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ST MARK'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST

# Newsletter - Winter 2014

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*Dates for your diary:*

## Launch of Christmas Appeal

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December  
10am, St. Mark's Church

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## SMOATathon2

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2015  
St. Mark's Church Hall

### ***SMOATathon2 takes shape:***

Like most things in life, music affects people in many different ways, but there is no doubting its ever-present influence. Nearly 2,500 years ago Plato, the Greek philosopher, wrote that music “gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and to everything”, while in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century the Danish writer, Hans Christian Andersen, noted that “where words fail, music speaks”.

As music appears to reach those parts that other art forms find less accessible, it is no surprise that over the years SMOAT has used it extensively as a fund-raising tool. Soloists, choral groups and instrumentalists have all contributed to hugely enjoyable musical evenings, which in turn have boosted SMOAT's income, helping it to

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

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

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fulfil its objective of supporting projects to relieve poverty in the developing world.

Two years ago, when the SMOAT Committee was considering how to broaden its fund-raising activities, it decided to stage a sponsored musical event.

Live music would be produced continuously over a number of hours (5<sup>1</sup>/2, as it turned out), with those taking part seeking sponsorship for their “slots”, which varied from five minutes for some of the younger players and singers to half an hour for more experienced performers.

The SMOATathon, as it was dubbed, was an unqualified success, with 25 performers providing a wide range of music greatly enjoyed by a small and ever-changing audience.

Unsurprisingly, no-one stayed for the full five and a half hours, but many people came, went away and came back again. And, most importantly, with the total number of sponsors running into the hundreds, the event raised more than £2,000 for a school health project in Kenya. Many who donated had not previously given to SMOAT.

### **SMOATathon2 is now on the horizon.**

**Sunday 22 March 2015** has been earmarked as the day when St Mark’s Hall will again be overflowing with musical talent, and much-needed funds will be raised. Please note this date in your new 2015 diaries and calendars, and support the event by:-

- \* signing up to play and/or sing if you would like to take part
- \* sponsoring those who perform
- \* coming along on the day to hear some enjoyable music

Whether as a performer, sponsor or member of the audience, it will be an occasion not to be missed!

DAVID LEAR

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## ***Editorial***

Well, it’s that time of the year again! Some of us love all the shopping, preparation, songs on the radio, silly hats, blatant commercialism, etc. and others of us hate it. I fall into the first category and my husband falls into the second category. However, we both love the fact that we get together with our family, in the warmth of our homes, eat almost too much to be able to move, go out for walks in the peaceful countryside and bump into friends doing the same thing.

I grew up in a very working-class household. My mum and dad worked hard all their lives but we didn't have much spare money, we didn't have a car or a colour television or things that some people might just expect to have nowadays. But what we did have was a home, food on the table, water to drink, a health system that looked after us and our Christmases were wonderful, joyous family occasions.

By this time you will probably see where I'm going with this and I'm not going to hide it. I do love the outrageous over-the-topness of Christmas. However, I count my blessings on all levels and throughout the whole season, because I am truly thankful for what I have. One of the things about being on the SMOAT Committee is that on a regular basis we talk and read about poverty and the plight of people in the world who can't even begin to imagine our lives, and it really does make us think hard about things.

I'm not saying that we shouldn't have what we have, I'm saying don't take it for granted, think about other people, realise what we have and how lucky we are. As a community, I think we try hard to help other people but we mustn't become complacent and think that we are doing enough because we can always do a little bit more if we try, and that little bit more might change someone else's life.

One thing that is noticeable when we hear reports back from our Projects is that the people we support, who struggle through terrible hardships and poverty, are essentially happy people. They take what they have and they make the most of it. They lose members of their families to diseases which are preventable and they accept that as a fact of life. They shouldn't have to accept it though and in this day and age they shouldn't have to live without clean water or in abject poverty. If everyone in the Western world gave just a little of their money or their time, then the world might be a different place.

Our Christmas Appeal this year centres around two projects. One is Project Uganda's Bugangari Secondary School washroom construction and the other is a MircoLoan project. Two very different projects, one centred around the welfare and health of children, one centred around families and their futures, both benefiting people for many years to come.

