

# SAMSON



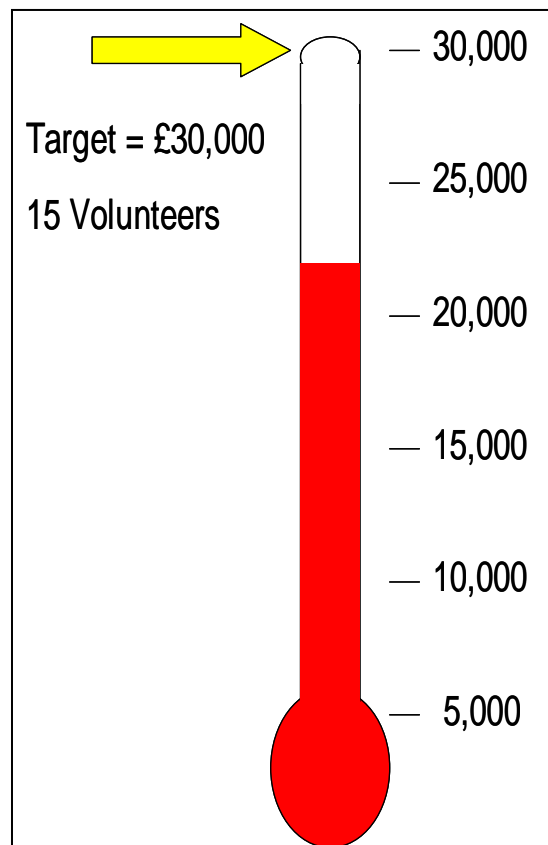
## SAFAD Members' Newsletter - Summer 2004

Friends of SAFAD - welcome to the 2004 summer edition of SAMSON, our bi-annual newsletter. This year, the SAFAD committee has been as busy as ever - running events, writing sponsorship letters, organising new projects and raising awareness about SAFAD's work. Likewise, our volunteers have been working hard abroad, completing their important work in Cameroon, Malawi and Guatemala before heading home to share their experiences and hunt for jobs. In fact, some volunteers felt that the work they were doing was so important that they self-financed their placements for a further 6 months.

SAFAD now has a whole host of new challenges and opportunities opening up with several new projects. Jane Wheeler, a former student in Natural Resource Management, has started essential capacity building work in a Tibetan community in the Yunnan province of SW China. Read about her experiences on page 3. We have also received pleas for SAFAD volunteers in two other new projects: working with Masaai communities around the Kenya-Tanzania border and helping to improve the

environment for rural communities living in the vicinity of Pondicherry, South India.

However, these new projects can only be sustained if we are able to raise enough funds.



Despite our continuous hard work, we are struggling to raise the money that we need to send all of this year's applicants away. SAFAD relies heavily on the generosity of a relatively small number of donors for the majority of its funds, and quantities raised each year are highly dependent on a few large donations. As you can see from our fundometer, we are still £8,000 short, and so can currently only send 10 volunteers abroad. We have 15 applicants this year and 15 placements available. Without this money, we are also unlikely to be able to start both the Kenya-Tanzania and India projects that we have worked so

hard to set up.

This draws me to make an urgent plea for help to all friends of SAFAD: please help in any way you can, whether through donations, spreading the word or helping to raise money. Thank you for your continued support.

*Robin Farrington  
President 2003-4*

# Thanking all Donors!

Agricola Trust, Tony Turner, The Denis Buxton Trust, Gabriela Lovelace, John Watts, R & M Foreman Charitable Trust, The Beatrice Laing Trust, HB Allen Charitable Trust, Simon Medaney, The Bernard Bulter Trust Fund, Sabina Dawson, Jakob Funkenstein, ABIC Engineering Assoc. Ltd, Tadworth & Walton Overseas Aid Trust (TWOAT), Julia Aked, The Norben Charity, TRE Thompson, RW Radley, Samantha Magne, The Oak Trust.

## Sharing Experiences of Guatemala

Having returned to Europe this July, after working as a SAFAD volunteer in the Guatemala agro-forestry project for nine months with SAFAD's partner organization AIRES, I have no doubt that accepting this placement has been an excellent decision, as the experience was so good in many different aspects.

I must confess that at the beginning I was little afraid because I was going to a country far away from my home, with a completely different culture from my own. Above all, my perspective of the country was built upon what I had learnt from the history and the news about Guatemala: civil-wars, starvation, disease...

