



**S • M • O • A • T**

**REIGATE'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST**

# **Newsletter - Winter 2025**

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## **Launch of the SMOAT Christmas Appeal Sunday 23 November**

at the 8am and 10am services at St. Mark's Church, Reigate

We are delighted to confirm that our 2025 Christmas Appeal will be for Action in Africa. Please come along to hear about the "Motorbikes for Nurses" Appeal which we are fund-raising for.

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## **BINGO – Sunday 25 January – after lunch**

Always a fun event for ages 6 to 106!  
at St.Marks' Church Hall, Alma Road, Reigate.  
Tea or coffee, home-made cakes and tombola,  
and lots of lovely prizes to be won.

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## **SMOATathon - Sunday 22 March**

Our sponsored music event returns to St Mark's Church.  
Save the date, and think about what you might contribute in the way  
of a musical performance to this daytime event!

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## **Autumn Quiz – Saturday 10 October**

Make a note in your 2026 diary for this SMOAT favourite,  
with Quizmaster extraordinaire, Helier Dreux

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If you want to keep in touch with what we're doing on a more regular basis, check our web site where you can see updates on fundraising and other events, and book tickets online. Details and news are also regularly posted on our Facebook account, which you can access via

[facebook.com/SMOAT.Charity](https://facebook.com/SMOAT.Charity)

REGISTERED CHARITY No. 280091



# **Understanding Global Poverty: The Persistent Challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa**

As the majority of projects supported by SMOAT centre around Sub-Saharan Africa, I thought it would be interesting to take a look at that area in more depth.

Poverty remains one of humanity's most persistent and complex challenges. Despite decades of progress in education, health, and economic growth, hundreds of millions of people around the world still live without adequate food, shelter, or opportunities. Nowhere is this struggle more pronounced than in Sub-Saharan Africa — a region that, despite immense natural wealth and cultural diversity, continues to face the highest rates of extreme poverty globally. Understanding the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to poverty in this region is essential to building a more equitable world.

According to a Report published by the World Bank in 2024, almost 700 million people (8.5 percent of the global population) live in extreme poverty - on less than \$2.15 per day (this increased to \$3.00 per day in June 2025). Progress has stalled amid low growth, setbacks due to COVID-19, and increased fragility. Poverty rates in low-income countries are higher than before the pandemic.

Around 3.5 billion people (44 percent of the global population) remain poor by a standard that is more relevant for upper middle-income countries (\$6.85 per day), and the number of people living on less than this standard has barely changed since the 1990s due to population growth.

In 2024, Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 16 percent of the world's population, but 67 percent of the people living in extreme poverty. In other words, two-thirds of the world's population in extreme poverty live in Sub-Saharan Africa, rising to three quarters when including all fragile and conflict-affected countries.

Over 400 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa live in extreme poverty. In several countries within Sub-Saharan Africa, poverty rates exceed 40% of the population. Rural areas are particularly affected, where subsistence farming remains the dominant livelihood, infrastructure is scarce, and access to markets is limited. The COVID-19 pandemic further reversed years of progress, pushing millions back below the poverty line.

Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa is deeply rooted in structural inequalities, historical legacies, and governance challenges.

Education and health disparities further entrench poverty. Millions of children in the region lack access to quality education, and adult literacy rates remain low in several countries. Meanwhile, inadequate healthcare systems and the persistent burden of diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS undermine human capital.

Political instability and conflict exacerbate these challenges. Some countries have been caught in cycles of violence and displacement, disrupting livelihoods and deterring investment. Corruption and weak governance also limit the effectiveness of development efforts and reduce trust in public institutions.

Behind every statistic are real people struggling to survive. For many families in rural Africa, poverty means choosing between sending a child to school or buying food for the day. Women and children are often the hardest hit. In many areas, women bear the double burden of unpaid domestic work and limited economic opportunities, yet they are central to food production and community well-being.

Children growing up in poverty face lifelong disadvantages — malnutrition, limited education, and poor health reduce their ability to break the cycle of deprivation. Poverty also fuels migration, both within and beyond national borders, as people search for better livelihoods.

Addressing poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa is not solely a regional issue — **it is a global responsibility**. The world's interconnected economy means that instability and inequality *anywhere* can have ripple effects *everywhere*. International co-operation, fair trade, and responsible investment can play powerful roles in reducing poverty. Moreover, global climate action is essential, as African countries are disproportionately affected by droughts, floods, and other climate impacts, despite contributing little to greenhouse gas emissions.

SMOAT, albeit in a small way, ticks all the boxes by way of dealing with the challenges faced. All of our projects either promote good health, give children a chance of education, or endorse entrepreneurship, very often women-led. We do this with the environment in mind, whenever the opportunity presents itself.