If you can, please support our Appeal. The SMOAT Committee works very hard to find really worthwhile projects. We also try to support projects which are not widely known about and therefore not known to or supported by such things as Comic Relief. However, we always

carry out rigorous research and demand reports so that we know where your money has gone. We can therefore say with a degree of certainty that all money raised goes to the projects, it doesn't get lost in administration fees.

Let me take this opportunity, on behalf of the SMOAT Committee, to wish you all a happy, healthy and joyous Christmas. Wear your flashing earrings or musical ties with pride, shop 'til you drop. But through it all, don't forget what Christmas is about and don't forget the people who aren't as lucky as us.

BARBARA PERKINS, *Chairman*

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## ***PAULINE YOUNG, RIP***

Pauline joined the SMOAT Committee in February 2009. She immediately fitted in, with a willingness to help which was second-to-none.

She thought nothing of catering for over 100 people and did it with ease, and if she couldn't do it herself for some reason, she made sure everyone around her knew exactly what they were supposed to be doing!

She was a passionate Royalist and slept in the streets for nearly every Royal Wedding since the 1960s.

She met HRH The Queen Mother and Prince Charles.

Pauline was a no-nonsense person who didn't suffer fools gladly but she had a heart of gold; she always went that step further to help people; she put herself out and didn't often put herself first;



she cared about people and for people. In my opinion she was, in the truest sense of the word, a Christian.

She will be very sadly missed by many people in many parts of the world. Our thoughts and prayers remain with her family and friends.

BARBARA PERKINS

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## *SMOAT through the eyes of a new committee member*

“Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice. Like Slavery and Apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Sometimes it falls on a generation to be great. YOU can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom.” Nelson Mandela

In my life I have witnessed extreme poverty first hand on two occasions. Firstly when I was working in Delhi, India, I had the opportunity to visit an orphanage which was supported by the company I was working for at that time. Secondly, I visited Uganda where my sister was working for an extended period with the government and saw the realities of life in rural poor communities.

These experiences combined with the stories my father had shared with us as children of his time spent as a VSO worker in Sierra Leone in the late 1960's.

I had seen and heard about the impact of poverty. However, I was limited to charitable donations of time and money in response, rather than the type of action figures like Nelson Mandela have referred to.

When an opportunity arose to join the SMOAT committee, it seemed like the perfect vehicle to realise my ambition to undertake some small active role of my own in the battle against Global poverty.

Attending the monthly committee meetings I quickly realised the incredible impact that even a small charity such as SMOAT can achieve. The committee engages in careful research into the projects they choose to support. I appreciated the need and success of small targeted projects and the huge impact they can have on local communities.

The effectiveness of SMOAT itself is enhanced by their efficient organisation of simple but effective fund raising activities,

and most importantly, the tremendous support they receive from the church and broader local community. But what I hadn't appreciated, was the enormous amount of fun that was to be enjoyed along the way.

The first fundraising event I was involved with was the '2014 Beetle Drive' in support of a rain water harvesting scheme in South Western Uganda (Project Uganda). This retro chic afternoon activity was attended by over 45 competitors across the entire spectrum of ages who all thoroughly embraced this "old school" paper and pen competitive challenge.

Fuelled by a delicious selection of cakes, cookies and caffeine the afternoon sailed by in a flurry of laughter and excitement until the winner, a certain Taylor Lam, was revealed and to his delight presented with a chocolate prize the Easter bunny would have been proud of!

The next fundraiser was the renowned 'Helier Dreux quiz night' in October. And so I set to in the church hall kitchen with several kilos of rice to cook and more pots of delicious donated home-cooked chilli con carne than I have ever seen, whilst my fellow committee members stocked up

the bar and labelled up prizes for the raffle. Again extremely well attended by 12 teams of 7 or 8, Helier's witty and sometimes taxing questions commanded an air of amused concentration among the participants and much happy banter. This single event raised over £1,350 and was a huge success.

Some of the events have had a more reflective agenda. The inspiring and thought-provoking talk provided by VSO worker Jessica Townsend, sponsored by SMOAT for her nursing work in Tanzania, was a poignant reminder of the enormity of the challenges that our Global community has to face. Jessica described the conditions of the hospital in which she had worked and the significant pressures. She left her audience in awe of her inspiring work, and grateful for our own tremendous NHS system.