Fortunately I was able to quickly adapt to working with the people of AIRES and the way of life in Guatemala. My first visits to the rural communities were very emotional especially when working with the children. The humility and generosity of the people impacted me the most. At the same time they accepted me as a volunteer who came from very far away armed with enthusiasm and commitment to assist their community.

In the beginning I participated in all kinds of activities in order to learn the dynamics of the work. Once I was integrated and I had a good overview, I began to focus on the more technical aspects of the project, mainly because this was the area where I could add more value and the communities and AIRES needed the most support. The local technicians have a lot of practical knowledge based on their own experience but there is a lack of a

solid technical support and the NGO needs this in order to be able to improve the quality of the projects and improve the benefits to the communities.

The main tasks I was involved in were:

- the design and implementation of data collection methodology and processes to monitor and evaluate the agro-forestry production systems;
- compiling and lecturing on topographic maps;
- designing a botanical and forestry gardens for an Ecological Park;
- establishing an agreement with the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, which was in the process of declaring an area with a rich source of water, a protected area. Through this agreement, a Geographical Information Systems program was established for AIRES in order to prepare them for the management of the area.

During all my time in Guatemala I have contributed my views and work in many ways to AIRES, while acquiring an invaluable practical experience that I was not able to receive in my MSc course at University. It was a perfect and invaluable exchange of knowledge and experience between AIRES and me to the benefit of the communities that the project targets.

*Begoña de la Calle*  
*SAFAD Volunteer 2003-4*

# News from the Yak Hut!

Dechin Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture,  
Yunnan, SW China

The Dechen Jamyang Mungsel school, located midway between Zhongdian and Dechin at 3200m in the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (Tibet until the Cultural Revolution) is home to thirty-nine children, two Tibetan teachers, one cook, one dog, fourteen black pigs, endless chickens and chicks and one cockerel. The children are Tibetan and travel up to eight hours each term to attend this rare school where Tibetan is predominantly taught (reading and writing) and more recently English.

A brochure for the school might read: *Join our school set in idyllic mountain scenery. Heaven on earth when the sun shines, shear hell when it rains. Learn Tibetan with two dedicated monks from the local monastery and run freely in the woods enjoying the local flora and fauna that surrounds the school.*

The school brochure may also point out that every time it rains, the area is swamped in mud and water. The classrooms, made of wood with mud floors and plastic-covered roofing, leaks, as does the kitchen and the children's dormitory. Teaching has to be carried out in a waterproof coat with the hood up and the children make every effort to keep their writing books dry under pieces of plastic.

Fuel (dead wood) to keep warm and cook with has to be collected far and wide as cutting trees is banned as the school is in a protected area. Regular maintenance is needed to keep the rain coming into the buildings to a minimum and the children and monks are frequently seen on the roof engaged in repairs. Often lessons have to be missed because fuel collection and maintenance become the priority.

A new school is desperately needed for these hard working, fun loving, bright children dedicated to their culture. A site has been allocated for them and permission given to build. The land has been prepared and the

retaining wall constructed (to prevent earth sliding down the mountain side – frequent occurrence in the area). A local building contractor is standing by waiting instruction and funding is accumulating gradually but much more is needed, around £65,000 (sixty-five thousand pounds).



It is considered that with local Government subsidy, funds from Hong Kong and Singapore along with the children's Income Generating Activities such as Tibetan dancing in national dress, the sale of their own very skilled drawings, local handicraft and its own meat, egg and vegetable produce the school will be able to sustain its daily expenses.

As a SAFAD volunteer in the community, working in conjunction with the Tibetan Society, the rewards are tremendous. The children work hard at their studies, are kind and thoughtful and always smiling and laughing. It is fascinating to watch the progress from zero English to the level of understanding they have currently reached. Young Tashi Dorgee (16 years old) had a debate with me as whether a tomato was acidic or sweet. We came to the conclusion that maybe green tomato was acid and red sweet.

If any of our readers are in the position to help with or advise about funding, the community would be truly grateful.

**Jane Wheeler**  
**SAFAD Volunteer 2004**

# Derek Sutton Memorial Lecture

Dr. Christie Peacock, head of UK Charity FARM-Africa, was this year's guest speaker at the Derek Sutton Memorial Lecture on the 6th May. The event is now in its second year, in memory of the late Derek Sutton, a long standing advisor and friend to SAFAD. Christie gave the audience a unique and fascinating insight into the changing role of international organisations in overseas development, from the view of a dynamic leader at the top of her field. The talk was well attended and there was a good debate about the issues raised after the talk.

