



S · M · O · A · T

40 YEARS OF OVERSEAS AID

Newsletter - Winter 2020

Date for your diary:

Launch of Christmas Appeal

Sunday 22th November

During the online service at St Mark's Church, Reigate
and on YouTube via www.SMOAT.org.uk

I'm starting to write this on the weekend of Harvest Festival. Donations are usually bountiful and are distributed within communities. However, with things the way they are at the moment, I'm sure that donations were not as plentiful for many reasons. At the moment, unemployment is at such a high level that people everywhere are struggling to pay their mortgage and put food on their tables. The food banks have never been so busy and demand goes up each week. I know that many people support the food banks, including me, but, for someone involved in raising money for overseas aid, it is hard not to draw comparisons with the need here in the UK and in some of the poorest communities in the world.

Poverty, deprivation and unemployment in many areas of the world are quite different from the UK. People born in remote villages in the likes of Africa, South America or India, to name but a few, know poverty like we will never know it. Many start out their lives without an education, too poor to pay for it or perhaps the children are sent to gather water from dirty rivers and never get to school. The situation is even worse for girls. Those children will find it almost impossible to ever find their way out of poverty, without help.

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REGISTERED CHARITY No.280091



The weather also has a huge impact. Sometimes whole crops are destroyed because of drought or flooding. That is if farmers have been able to afford to grow crops. This impacts whole communities, ruins businesses and, worst of all, causes starvation. People experiencing malnutrition and poverty are especially vulnerable to chronic health conditions and infectious diseases. And those people are the people who are least likely to have access to medical help.

We live in a world where there are billions of pounds spent on space travel, where millions of pounds are spent on buying footballers or paying racing drivers, where car manufacturers sell supercars for millions of pounds; and yet we don't seem to be able to look after all the people who live on this planet. I'm afraid I find it all very hard to swallow.

I read recently that, globally, 200 million children's lives are currently at risk due to malnutrition. Two hundred million! How can that happen? It's hard to fathom how countries can allow it. The trouble is, people will say, "How can I possibly make a difference?" Well, of course, they can make a difference. It might feel that giving a small donation to a charity is not going to make a difference. Let me tell you: It does. The thing is, we need lots of people to give, whatever the amount. If that happened, and people who could afford to do it shared what they had, the world would be a very different place. People everywhere in this world, here in the UK or in the smallest villages in Africa, would be given the security of food on their table and fresh water to drink.

I may be naïve in this world of politicians and economists, but I don't think I'm the only one to think this. It seems quite simple to me. Why can't countries distribute their wealth slightly differently so that no-one is homeless, starving or deprived of clean water? However, this doesn't seem to be top of people's lists of priorities. The phrase, 'I'm alright Jack' comes to mind. Therefore, it is down to people like you and me to make a difference. As I said earlier, even if it is the smallest difference, it counts. It just needs more of us to do it.

So, as you prepare for Christmas this year, make donations to food banks so that people who can't afford it can have a better Christmas. Make a donation to an overseas aid charity so that you can make a difference to our friends in other countries who are struggling just to live each day. Add them to your Christmas list. Think how good Ebenezer Scrooge felt when he helped out Bob Cratchit and don't let

the ghosts of Christmas haunt you as you sit down to enjoy Christmas dinner with your family.

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

BARBARA PERKINS, *Chairman*

By sea, rail and road ... the aid gets through

We recently cleared out a shelf in one of our kitchen cupboards which had been home to a variety of health remedies and supplements. A glance at the “use by” dates on the jars and packets about to be jettisoned quickly showed that this exercise was long overdue: Benylin - May 2012; Calpol - July 2013; other items were of even more ancient vintage.

As comforting as it had been originally to know that these pills, tinctures and sprays were there to be taken or applied if necessary, clearly it was now the case that their useful life had expired.

