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ST MARK'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST

# Newsletter - Winter 2018

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## Dates for your diary:

### Launch of Christmas Appeal

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2018

at St. Mark's at 8 am and 10am services

### Beetle Drive - Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2019

An afternoon event for players from 5 to 95

### Jazz Evening - Angie Barton

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March at St. Mark's

Tickets available from the committee and online

### Annual Public Meeting - 11.20 am at St. Mark's

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> May

### Quiz Evening with Helier Dreux - Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> October

### SMOATathon Sponsored music - Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> November

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Further details of all SMOAT events will be available nearer the time on our web site: **[www.SMOAT.org.uk](http://www.SMOAT.org.uk)**

on Facebook via **[SMOAT.org.uk/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/SMOAT.org.uk)**

or from any of the committee.



## **“Beating poverty needs partnerships and collaboration – not just money”**

I read an interesting article recently with the above title. Please forgive me for quoting heavily from it, but some of the points made struck me as being so close to SMOAT principles that I thought it was worth highlighting just a few things in the article, of which the following is an abridged version.

“Nigeria recently surpassed India to become the country with the highest number of people living in extreme poverty: 87 million. Nigeria is oil rich and boasts Africa’s fastest growing economy. Yet six of its people fall into extreme poverty every minute. By 2030, it is estimated that 82% of the world’s poorest people will live in Africa.

“Historically, poverty has been predominantly dealt with as a lack of material resources or an income deprivation issue. Development work has focused on pushing resources to poor communities. Many have criticised the availability of “free money” through international aid, which they say has created a “dependency syndrome”. The reality is that poverty is about more than just money. If money alone were the solution, poverty would have ended: more than \$50 billion was given as overseas development assistance to Africa in 2017 alone.

“Without contextual knowledge, education and adaptation, foreign or imposed practices or resources cause new sets of problems. This is seen again and again across countries that depend on aid. For example, where food poverty was causing under-nutrition in parts of Malawi, financial aid has alleviated it. But that problem is quickly being replaced by diabetes and hypertension – because of a narrow financial solution to a complex problem.

“Tackling poverty requires a different focus, rather than just money. It requires partnerships and practices that promote learning, particularly in relation to culture and self-knowledge. Having communities identify their own problems, then collaborate to find solutions, is also crucial. Money has a role to

play in partnerships, but projects shouldn't default to depending solely on it.

“Many of the factors that are blamed for contributing to poverty are not measurable in dollar terms or connected to income. These include people's lack of choices, restriction of freedom, lack of skills, gender, castes and barriers.

“Understanding these issues and their complexities requires looking at poverty through a sustainability lens. This is a perspective that focuses on ethical and innovative ways to look at and use resources, share knowledge, and build community to affect positive change.”

I think most SMOAT supporters know that when we select projects we look for those which are low cost and low maintenance, of a community self-help nature and sustainable. We prefer projects organised with providers who work directly with local communities, have strong, responsible management and provide good feedback and projects which have personal contacts in this country or the recipient country who meet these criteria. And so, when I read this article, I felt rather proud of SMOAT for being a forward-thinking organisation that doesn't just throw money at projects because of their kerb appeal. We research, we talk to organisations and form partnerships with them which lead to partnerships and relationships with the people we help.

SMOAT was founded nearly 40 years ago by a group of ordinary people who wanted to help those who couldn't possibly help themselves without a little outside intervention. Over those 40 years, we have evolved, many committee members have come and gone, but we remain staunch in our resolve not just to donate money but to make sure it goes to exactly the right place. The people we are helping are never just given a hand out, they receive a sustainable hand, that will ensure their futures.

Thank you for your ongoing support and please be assured that SMOAT's principles won't change. We will always make the most of money given by our supporters to ensure that it gets to the grass roots of poverty, exactly where it is needed to give its recipients the best chance of a future, not just a short-term fix.

BARBARA PERKINS, *Chair, SMOAT Committee*

## Quiz support remains rock solid

When did you last complain about the weather? I mean, *really* complain? Maybe a family barbecue or picnic was spoiled by unexpectedly heavy rain, or a sporting event that you planned to watch or take part in was curtailed, postponed or even cancelled because it was just too wet to carry on. How did cricket even come to be invented in England?

While the summer of 2018 had many of us struggling to recall when it had last rained, the British Isles are of course far from immune to weather-based disasters. Those old enough will recall the catastrophic floods in Lynmouth on 16 August 1952, when 34 people died, and, 52 years later - eerily on the same date - in Boscastle, where thankfully there were no fatalities. More recently, Cockermouth in Cumbria has experienced devastating flooding twice in six years. And, if all these places seem far removed from SMOAT's home territory, this year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1968 floods that caused local destruction and loss of life after the River Mole burst its banks.

Maybe it is necessary to think back to events such as these when we hear of extreme weather taking its toll in countries where the resources to aid recovery and reconstruction may not be widely available. In sub-Saharan Africa, long periods of drought interspersed with violent storms are, it seems, becoming more frequent. The need to harvest rainwater has become increasingly urgent, because no-one knows when this precious resource will next arrive.

