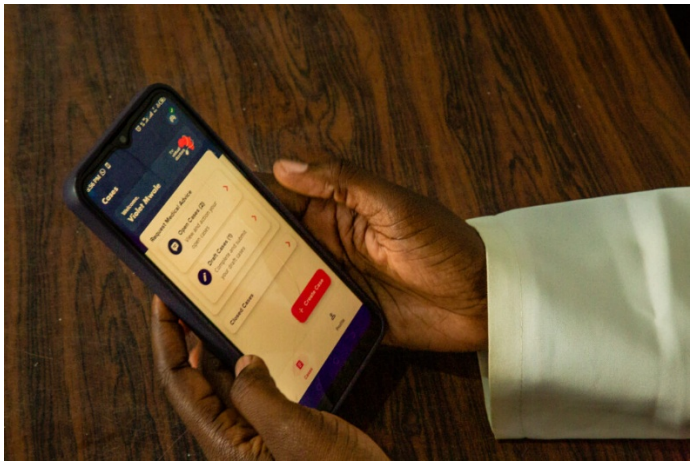
S • M • O • A • T

REIGATE'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST

REGISTERED CHARITY No. 280091

Dear SMOAT Supporter

In 1998, Huw Jones was driving through a remote area of Eastern Zambia when he came across a medical crisis right before his eyes: a man desperately trying to cycle 60 kilometers to get his pregnant wife to hospital before she bled to death. Tragically, despite Huw's best efforts to drive them there, the man's wife and unborn child died. It was following that devastating experience that the concept of using the internet to save lives was born and Huw went on to found The Virtual Doctors.



Virtual Doctors use mobile phone technology to connect health workers in isolated health centres (currently in Zambia and Malawi) with doctors in the UK and Zambia, who support them with diagnosing patient symptoms. The statistics speak for themselves: in 92% of cases, patients' symptoms improve; it has prevented the need for hospital referral in 78% of cases; and, importantly, it has provided an educational benefit in 97% of cases – healthcare workers are learning from their experiences with the advice of medical professionals. Currently, there are approximately 150 volunteer doctors in the UK and 80 doctors in Zambia supporting the service.



The project we are supporting with the Christmas Appeal proposes to introduce the telemedicine service into five new rural health centres in Zambia, providing frontline healthcare workers, serving some of the country's poorest and most isolated communities, with access to specialist medical advice.

In rural Zambia, Clinical Officers and senior nurses are often the most qualified healthcare professionals available, working in health centres with no resident doctor. When faced with a complex patient case, they may have little choice but to refer the patient to a distant hospital. These journeys can take many hours or days and impose transport, food and accommodation costs that poor rural families struggle to afford. Some patients are simply unable to make the journey.



We are hoping to raise £8,000 through the Appeal. It costs £1,500 to establish and support the service in one rural health centre for three years. Therefore, we would be able to provide the money for the establishment of five new rural health centres for three years. The remaining £500 would contribute towards implementation, monitoring and evaluation across the five sites. Amongst other things, this would enable The Virtual Doctors to measure and report the impact of the project to us and our supporters.

Each rural health centre typically serves a catchment population of approximately 10,000 people. Five new sites could therefore improve access to specialist, informed healthcare for rural communities totalling approximately **50,000 people**. The five participating health centres would be identified with the Zambian Ministry of Health and local health authorities, ensuring that the project responds to locally identified need and is integrated into the existing health system.

By strengthening the skills and confidence of Zambia's frontline health workers and increasingly involving Zambian doctors in supporting their rural colleagues, the project also builds local clinical capacity and contributes to their longer-term goal of embedding the Virtual Doctors' model within Zambia's healthcare system.

The reach of this project is amazing. Giving 50,000 people access to a medical facility that they would never be able to access otherwise will have a profound impact on so many people. It will save lives and it will give so many people the chance to get their lives back and be able to support their families or go to school. Perhaps when we next complain about our creaky NHS system, we should give these people a thought and realise how lucky we are.

On behalf of the SMOAT Committee, can I take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a Happy and Healthy Christmas and New Year.

Barbara Perkins
Chair, SMOAT

SMOAT Christmas Appeal 2026

I enclose £ ..…… towards SMOAT's work in Zambia, or have donated £ ..…… by Bank Transfer, or Donate online at **https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/22010**

Title …… First Name or initials ……..……... Surname ……..

Cheques, payable to **SMOAT** should be sent to: SMOAT Treasurer, 12 Ifield Close, Redhill, RH1 6SW
Bank Transfer: Account Name: St Marks Overseas Aid Trust - Sort Code: 40-38-10, Account Number: 93027767
To enable us to reclaim the Gift Aid, please ensure we have a completed Gift Aid form, and that Bank Transfers are identified with your name. Gift Aid forms may be emailed (without signature) to treasurer@smoat.org.uk

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I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

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