I hasten to confirm that none of these discarded remedies had been supplied by or through the NHS. It is, however, heartening to know that in this country there are charities which specialise in collecting unused medicines and medical equipment. As long as the items are still in date, they can be transported to developing countries and redirected to those who need them.

One such charity is Inter Care, based in Leicester, whose work SMOAT has supported in the past. Earlier this year, we were advised that Inter Care was preparing to send a container to Malawi holding health care goods with a medical aid value of £127,000.



Loading the container at Inter Care in Leicester

Items of personal protective equipment (PPE) - masks, gloves, aprons etc - would make up 40% of the contents, helping the people of Malawi to combat the Covid-19 crisis.



The transport costs amounted to just under £6,500, and early in June the SMOAT Committee agreed to make a contribution of £1,000 towards the shipping expenses.

The original plan had been to send the container in March, but the imposition of the coronavirus lockdown restrictions resulted in its departure being considerably delayed.



The container went to the new London Gateway port, and was loaded onto the Southampton Express



It eventually set off on 16 July for what should have been a six/eight-week journey by sea (including transfer to a second ship), rail and road.

Unfortunately its progress was slowed by ship engine failure, but it should have docked

during the last week of October, enabling it to reach its destination at Limbe, Malawi, early in November.



St Joseph’s Hospital at Limbe, in the southern region of Malawi, is Inter Care’s key partner in this project. From this hospital, smaller deliveries of health care goods will have been dispatched to eight rural health units in the region, with thousands of patients eventually benefitting as a result.

That it was possible for us to support this project in 2020 is largely thanks to those who give regularly to SMOAT. The impact of the Covid-related restrictions upon our ability to raise funds has been profound, with only one event held since the end of January, but the income received from our regular givers has enabled us to continue to donate to charities such as Inter Care.

Thank you all.

DAVID LEAR

SMOAT @ Home

We couldn’t let our 40th anniversary year pass by without one further fundraising event. And despite these strange COVID times we came up with our own appropriately social distanced activity that combined our traditional Autumn quiz, with our summer strawberry tea classic.

“SMOAT@Home” was born! Afternoon tea delivered to doorsteps with a family quiz activity to undertake, just for fun!

Our amazing loyal supporters did not disappoint, and before we knew it we had orders for over 180 creams teas. That’s a lot of scones to bake. And with our high quality standards, we wanted them to all be baked fresh on the day!



So we embarked on a Sunday morning baking marathon production line. Thankfully some wonderful volunteers, Adam Baldry and Tim Warren, also jumped on board to help with the mammoth bake off task.

We hope our homemade packages brought a smile to all those who unwrapped them. The fact that the event raised over £900 certainly brought a huge grin to the faces of the committee.

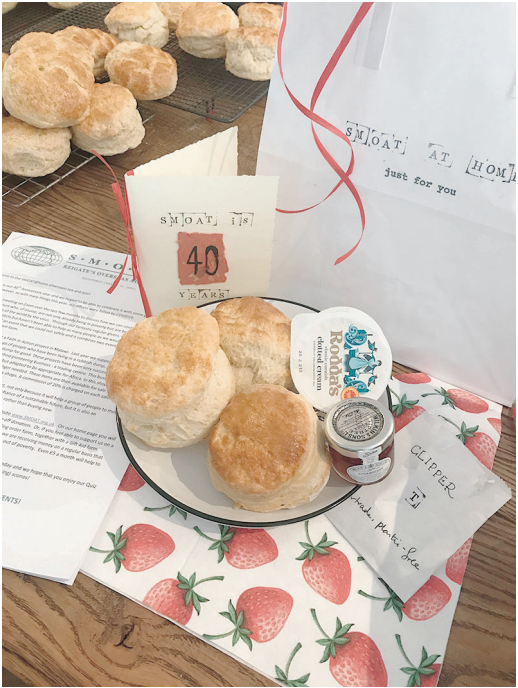
What a spectacular fund-raising result at such a difficult time. And at a time when overseas aid needs more support than ever.