Earlier this year, in Rukungiri, a district of Uganda, the staff and students of Solid Rock nursery and primary school were looking forward to the installation of the school's own rainwater-harvesting system. The work would be undertaken by Project Uganda, and the benefits would be huge.

No longer would students have to spend time walking long distances to collect water, often in the dark when it was dangerous. They would suffer less from dehydration, infections, malnourishment and the general poor health attributable to inadequate hygiene and sanitation. At school, their concentration levels would improve because of regular access to unpolluted drinking water. An additional benefit would be the provision of employment and training opportunities for a local labour force.

Then, before the work could be carried out, the school was hit by a storm of such intensity that floodwater poured through the site, causing



*A rural idyll? Not when this is your only source of (not very clean) water, a 1km walk from Solid Rock nursery and primary school.*

the walls of two classrooms as well as an office block to collapse. Mercifully, no-one was harmed, but in the immediate aftermath there were fears that the school would have to close.

Thankfully, a solution was found; it was agreed that the funds previously earmarked for the rainwater-harvesting system could be used instead for the reconstruction work clearly essential if the school were to avoid closure.

The classrooms and office block were rebuilt, and concrete culverts were constructed to divert any future floodwater under the buildings and away from the site. Within a relatively short space of time, the school was able to re-open. However, it still did not have a rainwater-



harvesting system, and the money set aside for that provision had been spent on the reconstruction and flood-prevention works.

At this point SMOAT, fortuitously, was in contact with Project Uganda, and it transpired that the amount required to install the rainwater-harvesting system (£1,200) was close to the total typically raised by our annual Quiz evening hosted by the incomparable Helier Dreux. It was quickly agreed that the proceeds of the 2018 Quiz would be earmarked for this project, and, as it turned out, the event raised more than £1,850, all of which has been passed to Project Uganda.

The students and staff at Solid Rock school will be able to have their rainwater harvested through the provision of guttering, some new roofing and two 6,000-litre ferro-cement water tanks, all of which should greatly enhance the quality of their personal and educational lives.

And the Quiz? It was an evening that thoroughly entertained the 120, formed into teams of eight, who attended. As is traditional on these occasions, a chilli supper was provided, and the bar and raffle each did an excellent trade.



*The Quiz, which was a sell-out! Book early for next year...*

With subjects ranging from rivers to Africa and from words to numbers, some of Helier's questions seemed more cryptic than usual. Which river rises high in northern Europe? OK, which river **Rises High In Northern Europe**? Or again, as Helier asked, po-faced, which very short river is the longest in Italy?

Some of us were delighted that we found one or two correct answers. While it goes without saying that the leading teams did rather better than that, the most significant outcome of a highly enjoyable occasion will be Solid Rock school's new rainwater-harvesting system - delivered by Project Uganda, with thanks to the generous supporters of St Mark's Overseas Aid Trust.

DAVID LEAR

# 2017 CHRISTMAS APPEAL UPDATE:

## Supporting HIV/AIDS widows in Zambia through agriculture

Our hugely successful Christmas Appeal for 2017 supported Kaloko Trust who received £2,840 for the Luansobe project in Zambia which supports widows looking after AIDS orphans. The widows were given grants, advice and training for subsistence farming. Our donation provided help for 15 households comprising 72 people.

The project's objective was to achieve long-term improvement in the farming capabilities of the widows and their families. To identify suitable families, the Kaloko Zambia team talks to traditional leaders in the area to find families which the community agrees are facing greatest hardship and would benefit from help to improve their crop yields.

The women heads of household are given training in agricultural techniques, plus seeds and fertiliser to help increase the amount of food they can grow. Surplus food is sold and can go towards school fees for their children, enabling them to stay in education by tackling a root cause of them leaving.

Recently Kaloko wrote to us to provide feedback on how the programme has specifically benefitted two of the recipient families, those of Grace and Winnie in Kwesha.

Grace and Winnie's families have both been affected by HIV/Aids, leaving them without much-needed social and financial support. However, both mothers are determined to keep their children and grandchildren in education as a lifeline out of poverty for their families.



*GRACE NAMBEVE: My sickness and my son's disability will not hinder his education progression anymore.*

Grace's son Mathews is in grade 10 at school. Mathews has been blind since he was eight months old, but alongside full time education he burns charcoal and does other piece work to help raise money for his school fees.

Resources have been tight for Grace and her family since her husband passed away of AIDS in 2005, so her children have to take on some of the financial burden.

Grace's main income is from agriculture and selling fritters, but a lack of farming inputs has led to low crop yields and therefore income, meaning providing basic needs and care for the children has been extremely challenging. She could not even afford to buy groceries such as soap. She has struggled for many years in providing basic needs and care for the children.

Now that she has the prospect of being a beneficiary of the agriculture project from Kaloko Trust, she says her life and the children's will improve in terms of food security and ability to sponsor her child's education.



*WINNIE SIMBOMBOLI: My life will not be the same: My grandchildren can now proceed with confidence to their secondary school.*

Winnie now cares for her seven grandchildren after they became orphaned to HIV/Aids. Two of her grand children have HIV and the other two are suffering from

anaemia. Her aging husband has been sick for the past three years.

