



S · M · O · A · T

ST MARK'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST

Newsletter - Winter 2012

Dates for your diary:

Launch of Christmas Appeal

Sunday 9th December, 10am, St. Mark's Church

Full details of the appeal are included in the enclosed letter.

SMOATathon

A sponsored musical relay of performances

Come along to listen or book in advance to participate - see page 3

Sunday 3rd February 2013 - St Mark's Hall

Quiz Evening

We've booked the date already for a repeat of this hugely popular event: Friday 18th October 2013

Jazz Evening

Following the success of our last Jazz evening, we are planning to hold another on Friday 15th November 2013

Make a note in your 2013 diaries!

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

SMOAT.org.uk or from any of the committee.

Editorial

SMOAT activities are governed by a trust deed drawn up over thirty-one years ago by the wise founders of SMOAT. But although SMOAT is necessarily a Trust separate from the Church and has some supporters outside of the Parish, nevertheless it has, through all those years, been dependant overwhelmingly on the family at St Mark's Church.

When, many years ago now, the Report "Faith in the City" was published there were cries that the Church of England should restrict itself to the "cure of souls" and not dabble in the real world. What a curious attitude that now seems to be. We are all aware of the conflict between good and evil within the walls of our souls, but we also realise that following the faith calls us to practical action especially for those less fortunate than ourselves. How else can we "love our neighbour as ourselves?"

But it would be presumptuous, as well as factually wrong, to suggest that such sentiments are the sole prerogative of Christians. That clearly is not the case.

However, for some, one very small, imperfect and partial way to care for the poor is through organisations such as SMOAT.

HARRY INGRAM (*Chairman*)

Faith in Action

In April 2011, SMOAT provided funds from its 2010 Christmas Appeal to help fund an irrigation scheme in Nyamula village Malawi through the small but well established charity, Faith in Action, based in Crawley. The scheme, which involves the whole community, began by setting up a local committee, then the materials were purchased and the locals trained not only in a new form of agriculture but necessarily in operating the windmill and even book keeping! Nevertheless by the end of the year the first crops had been planted.

This was an ambitious scheme involving not only a form of cooperative farming but the erection and use of a windmill-driven water pump with which to irrigate what is almost semi desert. Though primarily an agricultural scheme it has written into it social objectives such as the setting up and running of a local clinic to be financed out of the marketed proceeds. Furthermore, the participants are expected to repay the costs of setting up the scheme including the expensive pump

in the first two years. Other schemes have all achieved this. In that sense this is business and community finance rather than charity. It is very much a scheme which generates incomes and raises the local general standard of living. The whole scheme is overseen by the



local church authorities. The finance rolls on to other similar projects.

You may imagine that the scheme is of great interest to the SMOAT Committee and we hope to be able to monitor its progress closely.

HARRY INGRAM



The SMOATathon needs you!

... as a performer, sponsor or member of the audience - or even all three!

Do you have a gift for singing, or playing a musical instrument - or both? If you do, then be sure to note the date of **Sunday 3 February 2013**, when SMOAT will be aiming to provide live music in St Mark's Hall, Alma Road, Reigate, for six hours continuously, from 11.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

We are looking for musicians and singers to fill time slots of five, ten or 15 minutes so that between us we can cover each of the 360 minutes stretching ahead of us. So, if your speciality is the crumhorn or the comb, the saxophone or the swanee whistle, or you like singing in a group or choir or solo, please consider taking part on 3 February. And if performing is not for you, then come along to enjoy some refreshments and what promises to be a thoroughly entertaining afternoon.

The purpose of this musical extravaganza? Through sponsorship of the performers, to raise funds for an IMPACT school health project in the Kibwezi District of Kenya. This would provide immensely practical help to improve the lives of children in four schools in the most

impoverished parts of the area. Among many other benefits, the package of care would enable:-

- a health monitoring scheme to be established in each of the schools, with training provided for the health monitors
- children suffering from malnutrition to be provided with Vitamin A and de-worming tablets
- those having severe visual impairment to be given glasses
- the schools to be provided with first aid kits to help prevent secondary infections when children injure themselves

Please help us to finance this project by becoming involved with the **SMOATathon** in any way that you can. Further details for potential performers and sponsors are available from SMOAT committee members. We need you all!

DAVID LEAR

Fresh Start Foundation

This is a very small area based charity with direct links from the UK to the Kwinella district of The Gambia.

It began by supporting orphans and vulnerable children principally through a local school there which caters for five villages. It has renovated classrooms, provided school meals, and drilled bore holes for clean water. More recently it has extended its activities into the general population notably with an eye screening service. The small SMOAT donation of £490 provided 70 mosquito nets.

InterCare

This organisation collects unwanted medication mainly through GPs and also buys some medicines not otherwise available. The medicines and other medical stock are collected, taken to the centre at East Grinstead and there sorted and stored before being made up into parcels at order to be sent to Africa.