World poverty remains one of the defining moral challenges of our time. Sub-Saharan Africa stands at the centre of this struggle, facing immense obstacles but also immense potential. The region's youthful population, abundant resources, and growing urban centres could become engines of global growth — if supported by inclusive policies, strong institutions, and sustained investment.

Ending extreme poverty is not merely a matter of charity; it is about justice, opportunity, and shared humanity. The world has the tools and the knowledge to lift millions out of poverty — what remains necessary is the collective will to act.

BARBARA PERKINS, *Chair*

# Cream Tea

Back in the summer we had to take the difficult decision to cancel our beetle drive due to lack of ticket sales. This was particularly disappointing as we had identified an amazing project with our partner Deki, who we were hoping to fund.

Then inspiration struck. With the Wimbledon tennis finals weekend looming we realised we could pivot our baking efforts, and quickly arrange a quintessentially English cream tea delivery service as an alternative means of fundraising.



To our delight the offer of freshly baked scones to be delivered to the door was enthusiastically received, and our order book was quickly filled.

Following an early start on 12th July, Claire & Barbara deftly turned out just shy of 100 fluffy scones.

Carefully bagged along with the obligatory clotted cream and strawberry jam, the scones were lovingly distributed across many Reigate and Redhill doorsteps, in plenty of time for the woman's final that day.





We were absolutely delighted that sales and donations meant we were able to donate £1000 to Deki who work in the tiny West African country Togo.

This funding will be specifically used for setting up WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) projects, a tried and tested model where women in rural communities join local Mother Clubs and

learn about hygiene, handwashing, borehole maintenance and disease prevention.

They are also trained to produce their own low-cost liquid soap products, that can also enable income generation.



*Training making green soap*

Our donation will train women in 25 communities, providing skills that protect health, create income and help build brighter futures.





A huge thank you to all those who placed an order at short notice. Your support has enabled us to make a huge difference to the lives of many in Togo.

CLAIRE BOWERS





## Music not to be sniffed at

It wasn't the response that I was expecting. A modicum of enjoyment, a little interest, even total indifference .... any of these reactions would have been perfectly understandable. But upon learning that the piano music I was playing had reduced a listener to tears, my first thought was: "Surely it's not that bad?"



*Photos from the 2015  
SMOATathon*

Fortunately, no. The tears had resulted not from an aversion to the piece, or my playing of it, but because of the strong emotions that it had aroused, maybe triggering a link to someone held dear, or to events long buried in the memory.



Such can be the power of music. Down the ages many eminent writers have sought to explain the phenomenon, including Hans Christian Andersen ("Where words fail, music speaks"), Leo Tolstoy ("Music is the shorthand of emotion") and George Eliot, who expressed her view that: "Life seems to go on without effort when I am filled with music".

During the 45 years since its inception, SMOAT has had a history of producing magical music, invariably in a fundraising context. Whether tears have been involved isn't known, but along the way there have certainly been some powerfully emotional moments.

Early next year, on **Sunday 22 March**, we are planning to stage our sixth **SMOATathon**, just over 13 years since the first was held in February 2013. SMOATathon 2026 will take place in St Mark's Church, and our intention is that it will provide an extravaganza of live music for three and a half hours, from 11.30 a.m. until 3.00 p.m. We are not expecting anyone to choose to remain for the entire duration - that would surely result in tears - but coffee, tea, biscuits and cake will be provided to fortify those in the audience.

The first five SMOATathons proved to be remarkably successful fundraisers, together generating several thousands of pounds through sponsorship of those performing and donations. The money raised has been used to support projects which have made a vital difference to the lives of people in developing countries.

While the project to which next year's SMOATathon will be linked has not yet been chosen, it will have a similarly significant impact upon the community that it serves.

For the event to succeed, what will be needed are of course performers. If you or someone you know plays a musical instrument, or sings either individually or in a group, we will be delighted to hear from you or them.

Performances can be very brief, e.g. just two or three minutes in length, and there is no upper time limit, although in practice the longer "slots" tend to last about 20-25 minutes.

And if you do not see yourself performing, then come along anyway to listen to what promises to be a wide-ranging programme, with players and singers of all ages displaying their skills.

There is no charge for admission, but on the day donations to help fund the selected project will be gratefully received.

And don't forget to bring some tissues. You just never know when the music may get to you more than you think it will. Even when, actually, it's not too bad at all.

