decade. InterCare collects selected returned patient medicines from GP practices and, after appropriate quality controls, recycles them free of charge to a network of over one hundred health centres in seven desperately poor countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

In the UK medicines are returned to GPs for a variety of reasons: patients may be discharged from hospital with medicines to take home in case they suffer certain symptoms – for example extra-strong painkillers in case they suffer severe pain after an operation, or a prescribed medicine may not suit the patient and they go back to their doctor to get something different, or the patient just gets better and doesn't need the prescribed medicine after all.

If medicines are taken back to a chemist in the UK, the pharmacist is obliged to dispose of them either as landfill or by incineration. If, however, they are returned to a GP practice registered with InterCare, some of them can be re-cycled.

Following a request for medical aid by a group known as the Friends of Mulanje Orphans and a visit by InterCare staff to the Mulanje

district in Malawi in the Summer of 2009, InterCare set about trying to meet the request. For several years the Friends have supported 13 Orphan Day Care Centres in the Mulanje district.

These centres look after the educational, emotional and medical needs of nearly 6000 orphaned children, many of whom are orphaned due to the AIDS epidemic or the death of their mothers in childbirth.

In April 2009 a clinic was opened to provide health care for children in the Day Care Centres, seeking to treat malaria, anaemia, infections and minor injuries. It receives no government support and so has to raise its own funds to purchase the medicines it needs.

The InterCare workers who visited the clinic noted how small the quantity of medicines on its shelves was.

InterCare now plans to send five consignments of medicines to the clinic. SMOAT has donated £1000 to assist with the cost of purchasing some new medicines to go alongside those collected from GP practices, so that balanced consignments can be made up, and to cover the shipping costs for two of the consignments.

ALAN PRESTON

Lake Malawi Project (LMP)

We have again supporting this small project with £1000 to purchase seeds and help combat the spread of HIV / AIDs.

This project was founded in 2001 by an ex-VSO to improve the standard of living of the residents of the islands of Likomo and Chisimula on Lake Malawi. The inhabitants have an average annual income of less than £100.

Its activities include a programme to encourage agricultural improvements over a wide area, the provision of

seeds, countering the spread of HIV / AIDs and promoting vocational training (see Spring Newsletter). The area has recently been beset by inflation driving up food prices whilst the fall in the value of the pound has greatly reduced the value of funding from the UK. Some employees have continued to work without pay. Slowly the finances are recovering.

We get good reports detailing the problems and setbacks as well as the progress.

IMPACT

Impact was established in 1982 to combat health problems and alleviate disablement. It works through clinics, mobile hospitals (by rail, road and river), and projects for immunisation, the provision of clean water and sanitation.

In Bangladesh, in place of dirty river water for drinking, wells

have been sunk. However, in some places, well-water has been found to be polluted by natural deposits of arsenic (the wells were not installed by Impact).

The current project is to install water filtration to remove this health hazard. We have provided £1040 towards this.

HARRY INGRAM

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