The workers are mainly volunteers. It supplies 30 hospitals, 58 Health Centres, and a number of other organisations in Africa which altogether now total 116. Last year SMOAT sent £1,100 to fund the supply of such medical stock to a new location, the Madesi Mission Hospital in Malawi, which otherwise could not have been served.

Village Water

Mukatimule Village, Kaoma is really four small old villages in rural Uganda which has 32 families of about 228 people. For many years villagers have obtained their water from a scoop hole near the river bed of the Kaoma Ndonga. Malaria and diarrhoea has cause widespread sickness and high infant mortality.

Village Water responded to an application from the headman and with his help set up a sanitation committee to undertake sanitation works under supervision from the Village Water workers.

Now, for the first time, all households have latrines, washing facilities, bath shelters, pot racks to keep cooking utensils off the ground and away from animals, and they have access to rubbish pits. Last of all they dug their own well which has been capped and a hand pump installed, which the villagers know how to maintain.



The total cost of this scheme in 2011 was £2599, of which SMOAT gave £1500.

Practical Action

I wrote about the effectiveness of the work of Practical Action in connection with the Christmas Appeal for 2011.

The PA project “Hitting Hunger Harder” is an ongoing one in the Sudan where hunger is ever present. This truly was a matter of life or death. Matching funds come from the EEC so the modest SMOAT contribution of £2,500 was worth much more.

With normal low annual rainfall exacerbated by climate change and increasing population, farming methods have to become more productive. This project is as much a matter of information and conviction as infrastructure.

This really is a massive challenge which, without detailing the reports we have received, really is very difficult to get across. The varied interests of nomads with historic rights have to be reconciled with those of farmers who cannot farm land if it is trampled by livestock. Solutions must cater for all.

In summary the project provides for centres of information, demonstration plots (e.g. for drought resistant forms of sorghum), seed banks to help change to more drought resistant crops; irrigation, training for women (on seed propagation, new crops, food processing, nutritional values); training of para-vets for better husbandry, and better water harvesting and irrigation methods. It was for the latter activity and terracing that the SMOAT gift was applied.

Such profound projects will become even more vital as climate change for which we are all responsible becomes more widespread and extreme.

Practical Action in Nepal



Western Nepal has very poor living standards with little health or social provision. There, high mountains and deep, incised, river valleys make travel (walking and using donkeys) over even short distances a very lengthy experience.

The PA solution to these acute problems is the creation of a network of gravity ropeways and Tuins, or metal cages, to carry goods and people from one height to the next. At the higher end of the system are irrigation and new agricultural schemes to raise incomes and at the lower are warehouses to store produce on its way to market.

In 2011 SMOAT provided funds of £1600 towards the construction of such communications in Nepal.

HARRY INGRAM

Workaid's Container to Zambia

You may recall that the highly successful Jazz Evening held in October last year was in support of Workaid. The £1,500 SMOAT was able to donate from that event has contributed to the cost of sending a container (named 'Simeon') to Zambia. The container left Workaid's premises in Chesham on 20 June and arrived in Zambia two months later. On board were 10 tonnes of tools and equipment for 25 projects. Workaid's General Manager writes "I have just got back from a 12 day trip to Zambia and have seen at first hand the impact we are making in the lives of the Zambian folk. Without donations such as yours we simply could not do this. Once again – thank you all."

ALAN PRESTON

Barn Dance

On Friday 9th March, St Mark's Church Centre was turned into a hot spot for a hoedown when we held our family barn dance there!

Performing for us were the Odd Bods, a great band who kept us all in line – well as much as you can at a barn dance full of people who don't know what they are doing! During the well-deserved interval everyone enjoyed a lovely supper of cottage pie and salad. The children had a fantastic time, out-dancing the exhausted adults and keeping going until the last note had been played.

The money raised at the event is going towards supporting a VSO volunteer. Our volunteer is Keya Banerjee, who currently lives in London. On 22nd June she went to Uganda to take up a position as a General Practitioner trainer. Keya has committed to spending between 12 and 24 months in Uganda in this post.

Life expectancy in Uganda is 51 years of age, with over a third of the population living in poverty. It's hard to stay healthy when you're poor in Uganda, especially if you live in a rural village. Keya will be working closely with rural communities in implementing primary health care services, helping to provide preventative health care where access to health services is at its lowest.

We are hoping that when she comes back to the UK, following her placement, she will give a talk to us, to let us know of her experiences and achievements. This is something to look forward to as it will give an insight into a world that we find hard to imagine.