DAVID LEAR



## Huge success with sweet potato processing in Kenya

For our Christmas Appeal last year, SMOAT was delighted to partner with Team Kenya whom we first worked with in 2023. We donated a total of £4,000 in March which launched the Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potato (OFSP) project introducing women to improved farming, nutrition, Value addition and marketing.

Team Kenya and their local partner, Twende Pamoja, provided us with a final project report in October demonstrated how what started as a simple crop has quickly become a life-changing solution to entire households – 180 women and their families have gained knowledge in production earning income. What began as the first harvests of this crop that filled empty plates, has now developed into innovative chapatis, mandazis and crisps that are now sold in local markets.

Driven by local needs analysis, this project helped the poorest families to grow a particular crop which would provide food, but also provide the ability to process and sell food locally generating income. The project provided training on farming best practices and pest management. It also purchased the initial farm inputs, including high yield crops with appropriate fertilisers. In addition, it taught the skills in how to create value addition through agro-processing – converting basic crops into products like flour, chapati, chips and soups which could be sold locally at markets.

From April to June, the first cohort of 10 women completed their training – this pilot group forged ahead and are now benefiting from consumption of this nutritious crop. The mothers reported healthier and stronger children. They have also started to take the processed crop to market and generate income – and Team Kenya have shared us the stories of some of the participants.

**Eveline's story:** At just 30 years old, Eveline Adhiambo Ouma a mother of three and guardian to eight dependents has been struggling daily to provide enough food for her large family. Before joining the project, her family often survived on only two meals a day, frequently skipping either breakfast or lunch, with meals lacking sweet potatoes or other reliable sources of fibre and carbohydrates. This left her children vulnerable to poor nutrition.



After being selected as part of the target group, Eveline received training on OFSP production and was supported with potato vines and farm management costs. On her a quarter acre farm shown in the picture, she harvested 10 bags of 40kg each of Orange Flesh Sweet potatoes just in one season (3 months). In five months, Eveline has used 3 bags for family meals, kept 3 bags in stock for daily use, she also adds value by making flour and puree for mandazi for family consumption.

Her household now enjoys balanced meals and her children look healthier and stronger. Beyond feeding her family, Eveline has also managed to sell raw Orange-



Fleshed Sweet Potatoes in the nearby local market, earning Ksh. 6,400. She was among the participants who supplied vines to the second cohort trained in September and earned Ksh. 1,500 for each bag. For a woman from such a vulnerable community, this is a rare and remarkable achievement that has given her both pride and hope.

About 15 local people have shown interest in buying vines from her. With enough vines in stock, she dreams of expanding to a larger farm, training others in her community and venturing into value addition to reach better markets.

‘I am so grateful for the OFSP training and support I received. It has changed my family’s meals, improved our health and given me hope to dream bigger for the future’.



Based on the success of this pilot group, the project was expanded to a further 170 women by September.

Training courses were delivered in local primary schools (*see the photo, on the left*) in addition to practical demonstrations and hands on training on farms.

Local partner Twende Pamoja report that for the newer group it is still early to assess outcomes and impact

but many are beginning to connect with local markets and experimenting with different ways of processing the crop for sale.

Confidence and knowledge is growing, especially in small scale entrepreneurship. In addition, there has been a wider impact with additional partner schools and their communities showing interest and preparing land.



**Salome's story:** From the training she received, to being supported with potato vines and farm management inputs, Salome's journey with OFSP has been life-changing. On her 10x30m farm, she achieved her first harvest of 8 bags.

With four children and nine dependents to support, Salome used four bags of Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potatoes to feed her family, while the rest was sold to buy other nutritious foods. Today, her children enjoy three balanced meals a day including sweet potato vegetable leaves.

Beyond feeding her family, Salome has embraced value addition



by turning sweet potatoes into mandazis and crisps, which she sells in the local market. Her most recent sale earned her Ksh. 4,500 an amount she describes as significant for her household.

What was once a household struggling with food insecurity is now a story of financial stability, nutrition and dignity, all made possible through your support, **'thank you so much in investing in me'**.

The OFSP project has delivered real change: families that once struggled with hunger now enjoy nutritious meals daily; women once vulnerable now proudly contribute to their households through farming and small income.

On behalf of the 180 women, children and family whose lives have been touched in Ndhiwa-western part of Kenya, Team Kenya has extended their deepest gratitude to SMOAT.

"Your support has done more than plant Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potatoes, it has planted hope, better nutrition and new opportunities in the lives of women in Ndhiwa. Thank you so much for standing with us."

NAOMI FLOOD

We are now making tickets for some SMOAT events available online through TicketSource.

For event details, see <http://www.SMOAT.org.uk>

*(Please note that the web site has to be accessed as "http://", not "https", which some browsers assume and default to.)*

**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*  
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