Jim Ellis-Jones, formerly a colleague of Derek Sutton and also one of SAFAD's advisors, gave an overview about Derek's life and involvement with SAFAD.

SAFAD would like to see the lecture continue in the future years as it is a good opportunity to remember an important friend to SAFAD as well as reflecting on our own activities in light of what is going on in the wider world.

## Extreme Fundraising

Something 'martyr-like' needed to be done to help improve SAFAD's funding situation. Being paid to have body hair removed using hot wax seemed like the obvious option!!!

In weeks prior to the actual event, there had been an intensive marketing and sponsorship campaign and many were very generous in their sponsorship..

So at 10 pm on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July, I arrived in a pair of swimming trunks and alighted on the waxing couch in full view of all present. Having had the occasional hair pulled out once or twice I didn't think too much of the strips being torn off but then again I had never had my hair removed in such large quantities. I also hadn't accounted for was the heat of the wax!!! A microwave was on stage to heat the wax and another SAFAD member had kindly agreed to wax me! With yelps and screams each strip came off and I could feel myself sobering up from the vodka anaesthetic I'd taken shortly beforehand. The girls in the audience were enjoying every minute of it – I now sympathise with what some of them go through! After two hours my entire legs had been done!!!

Thank you to all those who sponsored me - I hope you enjoyed it and you got your money's worth!

*Alexander Beckett  
Information Officer*

## RedR Training

SAFAD puts a lot of value in training its volunteers before they go to their placement country and who better then to share their experiences than training professionals and experienced development workers from RedR, an emergency response engineering organisation.

The training weekend provided SAFAD volunteers with the opportunity not only to learn new skills but also to gain an insight into the demands of living in a developing country. RedR put health and safety as high priority and the volunteers were honoured with a lecture by Dr Jane Wilson on 'Bugs Bites and Bowels'. Dr Wilson, from her own experiences, is an authority on health and has published a book of the same name.

Workshops included Del Agua microbiology testing kits, water treatment, simple surveying, building techniques including roof and truss, bricks (concrete and lime and mud) and timber joints, pipeline design and erection of a hoop tent that is used in emergency situations. All of these techniques were appropriate to a developing country situation as all the materials could be acquired locally.

What a great way for SAFAD volunteers to acquire new important skills.

*Claire Hannah  
Membership Officer*

# 2004 Annual Seminar

On May 27th we had the fantastic opportunity of getting together SAFAD members, donors, committee members, returning volunteers, advisors and our patron, Sir Crispin Tickell, in the 2004 SAFAD annual seminar.

In the seminar we shared what we do, our achievements challenges and lessons learnt. We invited speakers who by sharing their experiences and thoughts with the SAFAD community can inspire us to achieve our ideals: that of transforming the education of Cranfield Postgraduates into action for a positive change in the world.

We started with a presentation by SAFAD's President, Robin Farrington, highlighting the achievements of this year committee as well as presenting the SAFAD accounts.

Afterwards we were delighted to listen to Sir Crispin Tickell's speech, "Sustainability or Sustainable Development?". He challenged our paradigms on Sustainability and Sustainable Development, questioning if countries all over the world should follow the track of industrial nations. He highlighted the importance that each country, with its own characteristics, culture, limitations and opportunities, work out its own track to improvement in human condition. He related this last concept with SAFAD's work, which he summarized in the last two letters of our acronym: Appropriate Development. The audience was really stimulated by his thoughts, as was demonstrated afterwards in a very lively question, answer and discussion session with him.

During the coffee break people enjoyed the magnificent Cameroon photo exhibition by SAFAD returning volunteer Sean Whitaker, who then shared with us his experience there through a very lively and insightful

presentation. Sean not only presented the technical aspects of his work and the impact it had on the communities, but he also shared his personal experiences of working in a completely different culture. This was very valuable to the potential volunteers in the audience.

Following this we had a presentation from Nick Evans, former SAFAD volunteer in Malawi, who is now based in the UK and setting up a Fair Trade scheme with our Malawi macadamia nuts project. This was an excellent example of the long-term impact of SAFAD's work both, in the communities with whom we work and in the personal and professional life of our volunteers.

It was an honour for us to have the Seminar closed by one of SAFAD's most committed and respected advisors: Richard Carter. He is a lecturer in International Water Supply at Silsoe in Cranfield University and has a vast experience in development in different parts of the world. He spoke about the evolution of SAFAD and how the organisation was learning and professionalizing itself through the work, ideas and commitment of new committee members from different parts of the world each year. He also highlighted that, although for many people the work of SAFAD might look just like a tiny drop in the ocean in the context of the world's problems, the ocean is made up of many drops, hence our work plays a key role.