BARBARA PERKINS

East Africa Children's Project

This is a small Brighton based charity with activities in three locations in East Africa. Its leader makes annual visits to oversee the progress of the projects it supports. One project is support for an orphanage in Kenya, another is a training project for women on sewing machines which at the end are given to the women to support their personal businesses. The third is a brick making project in Tanzania which required a second brick making machine and moulds to support several families in this income generating activity. SMOAT provide £1500 to enable this expansion to take place.

Unhappily there were problems with intermittent electricity required to power the machines, and then the land on which the activity was based was withdrawn from the project.

This activity has had to be temporarily shelved and the machines put in storage. We await more recent feed back. This particular project cannot be counted as a success. It illustrates the risks which attend projects in the Developing World and thereby emphasises the success of nearly all SMOAT supported projects.

Lake Malawi Project (LMP)

This is a very small area based project wholly dependant on a small number of well qualified enthusiasts in the UK and a committed body of local workers on Likoma island in Lake Malawi. It aims to improve the lives of the very poor people living on this island and as such necessarily has to spread its endeavours over a wide range of human activities.

The climate context is a long dry season with a short wet one destructive of the fragile earth condition, but there is also the uncertainty which goes with climate change.

The project's activities extend over health, particularly HIV/AIDS; education, including basic computer skills; agriculture and crafts, including boat building for fishing. Over the years SMOAT has supported many of these activities but specially the agriculture. LMP has concentrated on new agricultural

methods aimed at increasing food production and diversification.

When LMP began the island was dependant on imports for 80% of its maize consumption. Now it is approaching self sufficiency. This is a testimony to the value of persuading others to new methods in their own interest.

In the UK we quickly understood that the devaluation of sterling increased the price of notably our food imports, but did any of us consider that it completely undermined the basis of such projects as LMP?

Initially the project stumbled with the locals working for lower real wages and in the UK economies made included first reducing the hours of their only employee Clare Short who has given so much for so long to this enterprise. She has now had to give up her post but has joined the executive.

Last year SMOAT gave £1080 to help fund check dams to reduce soil erosion in the centre of the island and help retain water from the rainy season. This involves growing and transplanting vetiver grass onto the low ridges to prevent the flash

flooding washing away the soil. Apart from some unusual and uncertain rain this year in the wet season the project is reported to have gone well so that we may hope that both land and water will be retained.

IMPACT Foundation

This organisation grew out of a UNICEF initiative in 1984 to “avoid economic waste and human deprivation”. SMOAT has frequently supported its projects in the past. One of the poorest parts of South East Asia is the floating villages of the Tonle Sap lake region in Cambodia. Such villages are cut off from health care and are forced to use the dirty water of the lake which receives sewage and which they share with animals.

The first need is clean drinking water and IMPACT devised and tested a light-weight bio sand water filter which can be fitted to the boats. SMOAT's gift of £1000 last year funded the first filters for 15 family boats, and thus far they have been a success.

Build Africa

Build Africa works through sister organisations in Kenya and Uganda for the needs of schools and local communities. It has long been supported by a sister organisation, Caterham Overseas Aid Trust or COAT, another offshoot of the Rev Ian Kitteringham. With schools it works by setting up management committees of parents and teachers which devise three year plans by which the infrastructure, teacher training and the raising of educational achievement is achieved. In the community it supports various forms of income generating activity.

Last year SMOAT made a gift of £1344 to support a microfinance project. The funds finance the work of community-based trainers (CBTs) who oversee the setting up and support of local Savings and Loan Groups (SLGs). Unusually none of this finance is used to make loans. The SLGs of about 30 people make their own savings from which the loans for income generating and welfare uses are made. About 75% of savings are loaned out and the return on savings for the cycle of about 12 months averages 37%.

Income generating uses cover small business loans of between £5 to £15 to purchase tools, stock such as seeds, clothing or other retail stock items. The welfare part of the loan stock is available for education and Healthcare family needs. At the end of the cycle the fund is distributed to members and the next cycle is restarted. This not only stimulates the local economy and raises incomes but provides a sense of community support.

HARRY INGRAM

Christmas Appeal 2011

You may recall that our 2011 Christmas Appeal had two projects in view – Practical Action's Hitting Hunger Harder in Sudan and Project Uganda's washroom for Rukungiri Central Secondary Girls School in Uganda. I am pleased to report that the appeal raised a total of £5,063 (including Gift Aid). The SMOAT Committee are very grateful to all who supported the appeal so generously. The Committee decided to round the amount up to £5,500, giving £2,500 to Practical Action and £3,000 – the estimated cost of the washroom - to Project Uganda.

ALAN PRESTON

Beetle Drive

What better way to spend a lovely autumnal Sunday afternoon than in the company of friends, playing Beetle and having tea and cakes? Well, that's what 44 people thought on Sunday 18th November, and from the various comments I have received, everyone enjoyed themselves.