With the proceeds of this event, we are fully funding the start-up of an amazing eco-business enterprise project for a community in Malawi previously living in a refuse dump on the outskirts of Blantyre.

Working with our charity partners Faith in Action we can be confident that 100% of our donation will be put to fantastic use locally in Malawi to ensure this project goes ahead.

This is the benefit of being able to hand pick small micro projects through trusted partners with whom we have developed great relationships, and from whom we receive wonderful updates and feedback as the projects progress. We get to learn about the real fruits of our efforts and your generosity.

We will certainly keep you posted. 🍓☕ = 🌍♻️



CLAIRE BOWERS

SMOAT Finances

2020 has been a difficult year for many people but at SMOAT with the help of all our supporters we are still raising much needed money for development projects overseas.

In this financial year up to the end of September 2020 we had received £13,816 into our bank accounts. This is comprised of money from our regular givers, our 2019 Christmas Appeal, Gift Aid on 2019 income and our Bingo event in January.

In addition over £900 has been paid in during October from our SMOAT@Home event.

We have paid out £12,725 in grants and are planning to make some more grants before the end of the year.

Below is a summary of grant donations made to date.

Description	Country	Amount	Funded by
Doctors for Nepal	Nepal	£1,000	Bingo
Educaid	Sierra Leone	£4,150	Christmas Appeal
Simien Mountains	Ethiopia	£2,975	Christmas Appeal
Impact Foundation	Cambodia	£1,100	Regular donations / GiftAid
Intercare	Malawi	£1,000	Regular donations / GiftAid
Mike Campbell Foundation	Zimbabwe	£1,500	Regular donations / GiftAid
Faith in Action	Malawi	£1,000	SMOAT@Home

Once again thank you for your continued support during these difficult times.

JEAN WALLER, *Treasurer*

IMPACT

Supporting health during COVID in Cambodia with Impact Foundation

The Covid-19 pandemic has touched the whole of humankind and starkly demonstrated that health is a global issue.

Yet health challenges do not affect people equally – the most disadvantaged people are always disproportionately impacted by infectious diseases, needless disability, malnutrition and more.

This underpins the work of many of our project partners whose work centres on providing access to healthcare to vulnerable people in low-income countries.



Svay Chek Referral Hospital, Cambodia

Impact Foundation is an amazing example of an organisation that has been able to really quickly mobilise to support people affected by Covid-19 or acutely impoverished by lockdowns.

During this year, the Jibon Tari floating hospital in Bangladesh (which we helped fund from our 2018 Christmas Appeal), and also the Lifeline Express hospital train in India were re-designed to meet the new safety conditions. Impact was able to quickly respond to the changing demands and also work hard to try and meet the ongoing demands of 'normal' work of these amazing hospital provisions. They were also able to help to ensure that doctors, nurses and health workers were protected and equipped for the perilous job they faced.





Our SMOAT remit has never been to fund emergency appeals; there are major charitable organisations who can mobilise substantial sums of money in these circumstances.

Our focus has always been to fund small scale projects which have longer term sustainability objectives. But when the Corona crisis hit, we were keen to see what we could do to support Impact which might have a longer-term use.

Our friends at Impact talked to us about the inhabitants of Kandal Province in Cambodia. Following mass testing and screening of a huge influx of Cambodian workers returning from Thailand, 79 people tested positive for the virus and were promptly quarantined.

The hospitals were in desperate need of hospital beds, suction machines and patient monitors.

This year, even though our own fundraising has been low, we were able to make some important donations using funds from our generous regular givers.

We were able to instantly raise a cheque for £1000 which enabled our partners to quickly supply an Intensive Care Unit bed in order to effectively support those patients



recovering from the virus safely and effectively. Furthermore, the bed will continue to be used in Svay Chek Referral Hospital long after the virus has been eradicated, benefitting the communities for many years ahead.

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

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