



S · M · O · A · T

ST MARK'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST

Newsletter - Winter 2019

Dates for your diary:

Launch of Christmas Appeal

Sunday 24th November, 10am

St Mark's Church, Alma Road, Reigate

Bingo

Sunday 26th January, 2pm

St Mark's Church Hall, Alma Road, Reigate

Check website for online ticket sales nearer the time

Annual Public Meeting - Sunday 3rd May

Brunch - Saturday 6th June

Quiz - Saturday 10th October

Further details of all SMOAT events will be available nearer the time on our web site: **www.SMOAT.org.uk**

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

or from any of the committee.

REGISTERED CHARITY No.280091



Editorial

When I went to senior school, there was a real to-do about it. I was just out of the catchment area for my closest school (quite ridiculous really). It was a good school, just down the road from me, with a decent reputation. Instead, I was allocated a place at a shocking school, two buses and a mile's walk away, which had a terrible reputation and lived up to that reputation until the day it was condemned. I remember my mum fighting tooth and nail to keep me out of it, to no avail. You may wonder why I'm telling you this sorry story. Well, it's simply to make the point that I was given the chance of an education, however good or bad it was.

I used to complain about the journey, two buses and a mile's walk was a real bind, particularly for a sulky teenager! When I think about it now and compare it with the journeys that so many children in the developing world take, not just physically but metaphorically too, I realise how self-centred I was. It's deplorable to think that education is simply not possible for so many children in the world for so many reasons.

We have recently supported a project in North Uganda, building classrooms for South Sudanese refugee children, who have had to flee everything they have ever known to escape the rampaging war. The refugee camps are now their homes and the schools are vital, providing a stable and safe environment which, as well as offering them an education, helps their psychological recovery. They have been given a chance.

Last year we gave money to Maisha Trust for their wonderful Oasis Kindergarten in the huge Kibera Slum in Kenya. It truly is an oasis. We provided money towards a PA system that they really needed which, amongst other things, enables the children to have skype lessons



Oasis Kindergarten, Kenya – lots of happy children being given a chance

from the UK each week, and it also freed up money for them to spend on other things which provides the children with an education and nutritious food. They have been given a chance.

Last year we also supported a rain water harvesting system in a school in Uganda. This will enable children to attend school rather than spend the majority of the day collecting contaminated water from dangerous waterholes. They will be hydrated and therefore be able to concentrate. They will be less likely to contract water-borne diseases. They will be less likely to have illnesses associated with poor hygiene and sanitation. They have been given a chance.

A couple of years ago we supported a school health project in Mwingi Primary School in Kitui, Kenya, providing money for building materials and labour to facilitate the extension of their dining room, enabling the deaf children attending the school to socialise with the other pupils, a very important aspect of their developmental experience. They have been given a chance.

There are lots of other ways in which SMOAT supports and enables children, through health projects, water projects and family loans. However, we consider education projects to be of significant value because they underscore the ethos of our organisation. We want to enable people to make sustainable lives for themselves. They can't do that if they are ill or if they are deeply impoverished or if they are not educated.

As I have said before, children of the world everywhere are our future. They are the ones who will fix the environment that our generation has put in jeopardy; they are the ones who will be so tired of living with wars that they will bring peace; they are the ones who will cure diseases; they are the ones who will end poverty and improve equality.

In this country, every child has the chance of an education. It might not always be perfect but it gives them the opportunity to make something of themselves and it gives them a chance of a future. Every single child in this world deserves that, it shouldn't be a luxury, it should be a right. As Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

This year, one of our Christmas Appeal projects is from an organisation called EducAid, which supports educational projects in Sierra Leone. I hope you can find it in your hearts to give generously, to give children who wouldn't otherwise have it, a chance to shine in this world.

On behalf of the SMOAT Committee, I wish you a peaceful and joyous Christmas.

BARBARA PERKINS, *Chairman*

A feast of cutting-veg music

“What, exactly,” asks Hugh Grant’s character, Will, in Richard Curtis’ 1999 film *Notting Hill*, “is a fruitarian?” The explanation is provided by Keziah, a fellow dinner-party guest. “We believe that fruits and vegetables have feelings, so we think cooking is cruel. We only eat things that have already fallen off a tree or bush - that are, in fact, dead already.”

Will is hard-pressed to conceal his scepticism. “Oh, all right. Interesting stuff. So, these carrots ...”. “... have been murdered, yes.” “Murdered?! Poor carrots. How beastly!”