It was amusing to see the competitiveness of the players (adults and children) as they rolled their dice. It was also amusing to witness the chaos caused by the winners of each round moving one way round the room to the next table and the losers moving the other way. However, after a couple of rounds, people got the hang of it and everyone I spoke to enjoyed the very social aspect of meeting different people on their tables on each round.

The overall winner of the game beat her husband by one point. Fortunately, he didn't ask for a recount! As people walked out of the doors, they were asking when we would hold the next Beetle Drive, so I would consider the event a success!

The money raised from the event is going to an IMPACT School Health Project in the Kibwezi District of Kenya, where they have just experienced their worst drought for 60 years. Presently, children walk everywhere barefooted and are attacked by 'jiggers', which are sandfleas that burrow into their feet and eat the flesh. Apart from being extremely painful, these can cause serious infections. Vitamin A deficiency causes eye problems and ENT infections can lead to permanent deafness.

Four of the poorest schools in the District will receive help and up to 1,000 children will benefit from such things as medicines, first aid kits, Vitamin A, spectacles, equipment and provisions to establish vegetable gardens and tree saplings to prevent land erosion and to provide firewood.

44 people enjoyed themselves playing Beetle, up to 1,000 children will enjoy better health with the help of the money raised.

BARBARA PERKINS

Musical Evening

It was “The very dead of Winter....” well Saturday 21 January anyway, and so just the time to enjoy an evening of light-hearted music-making and recitations. Gathered in the warm glow of St. Mark’s Hall over 50 SMOAT supporters were superbly entertained by tenor Paul Weakley, his accompanist Mark, and reciter Roger Collis. Together they provided a wide mix of songs, arias, one-man duets (yes really!), keyboard solos, verse and prose, all very entertainingly introduced and spun together by the performers. And to warm us up during the interval the ladies of the SMOAT committee provided hot quiches and salad. We all thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, and as a result SMOAT was able to send Traidcraft Exchange £650 towards their Sustainable Livelihoods for Poor Producers project in Northern Bangladesh.

As you probably know, Bangladesh is one of the world’s poorest and least developed countries. About 40% of its 147 million people live in abject poverty, especially those in rural areas where livelihood options are limited. Bangladesh has seen economic growth in recent years, but progress in tackling poverty has been hampered by the global economic crisis, increasing food and fuel prices, and debilitating natural disasters.

Traidcraft Exchange’s project focuses on the Mymensingh and Sherpur districts where up to 55% of the population live below the poverty line and where there are high levels of malnutrition. These districts have been overlooked by donor funded projects, especially Sherpur. Communities here are poor and isolated. Agriculture is their main source of income but this is vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change. For various reasons including a lack of climate-adaptive agricultural practices, farmers struggle to develop sustainable livelihoods.

The project aims to address these issues. Its fundamental ethos is one of self-help: enabling the poor to work their own way out of poverty with dignity by providing them with the necessary skills, resources and opportunities to increase their incomes through improved trade. The main beneficiaries are 6,000 small farmers and their families. Based on an average family size of 5, this means that 30,000 people will directly benefit. At least 40% of the target farmers will be women and 30% will be from a minority tribal group called Garo.

A grant from the UK government’s Department for International Development (DFID) will cover 75% of the project costs. The remaining 25% needs to be raised from donors to enable Traidcraft to access this money. So every £1 donated will ‘unlock’ a further £3 from DFID. We are grateful to everyone who supported this event.

ALAN PRESTON

SMOAT QUIZ 2012

Friday 19th October saw a great gathering of SMOAT supporters at St Mark's for the annual Quiz night; once again hosted by the very popular Helier Dreux and his wife Ann. We would like to thank Helier and Ann for providing a very entertaining evening.

The quiz proved to be very challenging with the final results being closer than previous years.

In total just over 100 tickets were sold resulting in proceeds reaching £1,018. The bar contributed an additional £290, raffle £225 and generous other donations were £120. A tremendous £1,652.30 was the total income from the evening this year; £546 more than last year. Whilst ticket sales value were only £45 above last year; the bar and raffle takings far exceeded earnings in 2011.

This year costs were reduced by offering a fantastic Ploughman's Supper rather than the usual Fish & Chips. The feedback on this was varied but on the whole was very well received by our guests and the amended menu resulted in a significant cost saving of £170. Total costs of the evening were £441; this compares to £577 last year. So overall the Quiz night made an amazing profit of £1,211.34; £682 more than last year's event.

All earnings are going towards supporting Microloan in Malawi, providing small loans to women to encourage small business commerce. This has been a very successful project for SMOAT in the past and a further sponsorship of £1000 would service 150 women for 2 years!! SMOAT have added funds from savings to take the total donation up to £1,300.

Many thanks to all those who supported the quiz evening; without your support it would not have been such a fun and successful evening.

SANTHA DIXON

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*For further details of SMOAT and
our planned fund-raising events,
please visit our web site*

SMOAT.org.uk

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