Like Grace, she makes her living from agriculture planting maize and groundnuts, but last year's harvest was poor due to drought and the lack of fertilizer. Having a big family, Winnie has been facing challenges not only to feed her extended family but also to pay her grandchildren's school fees. They have to work alongside school or leave school to work, normally by assisting charcoal burners with packing. Before the assistance of Kaloko, she was seriously concerned that the elder children would not go to secondary school and she would have to marry off the older girls.

Winnie's joy at being a beneficiary of Kaloko's agriculture project is that her grandchildren will be able to focus on their studies instead of working to raise money for school fees. Winnie and her children will work hard in their own farm. One of her grandchildren says she will now focus on studying knowing the project will enable the grandmother to pay her schools fees. She mentions that hearing about the project serves as a motivation to work even extra hard because she can see the future is becoming bright.

These two families' stories show the long term educational benefit agricultural schemes can bring to the Kwesha community and with our support, Kaloko can help families like these.

NAOMI FLOOD



# Elizabeth Prosser

I am delighted to introduce myself as the newest member of the St. Mark's Overseas Aid Trust committee. You may remember me from the talk I gave in March on my time working in Chimoio, Mozambique (as seen in this photo) with Village Water, a charity which has enjoyed SMOAT support in both Zambia and now with their new venture into Mozambique.



I am particularly interested in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector and, since completing my Masters in *Water: Science and Governance*, I have also

spent time working in India on WASH-focused behavioural change programmes. I hope to pursue my passion to work overseas in this area in the future. Meanwhile, I welcome the opportunity to support SMOAT as part of the team and look forward to meeting you all at some of the great events coming up.

BETH PROSSER

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## Bingo! Top exam results for Kamal in Nepal

Back in early February, our family-fun Bingo raised a fabulous £500. Topped by with an additional £500 from our regular givers, we were delighted to support the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of medical training for Nepalese Kamal Hamal. The sponsorship is provided by Brighton-based charity, Doctors for Nepal (DFN) who aim to improve healthcare in rural Nepal by empowering impoverished students to serve as doctors in their isolated communities.

DFN currently has three graduated doctors, and six scholarship medical and three nursing students. All students sign an agreement to work for a minimum of four years in rural areas of Nepal once they have graduated; in doing so, they provide

desperately needed medical care to areas that are bereft of doctors. DFN enables local communities to have doctors and health workers from their own areas, to provide sustainable healthcare.



Back in September, Kamal passed his 3<sup>rd</sup> year final exams with flying colours and will now continue his clinical training on his path to becoming a qualified doctor. He is engaged in a Community Based Learning and Education (CBLE) system which

exposes him to a range of various rural settings of Nepal. All of these have extremely limited health facilities.

Kamal is himself from a poor rural area, and without the support he would not have the funding to undertake training. Typically, in rural Nepal, isolated communities are many days walk away from any kind of medical assistance. This situation is further exacerbated by the incredibly harsh mountain environment, political instability, and the poor economic status of the country.

NAOMI FLOOD

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## News from Haiti

In 2017, SMOAT donated £500 to support the placement of Micki Johns, a graduate of the Silsoe Aid for Appropriate Development (SAFAD) programme at Cranfield University.

Micki's 1 year placement has been with Haiti Outreach, an American funded local NGO, where he is working on community development water and hygiene services. Over the summer, we were delighted to receive a personalized update from Micki, who is currently mid placement.

Located to the east of Cuba in the Caribbean, the country is the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere with 60% of its' population living below the national poverty line of \$2.41 a day. It has had ongoing political problems, and its poverty was compounded by a catastrophic hurricane and earthquake in 2010.

Haiti Outreach works throughout all districts in Haiti, with the goal of every person in Haiti having access to clean and sustainable water supply. To do this, Haiti Outreach works with government officials, both local and national, community members, and other NGOs that work in the area. Through this,



*Measuring river flowrate using flowmeter.*



*Water kiosk connected to water system they were mapping.*

the community members and officials become the driver for change, with Haiti Outreach acting as a facilitator.

Micki is managing a project that involves mapping and simulating existing water distribution systems, and another looking at the management of human waste. He and his colleagues have designed and developed procedures, researching different technologies that capture longitude, latitude and elevation with high accuracy.

This research will enable local organisations to maintain and create water systems and ensure a safe clean water supply.

Micki is living in Pignon in a house that has solar power, running water, and potable water, for which he feels very grateful.

He reports that although there have been many ups and downs since moving to Haiti, he is very happy with the placement and the hugely welcome reception from Haiti Outreach. He notes that on weekends he tends to feel a bit isolated.

This highlights the reality of these sorts of placements – far from an ‘exciting holiday’, the commitment required is intense and humbling.

NAOMI FLOOD



*Measuring protected spring outflow using a bucket.*

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We are now making tickets for some SMOAT events available online through TicketSource. For event details, see **[www.SMOAT.org.uk](http://www.SMOAT.org.uk)**

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*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](mailto:richard@smoat.org.uk)*

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