This exchange came to mind during our recent SMOATathon - a five-and-a-half hour fundraising musical extravaganza, held in St Mark’s Church on Sunday 29 September. For about half an hour in the early afternoon the building reverberated to some extraordinary music produced by Nick Ingram playing solo tuba. After several jazz pieces, Nick performed one of his own compositions, “Death of a Cabbage”. The remarkable variety of sounds that emanated from his instrument seemed to capture the vegetable’s death throes with such realism that it would have been surprising if the majority of the audience had not been converted to fruitarianism on the spot.

The tuba was one of a range of musical instruments heard on the day. As well as the piano - particularly well-represented - there were oboes, harps, trumpets, organ and flute, and with performers ranging in age from single figures to 80+, the SMOATathon really did cross the generational divide.

There was also some wonderful singing, with the event launched by the incomparable St Mark’s Singers under Toby Garrood’s leadership, and Bruce Cousins successfully encouraging the audience to join in some well-known (and not so well-known) Music Hall songs.

This programme of musical activity was expertly compèred by Graham Humphries with his customary blend of skill, humour and remarkable stamina. The audience, ranging in number from

30 to 60, came and went and sometimes returned throughout the 5¹/₂ hours, fortified by an ongoing supply of coffee, tea, cakes and biscuits.

As always when SMOAT stages a fundraising event, the purpose was two-fold: to provide entertainment and enjoyment while simultaneously generating much-needed financial resources to help lessen the impact of poverty in the developing world. With regard to the latter objective, SMOATathon 2019 was as successful as its three predecessors. Through sponsorship and donations, a remarkable £1,800 was contributed. SMOAT will be able to claim Gift Aid on some of this amount, with the result that the total sum raised will exceed £2,100.

The charity supported through the SMOATathon, Afrinspire, is working in Uganda to assist refugees fleeing across the border to escape the conflict in South Sudan, many of whom arrive in Uganda having lost nearly everything.

Specifically, the funds raised by the event will help to pay for the construction of classrooms at two nursery schools. With the addition of money contributed by SMOAT's generous regular givers, it will be possible to send Afrinspire nearly £3,000 to pay for two classrooms to be built. It is difficult to overstate the significance of such a donation and the impact that it will have on the lives and education of the refugee children who will be able to use the classrooms.

The SMOAT Committee sincerely thanks all those who helped in any way to make the SMOATathon such an enjoyable and worthwhile event - the performers, compère, audience, those who obtained sponsorship and those who gave so generously.

The first three SMOATathons had been held in St Mark's Church Hall. Using the Church as the venue on this occasion, providing improved acoustics, and allowing the grand piano and organ to be played, was widely considered a successful move, which may well be repeated in the future. Just don't tell any vegetables!

DAVID LEAR

Update from Honduras

You may recall back in 2018 we pledged the money we raised at our June barbecue brunch to sponsor a postgraduate student on an overseas placement through SAFAD (Silsoe Aid for Appropriate Development, attached to Cranfield University).

After a careful selection process SAFAD selected Annette Butty, an applicant with degrees in water sanitation and tropical agriculture, and international development. At that time she was undertaking her MSc with the International Water Management Institute.



Annette giving training

In January 2019, with thanks for our funding, Annette took up a year's post in Trojes, Honduras, working alongside the NGO Pure Water for the World (PWW). This NGO has 8 employees conducting different projects across the 300-plus rural communities in the region. After a short period of familiarisation Annette set about employing her vast wealth of knowledge to support numerous PWW projects.

Annette recently updated the SMOAT committee with information about the projects she has been working on during her placement so far. These range from hygiene promotion campaigns and training in schools, to evaluating the efficiency of the NGO's Menstrual Hygiene Programme.

She has also been involved first hand in supervising the installation of water filters, latrines and piped water systems into homes and schools.

An interesting project she has been integrally involved with is the development of and experimentation with the use of silver stones as a second water treatment method to reduce recontamination of filtered water. Research PWW has been undertaking has demonstrated that silver embedded ceramic disks are an efficient method for water disinfection to



Water Filters

complement other filtering techniques. These disks infused with silver can be placed in water tanks to treat up to 20L of water for up to 12 months, and their studies have shown significant reduction of E.Coli levels in the water. Annette's project has initially been experimenting with the local production of these disks, using clay and colloidal silver and the skilled local workforce of potters.