In 2015 I look forward to more fun and fundraising, but also more learning about how our projects are facilitated and the impact that they have. Moreover, with my own children aged 9, 7 and 4, I feel confident to involve and inspire our future generations in this work.

CLAIRE BOWERS

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*The SMOAT committee are always interested to hear from anyone who would be keen to support the charity in any way they feel able. Please speak to any member of the committee.*

# Recent Projects

Our Summer Newsletter reported on the projects supported in the first half of this year. Since then we have supported three further projects.

## **Village Water (1): £1,700: Well rehabilitation in Western Zambia**

Since 2003 Village Water has been supplying safe water, sanitation and hygiene education to poor rural communities in Western Province, Zambia. It bears repeating that access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education helps communities to break the cycle of poverty by improving health, reducing barriers to education and increasing opportunities to earn a living.

Western Province is the poorest part of Zambia and is very rural, with most families dependent on subsistence farming and living in villages in the bush. Women and children spend hours collecting dirty water, as half the people living in rural areas in Western Province have no access to safe water: and nearly half the population have no access to any form of sanitation whatsoever. High levels of waterborne diseases mean children are often too ill to attend school and women spend the little money they have on medicines.



*Rehabilitated Well Head*

The model adopted by Village Water to address these issues begins with the community which will benefit. Before installing (or rehabilitating) a well the community sets-up a water committee to oversee and encourage behaviour

change, as this is key to reducing waterborne diseases. Communities are taught how to build simple, low-cost, low-technology sanitation facilities using locally available materials. This means all households,

including the poorest can participate. The well is then built (or rehabilitated) with the local community providing sand, gravel and labour. Two villagers are then trained to maintain and repair the water point. It costs just £25 to provide one person with safe water, sanitation and hygiene education.

This year Village Water aims to repair 90 broken water points put in by other donors. These water points have fallen into disrepair because no-one in the community was trained to maintain and repair the pump. Following the model outlined above Village Water will ensure that for each pump they rehabilitate members of the local community will be trained to look after the pump. This is estimated to cost £2,819 per village. The funds raised at this year's Quiz, with a small top up from SMOAT's general funds, allowed us to donate £1,700 to Village Water. And, as the Government will double that amount under the Department for International Development's current fund matching scheme, it will more than pay for one village rehabilitation.

### **Village Water (2): £1,500: manual drilling**

Originally all the wells provided by Village Water were hand-dug by local contractors. This is a time and labour intensive process that can take between one and three weeks for each well. Hand digging can also be expensive as it requires cement rings to line the inside of the well to stop it from collapsing. Local contractors were often employed elsewhere on more lucrative contracts for larger NGOs, which led to delays in completing Village Water's projects and frustration for villagers who had completed the hygiene and sanitation changes but then had to wait for the promised well.

In 2010 Village Water piloted manual drilling, which involves a process known as rota jetting (a drill bit is attached to the end of a pipe and driven into the ground: sections of pipe are then added until the required depth has been reached). Village Water had to train the contractors involved in the pilot in the techniques involved as there were no private sector businesses or local contractors who were offering manual drilling. Manual drilling is quicker than hand-digging, as a well can be completed in one day. It is also safer, as no-one has to be inside the well, as they are during hand digging, and it is cheaper because less cement is needed. From 2011 onwards Village Water supported the establishment of 6 manual drilling teams as independent local businesses. These teams received training in manual drilling and in business skills, including writing tenders, drawing up contracts, financing and reporting.

Community involvement is very important in manual drilling - as it is in most successful development projects. The manual drilling projects



Manual Drilling April 2014

involve the local community in helping to collect sand and stones, fetch water for use in the drilling, sift gravel and generally help and motivate the team. In the words of a Village Water representative “It is amazing to visit a village whilst the drilling is going on,

knowing that earlier that day they were drinking dirty water, but by the end of the day they will be drinking safe water”.

Each manual drilling team needs the following equipment: hoses and clips, a rota jetting kit (including drill bit, pipes and connectors), a trash pump, a submersible pump and a generator. One of the biggest challenges the teams are facing is lack of their own equipment. At present two of the teams lack submersible pumps and generators. A pump and a generator together cost £750. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters this year we have been able, from general funds, to send Village Water the £1,500 required to complete the equipment for the two teams. This donation too will be doubled under Department for International Development’s fund matching scheme, thereby providing a bonus for Village Water.