It was very rewarding at the end of the seminar to listen to students motivated to volunteer for a SAFAD placement, to donors willing to continue supporting us and to committee members willing to continue working hard to achieve our objectives.

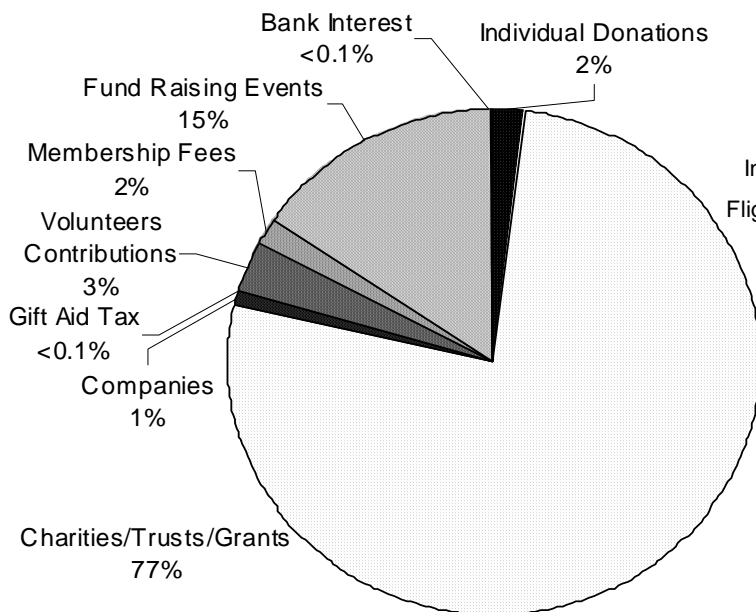
And most of all, it was a very enjoyable afternoon. Thanks to all who made it possible.

*Federico Grandi*  
*Vice President 2003-4*

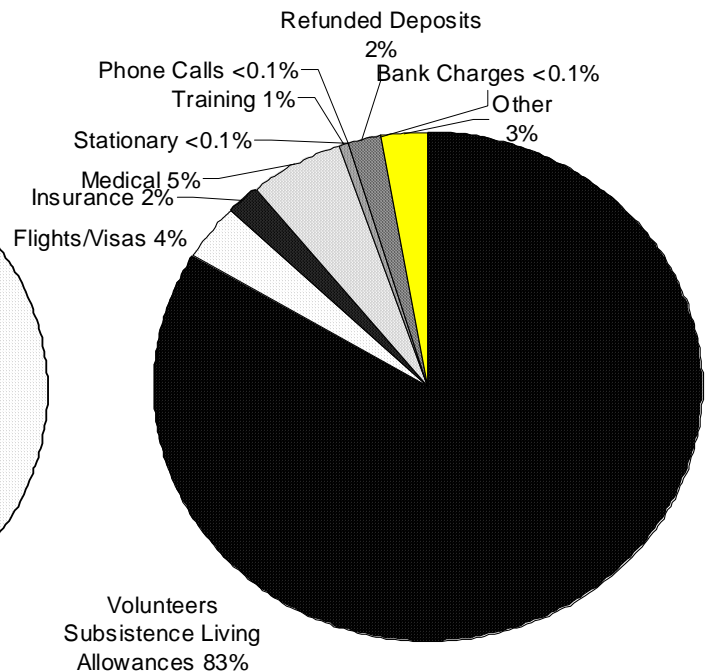
# A Financial Update

Because we know people who give like to know where their money is going, SAFAD's 2003-4 sources of income and expenditure are illustrated by the following charts. Note how heavily we depend on our donations for the vast majority of our income and how low our overheads are: we have no paid staff.

2003-4 Income



2003-4 Expenditure



**Join SAFAD** or renew your membership and receive our newsletter with project updates.  
Your contributions are essential to our work. **Registered charity No. 289621**



- I would like to become an associate member: £10 (students £5)
- I would like to renew my associate membership: £10 (students £5)
- I am already a member and I would like to make a donation
- I enclose a donation of £\_\_\_\_\_ (cheques made payable to SAFAD).
- I am already a member and I would like to make a regular donation by direct debit. I would like SAFAD to send me the relevant forms.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I declare that I am a taxpayer and would like any donation I make on or after 6<sup>th</sup> April 2004 to SAFAD to be considered as gift aid.

Signed:..... Date:.....

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