Silver stone moulds and prototypes

The next steps will be to develop and prepare the water storage tanks and undertake further analysis of the results in the local laboratory.

It's fantastic to think our funding has contributed to this sort of research and development being undertaken in such a remote part of the world. Precisely where it is needed. We wish Annette all the best as she continues to use her wealth of knowledge and skills to amazing effect. I'm sure this experience will be one that shapes not only her future path, but many with whom she interacts during the course of her journey.

CLAIRE BOWERS

Our annual Quiz Night has not been relegated to the rubbish dump!

Our popular annual Quiz Night on October 5 welcomed back Helier Dreux for a fun-filled evening. Fuelled by good humour, the SMOAT bar, and our infamous "homemade chilli supper", our teams battled it out for the top prize. As ever, Helier challenged our quiz-goers with a diverse selection of topic rounds, aided by his amazing visual clues and good humour. We were delighted to raise over £1,000.



At this event we were raising money for a great project funded through Faith In Action in Blantyre, the capital of the Southern Region of Malawi. They are working with a new ministry that has been set up within a community that are living on the outskirts of a large rubbish dump. To date, the main source of income for this community has been based on adults and children scavenging from the dump. However, with the help of Faith in Action, this proactive and motivated community has been able to set up small micro businesses to provide alternative sources of income.

So far, capital start-up costs have been provided for a grocery (see photo on previous page) and a restaurant. These initial businesses have been very successful, each providing sufficient income for 10 family members to live and to rent accommodation out of the dump. With our funds, more set up costs will be provided for additional micro-enterprises which are being scoped and planned at the moment.



In the photo above you can see a hot meal being provided to the circa 350 people living and working on the dump. These are hard-working entrepreneurial families, who are keen to make a living but have no access to finance. These grants will allow them to build their own businesses and reduce their dependency on the dump.

NAOMI FLOOD

Update: Doctors for Nepal

In both 2016 and 2018, SMOAT was delighted to make donations of £1,000 respectively to local Brighton-based charity, Doctors for Nepal. This amazing charity funds the training of impoverished students from rural Nepal to become doctors, nurses and midwives, who then return to provide healthcare to isolated communities.

SMOAT funding has helped pay fees for Dr Kamal Hamel, who is now in his 4th and final year as a medical student. This year he has undertaken a 5 month training placement at Gorkha District Hospital in a remote region of Nepal, including pressured work in their emergency department.



Today we corrected a shoulder dislocation on a male patient. That awesome moment when you do a manoeuvre and literally bring a dislocated arm back to where it belongs! Then there's no-one in emergency room.

But then a pregnant lady needs help. We take her for an emergency lower segment Caesarean section."

Kamal Hamel

Recently, Doctors for Nepal sponsored student, Dr Meena, shared the extraordinary story of how she saved the life of a mother and baby, whilst working in an extremely resource-limited setting.

Dr Meena is working in the far west of Nepal, in a tiny mountain-side hospital. There are no operating theatre lights, and no electricity to power instruments to stem blood-flow.

Recently Dr Meena undertook an emergency Caesarean section on an extremely unwell women who had been in labour for over two days.

There were many challenges to overcome, including convincing the family that this was necessary to save both the baby and the mother, the critical lack of power, and securing sufficient blood for transfusing. But finally they were able to carry out the caesarian section.



Dr Meena (R) performing C-Section

Fortunately, due to Dr Meena’s medical training, and her communication and coordination with the other staff in the tiny hospital, she was able to successfully deliver the baby and mother and baby are now doing really well.

Several stark facts highlight the overwhelming need for programmes like this:

- Rural areas of Nepal average one doctor for every 150,000 people, compared to one for every 850 people in the Kathmandu valley.
- A child born in Kathmandu has 82 years of average life expectancy. A child born in Jumla (in the mountains of the mid-west) has just 36 years (Department of Health Services figures).
- In Nepal the annual GDP averages £560 per head. The cost of medical training is over £30,000

We look forward to supporting this amazing charity in the future.

NAOMI FLOOD

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

Barbara Perkins (Chairman) e-mail: chairman@smoat.org.uk
Jean Waller (Treasurer) e-mail: treasurer@smoat.org.uk

Richard Salmon
David Lear
Louise Barr

Claire Bowers
Naomi Flood
Beth Prosser