**Project Uganda: £1,500:** Rainwater harvesting at Mugamba Model Primary School

Funds raised at the Beetle Drive (which were supplemented from SMOAT’s general funds) supported the installation of a rainwater harvesting system at Mugamba Model Primary School, which is about 4 miles from Rukungiri in south-west Uganda. Many schools in the area have very limited, or even no, access to water within an acceptable walking distance. Students are frequently dehydrated or ill and their education consequently suffers. Mugamba Model Primary School is a private day school with 115 pupils. It is in a hilly area and consists of two permanent buildings roofed with iron sheets. Currently, children

must walk over half a mile through very steep terrain to fetch water from the local spring, which also serves the whole community including all the schools in the area. The water is required not only for drinking but also for cooking and hand washing. The children who go to collect water are often delayed by very long queues at the spring and therefore miss lessons.

The rainwater harvesting system is a simple one. Guttering is placed under the edge of suitable sections of the roof on the existing buildings and downpipes are attached to form a conduit to plastic or concrete water tanks. These are large enough to supply the school with sufficient water even during the dry season. This will remove the need for children to collect water from beyond the school premises, with all the hazards and disadvantages that can bring, and improve their hydration, hygiene and sanitation and reduce their levels of infection: and of course they will be better able to benefit more fully from the education the school provides. Furthermore, as materials for the project will be sourced locally and local vocational students and local labour will be employed in the construction process, there will be benefits to the local economy too. The estimated cost of this project is £1,500, the amount we were able to donate.

*Many thanks to all whose contributions to SMOAT funds have made these donations possible.*

ALAN PRESTON

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## ***Update on past projects supported by SMOAT***

As many of you will be aware SMOAT aims to support projects which we believe will achieve a lasting legacy.

We are therefore delighted when we receive reports back from various projects we have funded in the past which provide us with ongoing news and updates from the regions which we have helped, and are pleased to share some of this positive feedback with you all.

You may well recall our donation to MicroLoan in December 2012, to support their agricultural programme in Jenda, Northern Malawi.

We have learnt that our grant supported the cost of sending two agricultural training specialists to the region, and subsequently helped fund loans to over 430 female farmers to help them build the capacity of their agricultural activity.

MicroLoan reports that the average quantity of savings amongst their farming clients is now around £10, which represents a significant amount of savings in poor rural communities.

This serves as an important buffer if these families experience financial difficulties.

Importantly MicroLoan have also indicated their clients in this region have maintained a 98.6% level of repayment on their interest free loans since our donation. This is a great indicator

of the success they are experiencing to move these families out of poverty.

But it also allows MicroLoan to pass on the capital in the form of loans to additional farmers, and thus the legacy of the original funding and donation lives on.

We hope the skills and farming activities these women have established will help facilitate long-term solutions to rural poverty in this region in the face of a challenging environment.

Our second update is courtesy of Colonel Tikajit Gurung in respect of his medical expedition to Nepal with BRINOS (Britain -Nepal Otology Service). You may recall the donation we made in respect of the Ear Surgery Camp which sent 3 ENT surgeons together with an anaesthetist, an operating practitioner (Colonel Gurung himself), and a nurse to a south western region of Nepal where a large proportion of the population suffer hearing disability due to the altitude and conditions.



*Pre-screening before surgery*

We are delighted to hear that over the course of two weeks the surgical team performed 117 major procedures with 100% discharge in 48 hours.

Many of their patients had waited many years to be able to have their surgeries, often experiencing pain and discomfort due to infection.



This humanitarian medical mission in Nepal was subsequently nominated for various categories in the British medical journal award ceremony in 2013 and went on to win Medical Team of the year 2013.

This is an amazing tribute to the skilled

work they undertook in difficult conditions and we are delighted to hear about the success of this project.

We hope you agree that this feedback is both heart-warming and motivational as we learn what together our efforts can achieve.

Thank you.

CLAIRE BOWERS



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*For more information, or to join our mailing list,  
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